

CHAPTER 9 - INFORMATION CONVENTIONS

Many readers depend on the abstract to give them enough information about the study to decide if they will read the entire report or not.

Read the following sample abstract from the field of computer science. It reports on a test of a voice recognition device designed to take dictation. Notice the kinds of information included and the order in which the information is presented.

EX 9.1

COMPOSING LETTERS WITH A SIMULATED LISTENING TYPEWRITER

background	Abstract. ¹ With a listening typewriter, what an author says would be automatically recognized and displayed in front of him or her. ² However, speech recognition is not yet advanced enough to provide people with a reliable listening typewriter. ³ An aim of our experiments was to determine if an
purpose	imperfect listening typewriter would be useful for composing letters.
method	⁴ Participants dictated letters, either in isolated words or in consecutive word speech. ⁵ They did this with simulations of listening typewriters that recognized either a limited vocabulary or an unlimited vocabulary. ⁶ Results indicated that
results	some versions, even upon first using them, were at least as good as traditional methods of handwriting and dictating. ⁷ Isolated word speech with
conclusion	large vocabularies may provide the basis for a useful listening typewriter.

WHAT HAVE YOU OBSERVED?

1. What was the principal activity of this research project?
2. Why are the five information elements in the preceding abstract ordered in this particular way?
3. Which sentences could be eliminated from this abstract without losing critical information about the study?

EXERCISE 9.2 Analysis

Read the following abstract carefully. It is taken from a child psychology study. Identify the sentences in the abstract that correspond to the elements B, P, M, R, and C on the preceding page.

TYPE A BEHAVIORS BY CHILDREN, SOCIAL COMPARISON, AND STANDARDS FOR SELF-EVALUATION

Abstract. ¹Type A behavior, an established risk factor for coronary heart disease, is characterized by extremes of competitive achievement striving, impatience, hostility, and aggression. ²As part of an effort to understand the origins of this behavior pattern, the present study assessed the impact of performance standards on the social behavior of Type A and Type B children. ³Children performed a five-trial task. ⁴Half were given an explicit standard with which to compare their own performance; half were given no standard. ⁵After 5 trials, all subjects were informed that their total score represented the middle score of the whole group and were asked to select one score for further comparison. ⁶Results showed no significant differences among groups on the frequency of comparison. ⁷In contrast, the results did show that regardless of the presence or absence of an explicit standard, Type A children chose to evaluate their performance against the top score, whereas Type B children chose to do so only in the absence of an explicit standard. ⁸The implications of these results for understanding the childhood antecedents of Type A behavior are discussed.

B = Sentence(s) _____

P = Sentence(s) _____

M = Sentence(s) _____

R = Sentence(s) _____

C = Sentence(s) _____