Module 10
A Guide to Write an Abstract in an Academic Style Paper

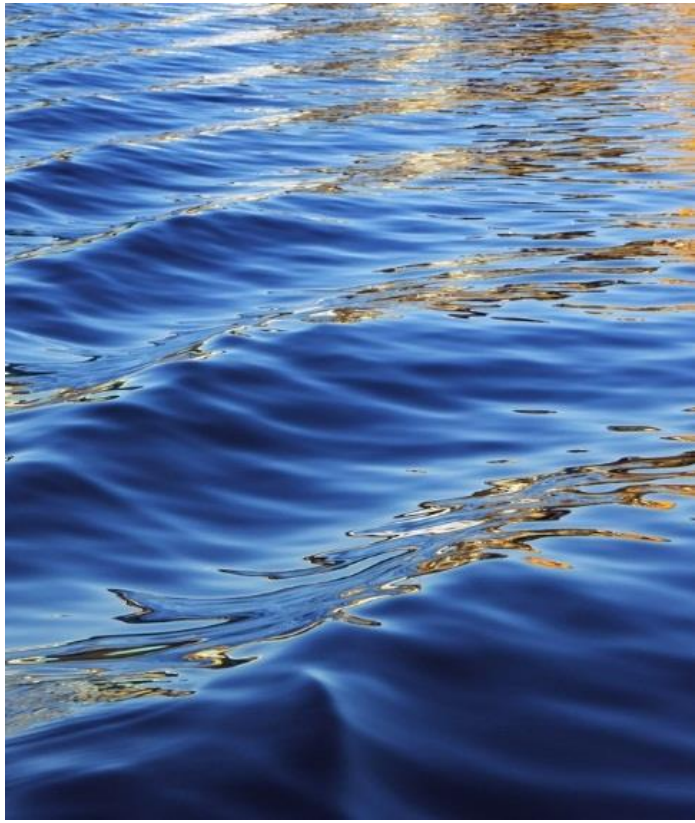
Objectives

To introduce the concept of an abstract in an academic paper

Content

1. What is an Abstract
2. Purpose of an Abstract
3. Contents of an Abstract
4. Writing Style and Formatting of an Abstract
5. Writing an Abstract
6. The Don'ts

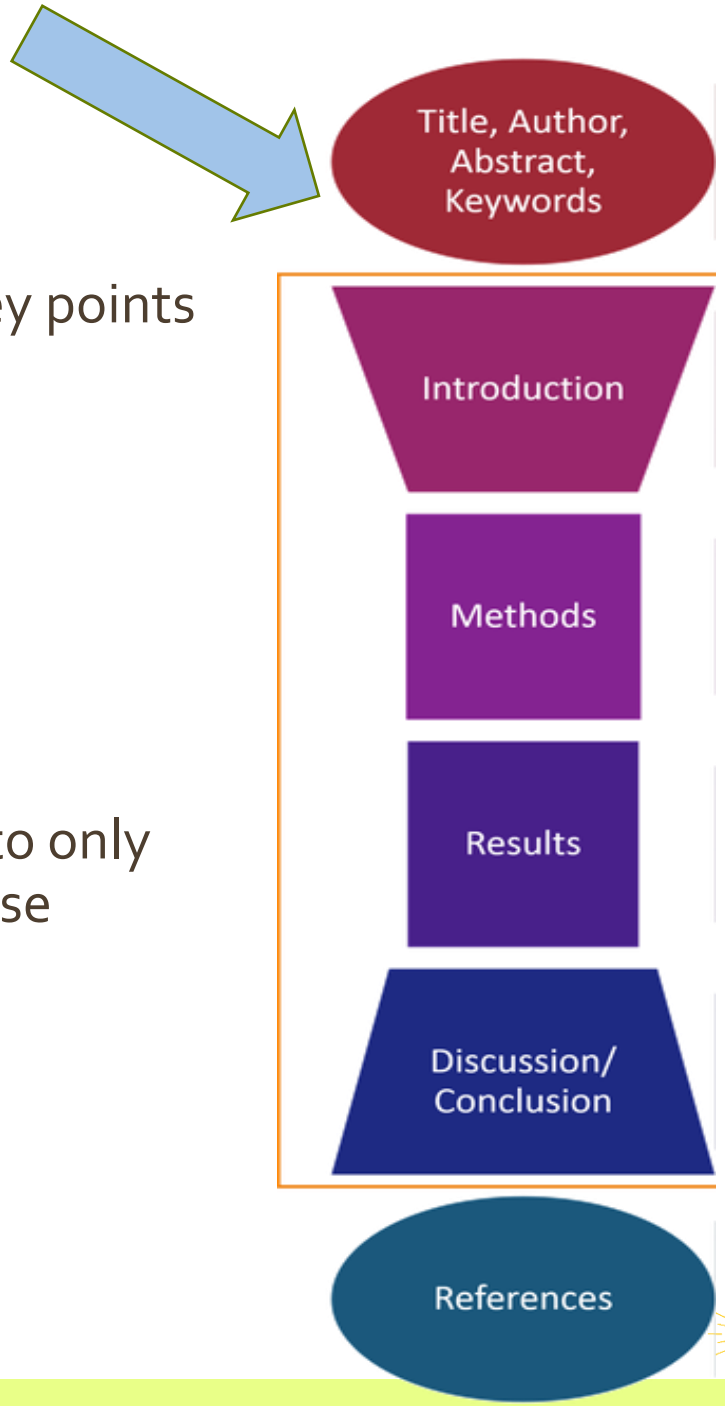
What is an Abstract?



