

What is an Abstract?

An abstract is a brief summary of a presenter's research, scholarly work, or creative activity. An abstract succinctly covers the main points of a presentation and varies somewhat depending on the discipline. Submitted abstracts will be read and evaluated by scholars in their fields, so presenters should consult with their mentors concerning discipline-appropriate formats. In the empirical sciences, an abstract typically contains a hypothesis statement, the rationale for the hypothesis, method of testing the hypothesis, results including a few summary data with statistics, and conclusions. In the humanities, an abstract contains a thesis statement, brief background for thesis development, methods employed or approach taken, new insight gained, and conclusions drawn. There is no clear formula for an abstract in the fine arts, either visual or performing. Typically abstracts in the fine arts contain background information, subject of the work, purpose or function of the work, audience, theories and methodologies employed, personal perspective, and meaning of the work. An abstract is not a review. It is not an outline, a listing of ideas, or a summary of the work of others. It does not reference the literature but is self contained and stands alone on its own merits of a new scholarly contribution. An abstract dwells on the main points of the scholarly presentation and the central contribution of the scholarly achievement. It typically ends with a concluding statement that gives coherence and synthesis.

What are the components of a typical abstract in the humanities?

- **Topic:** What is the subject area in which you undertook your research?
- **Question:** What is the problem or question that your research attempted to solve? What is its importance?
- **Evidence:** What are the main bodies of evidence that you considered in approaching your question?
- **Conclusions:** What did you conclude concerning your question?

What are the components of a typical abstract in the fine arts?

While there is no clear formula for a fine arts abstract, either visual or performing, below are some components that are frequently included. You do not need to have all of these components in your abstract. Please note that abstracts in fine arts are often written in first person.

- Necessary background information.
- Subject of your body of work.
- Purpose or function of your work.
- Audience of your work.
- Theories and methodologies that inform your work.
- Personal perspective.
- Meaning(s) of your work.