

# Information on the Writing of the Descriptive Abstract for the Épreuve Synthèse

## Definition and Purpose of the Abstract

An abstract, a brief summary – usually no more than 150 words – of the document, is used by researchers, scholars and students. Abstracts are found at the beginning of articles in scholarly journals. Abstracts are used for some (or all) of the following purposes:

- (1) *To get an overview of recent scholarship.* Reading the abstracts of scholarly papers gives a general idea of current research interests and methods.
- (2) *To find the journal articles most relevant to a person's own research.* Reading the abstracts allows the researchers to screen out all but the most relevant articles. Because of the large number of articles published on most subjects, this can be a very important step in finding appropriate articles.
- (3) *To learn the results of research without having to read the article.* Abstracts often include a summary of the method and results of the research, and many times, this is all the researcher needs.

## Explanation of the Descriptive Abstract

You are required to write a specific type of abstract, called the **descriptive abstract**. The descriptive abstract, sometimes called the *topical* or *indicative* or *table of contents* abstract, does only what its name implies: it describes the kinds of information in the document. It does not provide the information itself: the important results, conclusions, or recommendations. It simply lists in prose the topics covered, giving appropriate emphasis to each. This type of abstract identifies the purpose and topics in your épreuve, but it does **not** give the substance of the article. It basically functions like a table of contents, and so it can be used to decide whether or not a particular article is relevant to a researcher's work. Thus the descriptive abstract essentially duplicates the major heading of the table of contents. It is not a substitute for the article because it does not give the results of the investigation. However, it does give the reader a clear overview of the article.

## Guidelines for Summarizing Information

- Summarizing, a more comprehensive form of note-taking, is the process of rewriting an original document for the purposes of making it shorter while still retaining its essential message.
- Summarizing a document generally consists of identifying the main points and then expressing them concisely. In order to write a summary or abstract of a document, you should follow these six (6) steps:
  - (1) *Define the task.* This involves recognizing the purpose of the summary, and identifying the intended reader(s) of the abstract. You will have to decide here if there are particular aspects you should concentrate on, and whether or not you should use technical terminology.
  - (2) *Identify the main points.* Begin by underlining the key ideas in the original text.
  - (3) *State the main points in prose.* Paraphrase the underlined ideas. Do not worry yet about your grammar, punctuation and style. At this point, you just want to see if you can reproduce in brief form the essence of the original.
  - (4) *Check your draft against the original for accuracy and emphasis.* Reread the original to make sure your abstract is accurate and reflects the *épreuve*'s emphasis. Checking for proper emphasis means getting the proportions rights; if the original devotes 20% of its space to a particular point, your abstract draft should not devote 5% or 50% of its space to that point.
  - (5) *Edit your abstract for style, grammar, and punctuation.*
  - (6) *Revise to meet the length requirement.* Your requirement is 100-150 words.
  - (7) *Select six (6) key words.* Abstracts often conclude with a list of a half-dozen key words – words or phrases that are entered into electronic databases. Your job is to think of the different key words that people might use to access your document.

## Grading Criteria

Along with your abstract, you should submit the **Abstract Assessment Grid** to your professor. As seen clearly on the grid, your abstract submission must demonstrate basic conformity to the abstract genre, as well as performance in three specific areas: (1) clarity in identification of the purpose of the project, (2) effectiveness of the organization of the information, and (3) clarity and correctness of written expression. You will be graded on your descriptive abstract on a pass/fail basis, and you must fulfill all of the above criteria in order to pass the abstract component of the *épreuve*. If you do not meet these criteria, you must resubmit a corrected abstract to your professor, until your abstract is approved.

Remember that you are required to pass the abstract component in order to fulfill the requirements of the *épreuve*.

## Author Identification

As is common practice at the College, you are required to identify your abstract by **your name, course title, professor name, and date of submission** (see *Sample Abstract* on p.5). This should be typed at the top-left hand corner of your abstract page. Your abstract should consist of a single page, i.e., you should not attach a separate cover page.

## Further Information

For help writing science abstracts, see Markel, Michael H.

*Technical writing : situations and strategies*. pp.238-241 on Reserve at the Library.

### Abstract Submission Check List

When you submit your abstract to your professor:

- ▽ Type **your name, course title, professor name, and date of submission** in the top-left corner.
- ▽ Make sure your abstract is in the correct format (see *Sample Abstract*)
- ▽ Make sure your abstract respects the length restriction (100-150 words).
- ▽ Attach a copy of the *Abstract Assessment Grid*.

## Sample Descriptive Abstract

When an author submits an abstract to a scientific journal or conference, the author is usually required to fill out an abstract form. This form consists of essentially two parts: the *author information* and the *abstract* itself. This is the format in which you will submit your abstract. The example below illustrates a suitable format for your abstract. Please remember to fill in the information about the author (i.e., yourself)!

### ***Example:***

<<Your name>>

Épreuve synthèse abstract

<<Course name>>

<<Professor's name>>

<<Date of submission>>

### **Design of a Radio-based System for Distribution Automation**

<Your name>, Marianopolis College, Montreal, Quebec, Canada.

At this time, power utilities' major techniques of monitoring their distribution systems are after-the-fact indicators such as interruption reports, meter readings, and trouble alarms. These techniques are inadequate in two ways. One, the information fails to provide the utility with an accurate picture of the dynamics of the distribution system. Two, after-the-fact indicators are expensive. Real-time load monitoring and load management would offer the utility both system reliability and long-range cost savings. This report describes the design criteria we used to design the radio-based system for a pilot program of distribution automation. It then describes the hardware and software of the system.

Key words: distribution automation, distribution systems, load, meters, radio-based systems, utilities.