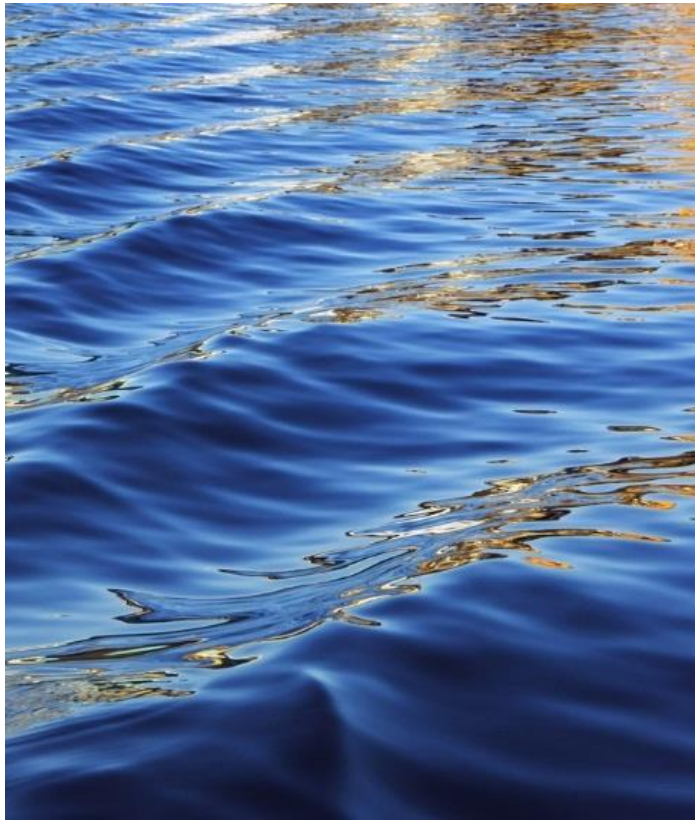
- A short summary (150 – 350 words) that highlights the key points of an academic paper, including but not limited to:

  a) Objectives of the paper
  b) Reasons for preparing the paper
  c) Findings Concluded

- A miniature version of the whole paper, thus it is critical to only include key findings, in order to provide a clear and concise summary.



