

## WRITING AN ABSTRACT

### I. FAMILIARIZATION

#### 1. Brief overview of an abstract

An abstract is a brief or condensed statement by the writer of the contents of the writer's work. In general, an abstract is only one paragraph of 200 words or less. It is often used for scientific or technical work and either appears before the work (research paper, report, thesis, dissertation) or is published separately in a volume like Chemical Abstracts. If the abstract appears before the work, it gives the reader a preview of the contents of the work. If the abstract appears published separately, the reader can read it and then decide whether or not to order the original work or read the work.

The abstract normally follows the title page and is numbered page ii. It should be in italic or in a smaller font with a larger margin and should stand on its own in the middle of the second page.

#### 2. Kinds of abstracts

Depending on the kind of information they contain, abstracts are usually classified as either Descriptive or Informative.

- **Descriptive abstracts:** Descriptive abstracts indicate main topics that are discussed in a work. They define the scope of the work and indicate what contribution it makes. Two good examples of descriptive abstracts are book reviews and narrative statements under chapter headings. Study the following examples of book reviews.

#### ABSTRACT

This book discusses a study that examines the causes of syntactic errors made by nonnative learners of English. A comparison of composition from students in a college remedial writing course for nonnative English-speaking undergraduates and a freshman course for nonnative speakers was made. Some errors that were analyzed were in interference, hypercorrection, and semantic complexity of the target language system.

- **Informative abstracts:** Informative abstracts, unlike descriptive abstracts, discuss what is in the work. This type includes information about the work in regard to the following: (a) objectives, (b) methodology, (c) results, (d) conclusions, and (e) implications, if any. An informative abstract should contain no information that is not in the original work. If you are writing an informative abstract of your own work, you do not need to retain the original sequence. You can describe (1) what you did, (2) how you did it, (3) what you found, and (4) what your principal conclusions are.

#### ABSTRACT

The introduction of E-commerce is commonly recognized as the most significant and exciting development in business around the world. This paper, based on secondary research, discusses Vietnam's level of readiness to develop e-commerce. In particular, three areas of business practice in Vietnam are explored: company and consumer attitudes, payment methods, and finally Vietnamese legislation pertaining to the operation of e-commerce. The findings of the research indicate that companies and consumers in Vietnam are not interested in e-commerce and the country lacks the payment system and the legal framework necessary to promote the operation of e-commerce. Finally, based on the findings, the paper draws the conclusion that Vietnam is not ready to develop e-commerce.

#### Task:

**Q1.** Read the samples of the abstracts carefully and discuss the features included in them.

**Q2.** What are the possible strengths and the weaknesses that you find in the samples?

### II. LANGUAGE NOTES

#### Steps to write a descriptive abstract

3. Highlight the purpose, method, and scope.
4. Use Table of contents as a guide.
5. Examine the Introduction and Summary or Conclusion to generalize the paper.

6. Write a summary of the report itself.
7. Keep the order of the information in the paper.
8. Revise the abstract until it is both concise and appropriately comprehensive.

#### **Steps to write an informative abstract**

1. Highlight the objective (purpose) and the conclusion that are in the introduction and the discussion parts of your research.
2. Jot down keyword information in the section "Method."
3. Highlight the results from the discussion section in your paper.
4. Compile the above-highlighted information into a single paragraph.
5. Delete unnecessary words and phrases.
6. Rephrase the first sentence so that the abstract starts with a different sentence from the one in the Introduction section.

#### **Some useful tips for writing the abstract**

1. Write the abstract after writing the report.
2. Begin with an introductory sentence to orient the reader to the topic and then a topic sentence that states the objective of the work.
3. Condense the information, but do not delete articles (a, an, the) and needed transitional words.
4. Avoid overloading your abstract with technical terms or unnecessary jargon, since not all your readers may be as familiar as you are with the subject matter.
5. Do not include illustrations, tables, or biographic references in the abstract.

### **III. PRACTICE**

#### **Practice 1: Read the following abstract and identify to which kind it belongs.**

##### **ABSTRACT**

Play is the most important task for early childhood education and development. This research article is concerned with the areas of pre-school children's play. It analyzes in depth the meaning, the characteristics, and the value of play during children's growth. It also introduces the types and courses of play based on different age and development periods in the lives of pre-school children, and it stresses the importance of indoor and outdoor environments that affect children's play. Finally, successful ways to direct the play of pre-school children are suggested.

#### **Practice 2: Make any improvements in terms of the language, particular features to be included in an abstract of that kind and the way the ideas are arranged.**

##### **ABSTRACT**

Recently, living unmarried has become a new trend among students in big cities in Vietnam despite the fact that it still contains both pros and cons. This paper, based on secondary research, highlights some facts about cohabitation among students in Vietnam. It also further discusses the advantages as well as disadvantages of living together unmarried. The findings of the research indicate that most of students in Vietnam are not likely to ensure a normal life when engaging in cohabitation because of problems arising. Finally, based on the findings, the paper concludes that students should consider carefully before cohabiting in order to avoid unexpected troubles as well as physical and psychological injuries.

(Đặng Thanh Tâm and Phùng Thị Lan Hương - 2Q-06 - Cohabitation among students in Vietnam)

#### **Practice 3: Write the abstract for your research paper.**

### **IV. EDITING CHECKLIST**

1. What kind of abstract is this?
2. Does the abstract contain all the necessary features?
3. Is the abstract grammatically correct?