Abstracts

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CENTER

What is an abstract? What should it do?

An abstract is a concise paragraph (though it can be longer) that provides readers with a brief overview of the paper's argument, methods, and findings. An abstract communicates the key issues of your research and can be vital in helping direct others to your work. An effective abstract allows readers to determine whether your work is relevant to their research interests and inspires them to read on.

How do I structure an abstract?

While abstracts vary among disciplines, they typically follow this structure:

Purpose: What is important about your research topic? What gap in existing scholarship is your research addressing?

Methods: What methods, or approach, did you use to structure your research? (For example, did you conduct interviews, gather and analyze data, create prototypes for a more efficient battery, examine the portrayal of women in *Beowulf*, etc.?)

Results: What were the results or findings of your research?

Conclusions/Implications: What conclusions can you draw from the results of your research? What implications do your findings suggest for this research topic and for your field?

A note on style: Like other components of academic writing, stylistic conventions among abstracts can vary depending on discipline and journal preferences. The examples on the next page illustrate differences in length and style. Some abstracts use first-person, some do not. Some abstracts use passive sentences constructions while others rely on active voice. When writing an abstract, it's a good idea to keep the stylistic conventions typical of your field of study in mind.

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Sample Science Abstract:

Hashempour, M., Arani, Z. M., & Lombardi, F. Modeling gross damage in tile-based nanomanufacturing by DNA self-assembly. *IEEE Transactions on Nanobioscience*, 9(3), 193-203.

This paper proposes a novel model for gross damage as occurring in tile-based nanomanufacturing by DNA self-assembly. Gross damage occurs due to exogenous agents (such as radiation and tip-sample interactions) and is modeled as a hole (with a large number of empty tile sites) in the aggregate of the self-assembly. A stochastic analysis based on Markov chains for the tile binding process is pursued for regrowth of the tiles. This analysis establishes resilience as the probability to regrow the target pattern in the area affected by the gross damage. The conditions by which regrowth of a hole is favorable (i.e., at high resilience) compared with normal growth are established by considering temperature of aggregation and bond energy. As examples, two patterns for nano interconnects are analyzed based on the proposed model.

Sample Humanities Abstract:

Kelly, D. (2005). Lost in translation: The English versions of Gabrielle Roy's early novels. *Studies In Canadian* Literature, 30(2), 96-114.

An examination of Harry Lorin Binsse's English translations of four texts by Gabrielle Roy: *Where Nests the Water Hen* (1951), *The Cashier* (1955), *Street of Riches* (1957), and *The Hidden Mountain* (1962). The writer explores how well Binsse's translations achieve his aim to be faithful to his source texts. She finds many inaccuracies in his translations, ranging from minor imprecision to substantive changes. She asserts that nonetheless, Binsse's work is far from being a total failure. She points out that his overall achievement should be assessed in the context of his own honest statement that all translations are imperfect.