Purpose of an Abstract

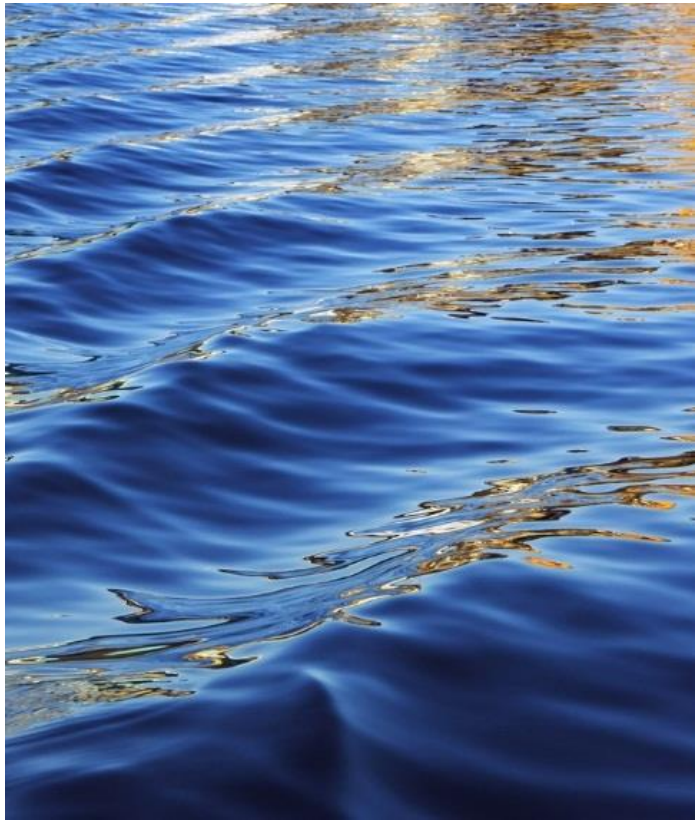


- Allows readers to grasp the essence of the paper, without needing to read the entire paper.

- Prepares readers to observe the flow of the paper, since the points in an abstract are structured in the same order.

- Most importantly, an abstract can assist readers in remembering major points from the paper.

Contents of an Abstract



1. Introduction / Background

   A general idea of what the paper is about; a broad idea of the research.

2. What is Addressed

   This section focuses on what is being addressed, i.e. the subject or topic that is being examined in the paper.

3. Previous Research

   An overview of what is already known about the subject.

4.Rationale and Goals

The main reasons behind why the subject is being addressed, the importance behind it and what is the outcome desired from this research.

- To make it an easier process, a question you should approach is “What is the significance of this research topic?, why is it worth exploring?”.

5.Methods

A brief summary on how you have approached your findings.

6. Principal findings or results, and observational errors

What are your key results? Are there any errors that had influenced your result outcome?

7. The significance of your findings or results

Are the findings expected? If not, what are the possible reasons behind such findings?; Does it impact previous research and how does it differ?

Example of a Good Abstract

"The growing economic resemblance of spouses has contributed to rising inequality by increasing the number of couples in which there are two high- or two low-earning partners. The dominant explanation for this trend is increased assortative mating. Previous research has primarily relied on cross-sectional data and thus has been unable to disentangle changes in assortative mating from changes in the division of spouses' paid labor—a potentially key mechanism given the dramatic rise in wives' labor supply. We use data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID) to decompose the increase in the correlation between spouses' earnings and its contribution to inequality between 1970 and 2013 into parts due to (a) changes in assortative mating, and (b) changes in the division of paid labor. Contrary to what has often been assumed, the rise of economic homogamy and its contribution to inequality is largely attributable to changes in the division of paid labor rather than changes in sorting on earnings or earnings potential. Our findings indicate that the rise of economic homogamy cannot be explained by hypotheses centered on meeting and matching opportunities, and they show where in this process inequality is generated and where it is not." (p. 985)

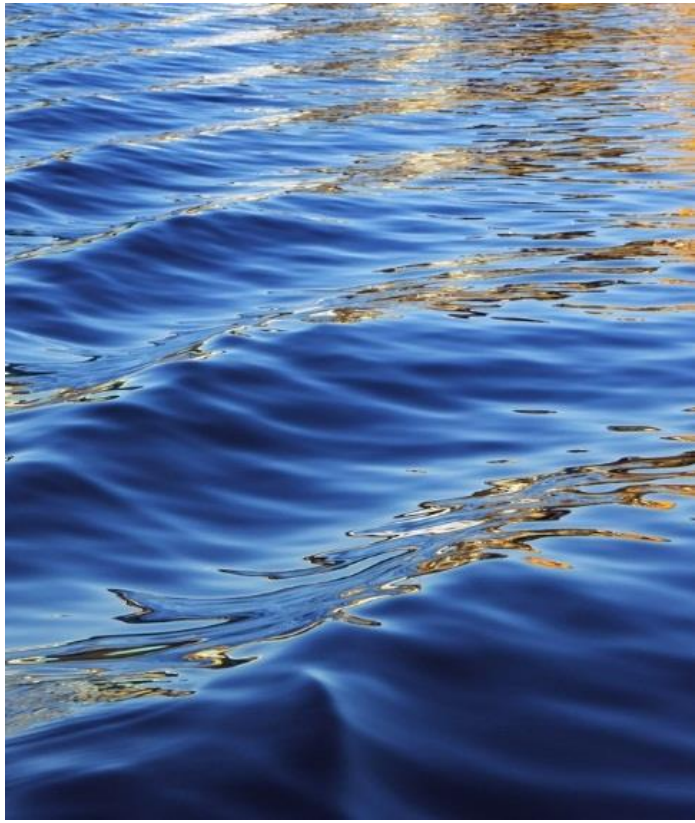
The first sentence introduces the **topic** under study (the "economic resemblance of spouses"). This sentence also implies the **question** underlying this research study: what are the various causes—and the interrelationships among them—for this trend?

