What is an ABSTRACT?

An abstract is a brief synopsis or summary of all the main points of a research, article, thesis, review, or conference proceedings. It is often used to help the reader quickly understand, and evaluate the significance of the paper and then decide whether or not she or he wishes to read the full paper.

Although the abstract appears first in a paper, it is generally the last part written. It comes after the title but before the introduction, with extra line spaces to show it is separate from the main text. Only after the paper has been completed, can the author(s) decide what should be in the abstract and what parts are supporting details.

Qualities of a good abstract.
An effective abstract has the following qualities:

→ It uses one or 2 well-developed paragraphs: these are unified, coherent, concise, and able to stand alone.

→ It uses an introduction/body/conclusion structure which presents the article, paper or report’s purpose, background information, methodology, results, conclusions, and recommendations.

→ It follows strictly the order given in the article, paper or report.

→ It provides logical connections (or transitions) between the information included.

→ It adds no new information, but simply summarises the main points of the article, paper or report.

→ It can be easily understood by a wide audience.

→ It mostly uses passive verbs to downplay the author and emphasise the information.

→ It should be about 100 words long and no longer than 150 words.

**Hint:** When writing an abstract use specific statements as opposed to general ones:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For example:</th>
<th>X General</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✓ Specific</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The problems dealt with were...</td>
<td>Several problems and solutions were identified...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A SAMPLE ABSTRACT

A published abstract is reproduced here with its different sections labeled. Study it to see the contents of each of its sections.

**ABSTRACT**

**Rationale**
Crop yields are primarily water-limited under dryland production systems in semiarid regions. This study was conducted to determine whether the growing season water balance could be manipulated through planting geometry. The effects of row spacing, row direction, and plant population on the water use, light interception, and growth or grain sorghum were investigated at Bushland, Texas, on a Pullman clay soil. In 1983, which had a dry growing season, narrow row spacing and higher population increased seasonal evapotranspiration by 7 and 9%, respectively, and shifted the partitioning of ET to the vegetative period. Medium population crops yielded 6.2 and 2.3 Mg/ha of dry matter and grain, respectively. High population resulted in high dry matter and low grain yield whereas low popula-
tion resulted in low dry matter and high grain yield. Row direction did not affect water use or yield. In 1984, dry matter production for a given amount of ET and light interception was higher in the narrow-row crops. Evapotranspiration was less for a given amount of light interception in the narrow-row crops and in the north south row crops. Narrow-row planting geometry appears to increase the partitioning of ET to the transpiration component and may improve the efficiency of dry land cropping systems. [From Agron. J. 78:720-726 (1986)].

Activity: Introduction or Abstract?

01 Introduction or Abstract?

Study the two texts below and decide which one is an abstract. How do you know?

Text A

This paper addresses the question of whether teaching initial literacy in a pidgin language will cause significant interference problems in the subsequent acquisition of the pidgin’s lexifier language. It surveys the literature on the use of pidgins and Creoles in formal education and then presents the preliminary results of an evaluation of the “Tok Pisin Prep-school Program” in a district of Papua New Guinea. This program uses Melanesian Pidgin English to teach initial literacy to children before they enter the English medium government primary schools. The preliminary findings show that primary school students who have learned initial literacy in Melanesian Pidgin actually show higher academic achievement in English, as well as in other subjects, than those who have learned initial literacy in English. The ‘prep-school’ program appears to be successful according to other, non-academic, criteria as well.

Text B

In this paper I will present the preliminary results of a formal evaluation of some aspects of a pre-school program in Papua New Guinea which uses Tok Pisin (The PNG dialect of Melanesian Pidgin English) to teach initial literacy. First, however, I will give some background to this study and a brief survey of other programs using pidgin or Creole languages in education. Then I will describe the program being evaluated and give the preliminary findings of the study. Finally, I will make some tentative conclusions.

02 Abstract Analysis

Break apart the text you have selected and clearly label these parts.
Objective: This paper addresses the question of whether teaching initial literacy in a pidgin language will cause significant interference problems in the subsequent acquisition of the pidgin's lexifier language. Many school students who have learned primary literacy in English enter the English medium government primary schools. This paper uses the literature on the use of Melanesian Pidgin English to teach literacy to children before they are introduced to English. A district in Papua New Guinea's Port Moresby region designed and implemented the "Tok Pisin Prep-school Program" to provide a transition for primary school students. The preliminary findings show that primary school students who learned initial literacy in Melanesian Pidgin actually show higher academic achievement than those who learned in English. The prep-school program appears to be successful according to other, non-academic criteria as well.

Method: It surveys the literature on the use of primary literacy in English medium government primary schools.

Results: The preliminary findings show that primary school students who learned initial literacy in Melanesian Pidgin actually show higher academic achievement in English, as well as in other subjects, than those who have learned initial literacy in English. Students who have learned initial literacy in a pidgin language show higher academic achievement than those who have learned in English.

Conclusion: The prep-school program appears to be successful according to other, non-academic criteria as well.