I'm not a robot

Etymology Adjective Middle English, "withdrawn, removed, abstruse, extracted from a longer work, (of nouns in grammar) not concrete," borrowed from Medieval Latin abstractus "removed, secluded, incorporeal, universal, extracted from a larger work, summarized," going back to Latin, past participle of abstrahere "to remove forcibly, turn aside, divert," from abs- (variant of ab- ab- before c- and t-) + trahere "to drag, draw, take along," of uncertain origin Note: The etymology of trahere beyond Latin is problematic. It would require a verbal base *tregh-, a shape that is not allowable by Indo-European root structure constraints (voiceless stops cannot co-occur with voiced aspirated stops, though there may be exceptions if a sonorant is interposed). However, aside from loans and expressive formations, Latin words do not begin with dr-, so it is conceivable that initial dr- in an inherited root could have shifted to tr-. The verb trahere then invites comparison with Germanic *dragan- "to draw, pull" (see draw entry 1), virtually identical in meaning, though this presupposes a further change, since *dragan- must descend from Indo-European *dhrogh-. Thus *dhragheti > *dragheti (by dissimulation of the first aspirate) > trahit (3rd person singular present tense). (See M. Weiss, Outline of the Historical and Comparative Grammar of Latin, 2nd edition [Ann Arbor, 2020], pp. 169, 176.) Alternatively, trahere has been compared with Old Irish tethraig "ebbed, receded," with nominal correspondents tráig "beach, shore," Middle Welsh trei "ebb, draining," all presupposing a root *treHgh- or *tragh-. (See S. Schumacher, Die keltischen Primärverben [Innsbruck, 2004], pp. 635-36; his hypothesis is seconded by M. de Vaan, Etymological Dictionary of Latin and the Other Italic Languages [Leiden, 2008].) M. Weis, on the other hand, would assign this etymon to *tregh- "run" (whence Old English þrǣgan "to run," Gothic biþragjan)—see "Limited Latin Grassmann's Law: Do We Need It?," Vina Diem Celebrent: Studies in Linguistics and Philology in Honor of Brent Vine (Ann Arbor, 2018), pp. 438-47. See further P. Schrijver, The Reflexes of the Proto-Indo-European Laryngeals in Latin (Amsterdam, 1991), pp. 188-89, where an attempt is made to explain the a of trahere by the assumption of a laryngeal in the root. Noun Middle English, derivative of abstract abstract entry 1 (or borrowed directly from Medieval Latin abstractus) Verb Middle English abstracten "to draw away, remove," derivative of abstract abstract entry 1 (or borrowed directly from Latin abstractus) First Known Use Adjective 14th century, in the meaning defined at sense 2 Noun 15th century, in the meaning defined at sense 1 Verb 15th century, in the meaning defined at transitive sense 4 Time Traveler The first known use of abstract was in the 14th century See more words from the same century If you are writing a scientific research paper or a book proposal, you need to know how to write an abstract, which summarizes the contents of the paper or book.When researchers are looking for peer-reviewed papers to use in their studies, the first place they will check is the abstract to see if it applies to their work. Therefore, your abstract is one of the most important parts of your entire paper.In this article, we'll explain what an abstract is, what it should include, and how to write one.What Is an Abstract in a Paper?An abstract is a concise summary of the details within a report. Some abstracts give more details than others, but the main things you'll be talking about are why you conducted the research, what you did, and what the results show.When a reader is deciding whether to read your paper completely, they will first look at the abstract. You need to be concise in your abstract and give the reader the most important information so they can determine if they want to read the whole paper.Remember that an abstract is the last thing you'll want to write for the research paper because it directly references parts of the report. If you haven't written the report, you won't know what to include in your abstract.How Long Should an Abstract Be?If you are writing a paper for a journal or an assignment, the publication or academic institution might have specific formatting rules for how long your abstract should be. However, if they don't, most abstracts are between 150 and 300 words long.A short word count means your writing has to be precise and without filler words or phrases. Once you've written a first draft, you can always use an editing tool, such as ProWritingAid, to identify areas where you can reduce words and increase readability.If your abstract is over the word limit, and you've edited it but still can't figure out how to reduce it further, your abstract might include some things that aren't needed. Here's a list of three elements you can remove from your abstract:Discussion: You don't need to go into detail about the findings of your research because your reader will find your discussion within the paper.Definition of terms: Your readers are interested the field you are writing about, so they are likely to understand the terms you are using. If not, they can always look them up. Your readers do not expect you to give a definition of terms in your abstract.References and citations: You can mention there have been studies that support or have inspired your research, but you do not need to give details as the reader will find them in your bibliography.ProWritingAid will help you improve the style, strength, and clarity of all your assignments.5 Steps for Writing an AbstractIf you've never written an abstract before, and you're wondering how to write an abstract, we've got some steps for you to follow. It's best to start with planning your abstract, so we've outlined the details you need to include in your plan before you write.Remember to consider your audience when you're planning and writing your abstract. They are likely to skim read your abstract, so you want to be sure your abstract delivers all the information they're expecting to see at key points.1. What Should an Abstract Include?Abstracts have a lot of information to cover in a short number of words, so it's important to know what to include. There are three elements that need to be present in your abstract:ContextHypothesisKeywordsYour context is the background for where your research sits within your field of study. You should briefly mention any previous scientific papers or experiments that have led to your hypothesis and how research develops in those studies.Your hypothesis is your prediction of what your study will show. As you are writing your abstract after you have conducted your research, you should still include your hypothesis