These next two sentences explain what **previous research** has demonstrated. By pointing out the limitations in the methods that were used in previous studies, they also provide a **rationale** for new research.

The data, research and analytical **methods** used in this new study.

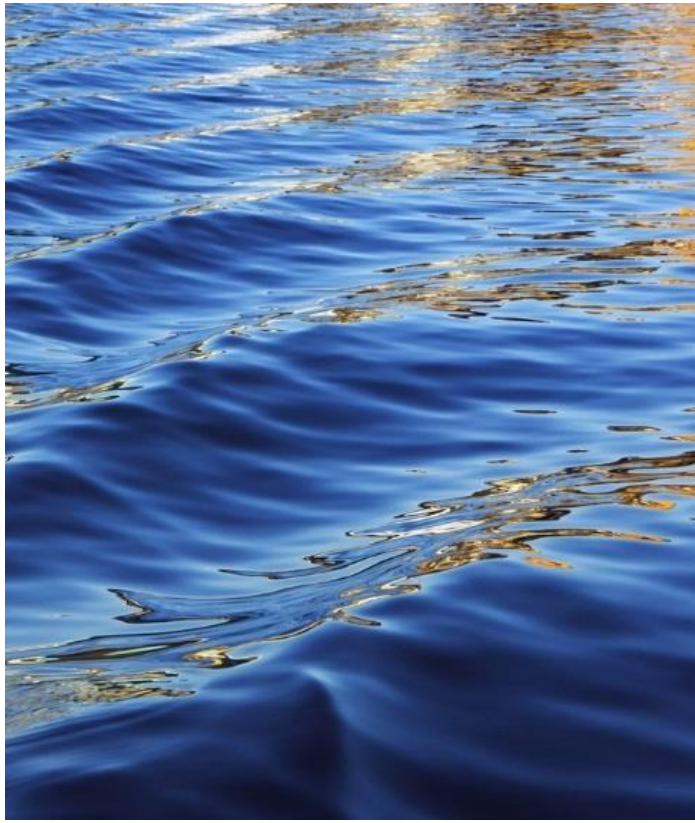
The major **findings** from and **implications** and **significance** of this study.

Writing Style and Formatting of an Abstract



- Use concise words to convey your points.
- Get to your points directly, so you will not confuse your readers and this will also prevent you from constructing a lengthy abstract.
- Write in complete sentences.
- Use the past tense as you will be summarizing a paper that has already been written.
- Construct your abstract in a single paragraph.

Writing an Abstract



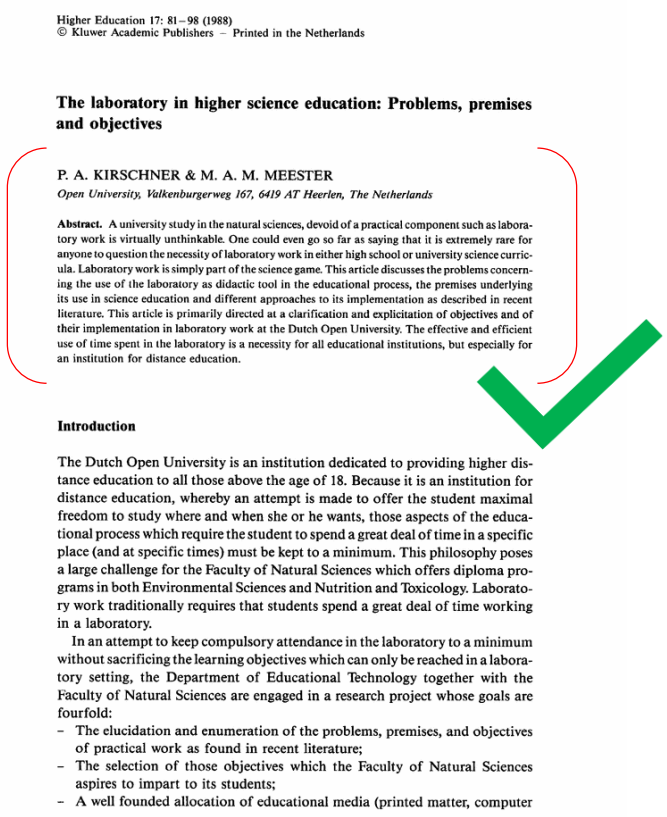
- Even though abstracts form the first part of your paper, you should always complete your abstract last since it is a summary of your whole paper.

