

## Abstracts

Your abstract is what readers will use when they are deciding whether to read your article. For this reason your abstract is very important and you should spend time making sure that it is readable and that it contains a complete description of your research. In approximately 100-200 words, you will need to summarize your findings and what the implications of those findings are.

- The abstract must be accurate as a reflection of what is in your article.
- The abstract must be self-contained, without abbreviations, footnotes, or incomplete references. It must make sense on its own.
- It is a good idea to include keywords in your abstract, as this will help readers to find it. Key phrases need to make sense within the abstract. Try to keep to a maximum of three or four different keyword phrases, and avoid over-repetition of such phrases as this can look like an attempt to trick a search engine, which may result in a page being rejected.
- Check that the abstract reads well.
- Check the journal Information for Authors page for specific requirements, such as word limits or whether a structured abstract with specific headings is required.

For papers reporting original research, state the **primary objective** and any hypothesis tested; describe the **research design** and your reasons for adopting that methodology; state the **methods and procedures** employed, state the **main outcomes and results**, and state the **conclusions** that might be drawn from these data and results, including their implications for further research or application/practice.

Abstracts are often the least considered but most important part of any paper. Most readers of a journal will read most of the abstracts, but very few will read the full papers. Perhaps 95% of readers will read only the abstract. The need for abstracts to be terse often causes difficulty and can taint what is otherwise a perfectly acceptable style of writing. Since deciding to improve the general standards of abstracts in Construction Management and Economics, we have found that certain problems recur. We seek to deal with most of them here. Some are based upon accepted good practice in abstract writing, others are simply a question of style or consistency. The following suggestions should help to reduce the need for authors to re-write their abstracts.

The abstract should not be a table of contents in prose, neither should it be an introduction. It should be informative. Tell the reader what the research was about, how it was undertaken and what was discovered, but not how the paper is organized. The main findings must be summarized. If there are too many of them, then just exemplify them in the abstract. The essential elements of the abstract are:

## How to write an abstract

Shahriyar Mansouri  
Assistant Professor of English Literature  
Shahid Beheshti University  
Tehran, Iran

- Background: A simple opening sentence or two placing the work in context.
- Aims: One or two sentences giving the purpose of the work.
- Method(s): One or two sentences explaining what was done.
- Results: One or two sentences indicating the main findings.
- Conclusions: One sentence giving the most important consequence of the work.

The following guidelines have been extracted from recent criticisms of real abstracts. This may help to overcome some of the most frequent problems:

- Do not commence with "this paper...", "this report..." or similar. It is better to write about the research than about the paper. Similarly, do not explain the sections or parts of the paper.
- Avoid sentences that end in "...is described", "...is reported", "...is analyzed" or similar. These are simply too vague to be informative.
- Do not begin sentences with "it is suggested that...", "it is believed that...", "it is felt that..." or similar. In every case, the four words can be omitted without damaging the essential message.
- Do not write in the first person *in any form*. Thus, not only should you avoid "I", but also "we", "the author", "the writer" and so on. Again, this is because the abstract should be about the research, not about the act of writing.