



Writing the Abstract

An abstract appears at the beginning of the report. It is an abridged version of a report (typically about 150–250 words). A well-written abstract is very important as a reader uses it to judge if he or she should read the full report or paper.

There are two types of abstracts: **descriptive** and **informative**.

Descriptive Abstract

A descriptive abstract describes the work abstracted and is usually short, less than 150 words. It indicates the type of information found in the report or paper and includes keywords found in it. A descriptive abstract does not usually provide results or conclusions nor does it evaluate the research [3]. Here are typical information components of the descriptive abstract:

- Objective of the study (and method)
- Description of major sections of report
- Conclusion or recommendation (optional)

Informative Abstract

An informative abstract, unlike the descriptive abstract, presents the purpose, method, results, conclusions of the research and recommendations. Here are the typical information components of the informative abstract:

- Research background
- Research objectives
- Research methods
- Main results
- Conclusion (implications & recommendations)

Language focus

Abstracts are highly condensed versions of a report or paper. Therefore, always use concise and concrete language. Summarise all the main results and omit unnecessary details. Omit citations and references and do not direct the reader to information in the report.

Verb Tenses

The verb tenses used in writing sentences in the abstract are directly related to those you used in writing the related sections in your report. For example, the objective sentences in the abstract are similar to the objective sentences in the introduction. They are written in the past tense or present perfect.

Activity 6.6

Analysing an Abstract

Read the abstract from the article 'Analysis of all-terrain vehicle crash mechanisms' available on the main course site and answer the following questions.

1. Is the article a descriptive or informative abstract? Why?
2. Which sentences represent the information components you expect to find in the abstract?
3. Which verb tenses are used for the different components?

Analysis of All Terrain Vehicle Crash Mechanisms

Sara Tanner, Mary Aitken, James N. Warnock

Department of Pediatrics, University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, Department of Agricultural and Biological Engineering, Mississippi State University

Abstract: *A new field of engineering research is developing because of the increasing number of ATV (all-terrain vehicle) crashes among children. To determine why so many crashes occur and how they can be prevented, a series of ATV tests were conducted. Testing was conducted on a raisable platform in order to simulate an ATV rollover because the machine turning over causes the majority of crashes. The tests included simulating an ATV rolling over with the weight of a child, with added weight of a passenger, and due to a thrust effect. Through testing, the amount of weight needed to flip an ATV was determined. It was concluded that individuals add to the instability of the machine and the additional weight of a passenger creates a higher probability of a rollover. Utility type vehicles (UTVs) were also tested as a machine comparison. The risks were lower with a heavier machine. These preliminary tests allow for new questions and tests to be conducted.*