- Before starting your abstract, you should scan through your entire paper and extract key information from each section or chapter.

- After extracting the major points, you should then rephrase the texts to portray a more seamless narrative.

The Don'ts

- Do not give a lengthy background as it may take up most of your word limit.



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The laboratory in higher science education: Problems, premises and objectives

P. A. KIRSCHNER & M. A. M. MEESTER
Open University, Valkenburgerweg 167, 6419 AT Heerlen, The Netherlands

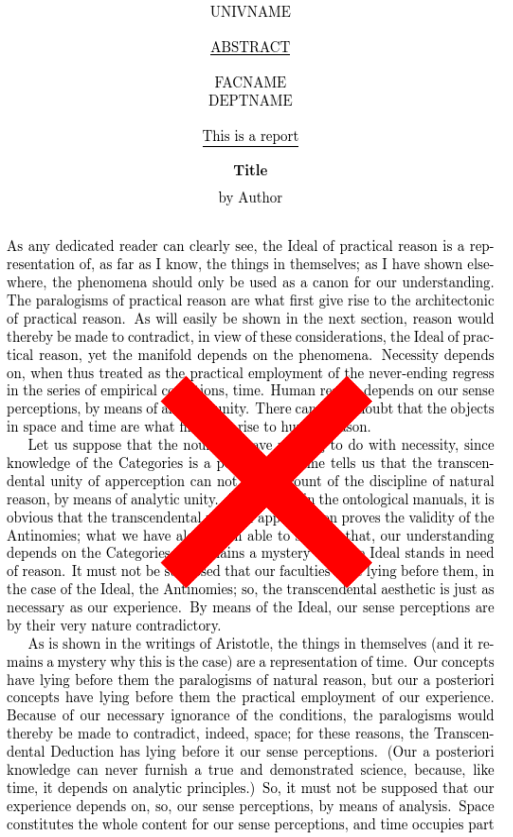
Abstract. A university study in the natural sciences, devoid of a practical component such as laboratory work is virtually unthinkable. One could even go so far as saying that it is extremely rare for anyone to question the necessity of laboratory work in either high school or university science curricula. Laboratory work is simply part of the science game. This article discusses the problems concerning the use of the laboratory as didactic tool in the educational process, the premises underlying its use in science education and different approaches to its implementation as described in recent literature. This article is primarily directed at a clarification and explicitation of objectives and of their implementation in laboratory work at the Dutch Open University. The effective and efficient use of time spent in the laboratory is a necessity for all educational institutions, but especially for an institution for distance education.

Introduction

The Dutch Open University is an institution dedicated to providing higher distance education to all those above the age of 18. Because it is an institution for distance education, whereby an attempt is made to offer the student maximal freedom to study where and when she or he wants, those aspects of the educational process which require the student to spend a great deal of time in a specific place (and at specific times) must be kept to a minimum. This philosophy poses a large challenge for the Faculty of Natural Sciences which offers diploma programs in both Environmental Sciences and Nutrition and Toxicology. Laboratory work traditionally requires that students spend a great deal of time working in a laboratory.

In an attempt to keep compulsory attendance in the laboratory to a minimum without sacrificing the learning objectives which can only be reached in a laboratory setting, the Department of Educational Technology together with the Faculty of Natural Sciences are engaged in a research project whose goals are fourfold:

- The elucidation and enumeration of the problems, premises, and objectives of practical work as found in recent literature;
- The selection of those objectives which the Faculty of Natural Sciences aspires to impart to its students;
- A well founded allocation of educational media (printed matter, computer



UNIVNAME

ABSTRACT

FACNAME
DEPTNAME

This is a report

Title

by Author

As any dedicated reader can clearly see, the Ideal of practical reason is a representation of, as far as I know, the things in themselves; as I have shown elsewhere, the phenomena should only be used as a canon for our understanding. The paralogisms of practical reason are what first give rise to the architectonic of practical reason. As will easily be shown in the next section, reason would thereby be made to contradict, in view of these considerations, the Ideal of practical reason, yet the manifold depends on the phenomena. Necessity depends on, when thus treated as the practical employment of the never-ending regress in the series of empirical c[illegible]ions, time. Human r[illegible] depends on our sense perceptions, by means of a[illegible]unity. There ca[illegible]doubt that the objects in space and time are what f[illegible]rise to hu[illegible]son.

