

ABSTRACT

A person reading the abstract should be able to tell quickly the value of the report and whether to read further. In many cases, more people will read the abstract than will read the entire report. Thus, the abstract has the dual function of supplying information to those who will read the entire report and to those who will read nothing further in the paper.

The abstract should be a suitable literary adjunct to the printed paper. It should be written after the paper is completed and should be consistent with statements in the paper. To some extent the abstract will repeat wording in the paper, but because it is sometimes read immediately before the introduction or other main sections, it should not be a tedious recapitulation.

On the other hand, the abstract must be completely self-explanatory and intelligible in itself. It should include the following:

1. Reason for doing the work, including the rationale or justification for the research.
2. Objectives and topics covered.
3. Brief description of the methods used. If the paper deals mainly with methods, give the basic principles, range, and degree of accuracy for new methods.
4. Results.
5. Conclusions.

The abstract also should call attention to new items, observations, and numerical data. Abstracts should be informative. Expressions such as “is discussed” and “is described” should rarely be included. Specific rather than general statements must be used, especially in the methods and results sections of the abstract. For example, do not say “two rates of P” but say “rates of 40 and 80 kg of P ha⁻¹”.