

IN THIS SEMINAR:

- WHAT IS AN ABSTRACT
- FOR WHAT PURPOSES
- WHO READS IT
- DIFFERENT TYPES OF ABSTRACT
- WHAT TO INCLUDE
- WHAT NOT TO INCLUDE

WHAT IS AN ABSTRACT?

- A short, self-contained, powerful summary of an article, paper or thesis;
- Length: between 150 and 300 words;
- Layout: usually one single paragraph; font size is different from the main text;
- Position: usually at the beginning of the paper

WHAT IS AN ABSTRACT? (continued)

- An abstract is an original document, not a collection of quotations taken from the text it summarizes.
- It does not contain vague statements which force the reader to refer to the main text.

FOR WHAT PURPOSES?

- To persuade the reader to see the full text
- To help readers decide if the article is relevant for their purposes
- To answer a call of paper in a conference

WHO READS IT?

- Same-field professionals looking for further information;
- Teachers having to evaluate future specialists' achievements;
- Students charting research in a given area.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF ABSTRACT

- Abstracts are genre-sensitive (i.e. components vary according to discipline)
- an abstract of a **social science**(**economics, politics,...**) or **scientific** work may contain the **scope, purpose, results, and contents** of the work.
- an abstract of a **humanities**(**literature, history,...**) work may contain the **thesis, background, and conclusion** of the larger work.
- An **abstract** is not a **review**, nor does it **evaluate** the work being abstracted.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF ABSTRACT

(continued)

- Abstracts are usually divided into two main categories:
- **DESCRIPTIVE AND INFORMATIVE**
- **Descriptive abstracts describe:**
 - What the text is about
 - The issues or problems explored
 - The purpose and methodology of the research

DIFFERENT TYPES OF ABSTRACT

(continued)

- **Informative** abstracts describe:
 - What the text is about
 - The issues or problems explored
 - The purpose and methodology of the research
 - The results
 - The conclusion and recommendations

DIFFERENT TYPES OF ABSTRACT

(continued)

- *Descriptive* abstracts are often written before a project is completed;
- Emphasis is placed on the problem and method;
- They may be required for conference paper proposals or for progress reports;
- *Informative* abstracts are written after a project has been completed;
- Emphasis is placed on the **results** and **conclusion** of the project.

WHAT TO INCLUDE

- *Reason for writing:*

What is the importance of the research? Why would a reader be interested in the larger work?

- *Problem:*

What problem does this work attempt to solve? What is the scope of the project? What is the main argument/thesis/claim?

WHAT TO INCLUDE (continued)

- *Methodology:*

An abstract of a scientific work may include specific models or approaches used in the larger study. Other abstracts may describe the types of evidence used in the research (e.g. qualitative interviews, book reviews, etc.)

WHAT TO INCLUDE (continued)

- *Results:*

Again, an abstract of a scientific work may include specific data that indicates the results of the project. Other abstracts may discuss the findings in a more general way.

- *Implications:*

What changes should be implemented as a result of the findings of the work? How does this work add to the body of knowledge on the topic?

WHAT TO INCLUDE (continued)

- To put it simple:
 - What the author did;
 - How the author did it;
 - What the author found;
 - What the author concluded.

WHAT NOT TO INCLUDE

- Information not contained in the original work;
- References to other work;
- Quotations from the original work or from other works;
- Lengthy explanations of words and concepts;
- Unexplained acronyms or abbreviations;
- Tables and maps.

TO KNOW MORE ...

www.unc.edu/depts/web/handouts/abstracts.html •

(the writing centre page of the University of North Carolina, USA)

<http://research.berkeley.edu/ucday/abstract.html> •

(advice on how to write an abstract created by Berkeley university,
California, USA)

www.mestierediscrivere.com/file/brevi_deagostini.pdf •

(a pdf page in Italian on what an abstract is and on how to create a
successful one)

Bondi, Marina (1999) English Across Genres, Modena: Edizioni il
Fiorino •

Bhatia, Vijav, K (1993) Analysing Genre: Language Use in Professional
Settings, London and New York: Longman •

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THANK YOU...