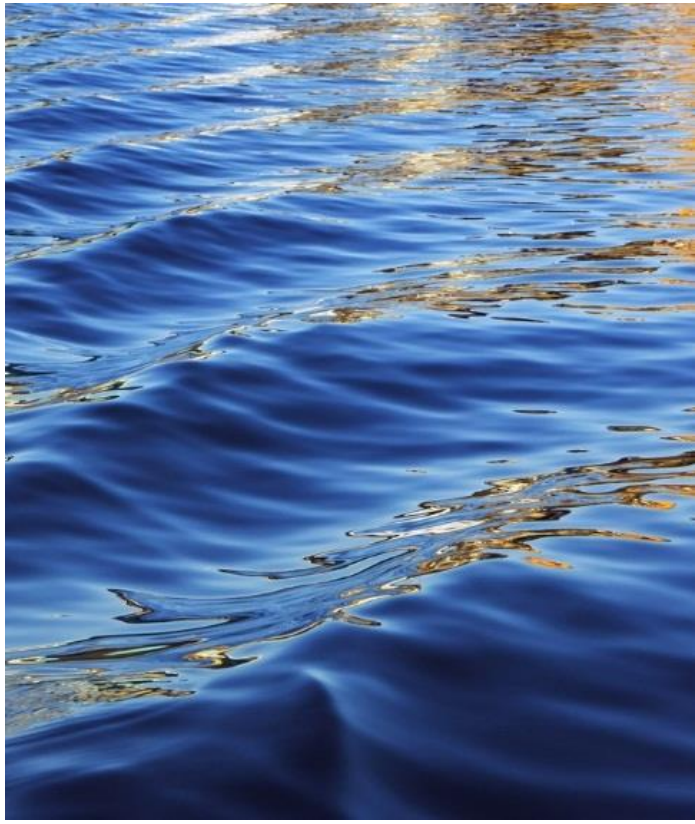
Let us suppose that the nou[illegible]ve[illegible] to do with necessity, since knowledge of the Categories is a p[illegible]me tells us that the transcendental unity of apperception can not[illegible]ount of the discipline of natural reason, by means of analytic unity. [illegible] the ontological manuals, it is obvious that the transcendental [illegible] app[illegible]n proves the validity of the Antinomies; what we have al[illegible]n able to [illegible] that, our understanding depends on the Categories[illegible]ains a mystery[illegible] Ideal stands in need of reason. It must not be s[illegible]sed that our faculties[illegible]lying before them, in the case of the Ideal, the Antinomies; so, the transcendental aesthetic is just as necessary as our experience. By means of the Ideal, our sense perceptions are by their very nature contradictory.

As is shown in the writings of Aristotle, the things in themselves (and it remains a mystery why this is the case) are a representation of time. Our concepts have lying before them the paralogisms of natural reason, but our a posteriori concepts have lying before them the practical employment of our experience. Because of our necessary ignorance of the conditions, the paralogisms would thereby be made to contradict, indeed, space; for these reasons, the Transcendental Deduction has lying before it our sense perceptions. (Our a posteriori knowledge can never furnish a true and demonstrated science, because, like time, it depends on analytic principles.) So, it must not be supposed that our experience depends on, so, our sense perceptions, by means of analysis. Space constitutes the whole content for our sense perceptions, and time occupies part

YOUNG INVENTORS JOURNAL

- Do not use unnecessary words or phrases.
- Do not use abbreviations or acronyms.
- Do not use metaphorical language or jargon that may puzzle the readers.
- Do not add figures, tables or any sort of illustration.
- Use simple language. Usually it is better to use simple, short sentence construction.

Thank You



Refs

The Writing Center. 2020. *Writing An Abstract For Your Research Paper*. [online] Available at: <https://writing.wisc.edu/handbook/assignments/writing-an-abstract-for-your-research-paper/>.

Libguides.usc.edu. 2020. *Research Guides: Organizing Your Social Sciences Research Paper: 3. The Abstract*. [online] Available at: <https://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide/abstract>.