in your abstract because it shows the motivation for your paper.Throughout your abstract, you also need to include keywords and phrases that will help researchers to find your article in the databases they're searching. Make sure the keywords are specific to your field of study and the subject you're reporting on, otherwise your article might not reach the relevant audience.2. Can You Use First Person in an Abstract?You might think that first person is too informal for a research paper, but it's not. Historically, writers of academic reports avoided writing in first person to uphold the formality standards of the time. However, first person is more accepted in research papers in modern times.If you're still unsure whether to write in first person for your abstract, refer to any style guide rules imposed by the journal you're writing for or your teachers if you are writing an assignment.3. Abstract StructureSome scientific journals have strict rules on how to structure an abstract, so it's best to check those first. If you don't have any style rules to follow, try using the IMRaD structure, which stands for Introduction, Methodology, Results, and Discussion.Following the IMRaD structure, start with an introduction. The amount of background information you should include depends on your specific research area. Adding a broad overview gives you less room to include other details. Remember to include your hypothesis in this section.The next part of your abstract should cover your methodology. Try to include the following details if they apply to your study:What type of research was conducted?How were the test subjects sampled?What were the sample sizes?What was done to each group?How long was the experiment?How was data recorded and interpreted?Following the methodology, include a sentence or two about the results, which is where your reader will determine if your research supports or contradicts their own investigations.The results are also where most people will want to find out what your outcomes were, even if they are just mildly interested in your research area. You should be specific about all the details but as concise as possible.The last few sentences are your conclusion. It needs to explain how your findings affect the context and whether your hypothesis was correct. Include the primary take-home message, additional findings of importance, and perspective. Also explain whether there is scope for further research into the subject of your report.Your conclusion should be honest and give the reader the ultimate message that your research shows. Readers trust the conclusion, so make sure you're not fabricating the results of your research. Some readers won't read your entire paper, but this section will tell them if it's worth them referencing it in their own study.4. How to Start an AbstractThe first line of your abstract should give your reader the context of your report by providing background information. You can use this sentence to imply the motivation for your research.You don't need to use a hook phrase or device in your first sentence to grab the reader's attention. Your reader will look to establish relevance quickly, so readability and clarity are more important than trying to persuade the reader to read on.5. How to Format an AbstractMost abstracts use the same formatting rules, which help the reader identify the abstract so they know where to look for it.Here's a list of formatting guidelines for writing an abstract:Stick to one paragraphUse block formatting with no indentation at the beginningPut your abstract straight after the title and acknowledgements pagesUse present or past tense, not future tenseExamples of an AbstractThere are two primary types of abstract you could write for your paper—descriptive and informative.An informative abstract is the most common, and they follow the structure mentioned previously. They are longer than descriptive abstracts because they cover more details.Descriptive abstracts differ from informative abstracts, as they don't include as much discussion or detail. The word count for a descriptive abstract is between 50 and 150 words.Here is an example of an informative abstract:A growing trend exists for authors to employ a more informal writing style that uses "we" in academic writing to acknowledge one's stance and engagement. However, few studies have compared the ways in which the first-person pronoun "we" is used in the abstracts and conclusions of empirical papers. To address this lacuna in the literature, this study conducted a systematic corpus analysis of the use of "we" in the abstracts and conclusions of 400 articles collected from eight leading electrical and electronic (EE) engineering journals. The abstracts and conclusions were extracted to form two subcorpora, and an integrated framework was applied to analyze and seek to explain how we-clusters and we-collocations were employed. Results revealed whether authors' use of first-person pronouns partially depends on a journal policy. The trend of using "we" showed that a yearly increase occurred in the frequency of "we" in EE journal papers, as well as the existence of three "we-use" types in the article conclusions and abstracts: exclusive, inclusive, and ambiguous. Other possible "we-use" alternatives such as "I" and other personal pronouns were used very rarely—if at all—in either section. These findings also suggest that the present tense was used more in article abstracts, but the present perfect tense was the most preferred tense in article conclusions. Both research and pedagogical implications are proffered and critically discussed.Wang, S., Tseng, W.-T., & Johanson, R. (2021). To We or Not to We: Corpus-Based Research on First-Person Pronoun Use in Abstracts and Conclusions. SAGE Open, 11(2).Here is an example of a descriptive abstract:From the 1850s to the present, considerable criminological attention has focused on the development of theoretically-significant systems for classifying crime. This article reviews and attempts to evaluate a number of these efforts, and we conclude that further work on this basic task is needed. The latter part of the article explicates a conceptual foundation for a crime pattern classification system, and offers a preliminary taxonomy of crime.Farr, K. A., & Gibbons, D. C. (1990). Observations on the Development of Crime Categories. International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology, 34(3), 223–237.How ProWritingAid Can Help You Write an AbstractIf you want to ensure your abstract is grammatically correct and easy to read, you can use ProWritingAid to edit it. The software integrates with Microsoft Word, Google Docs, and most web browsers, so you can make the most of it wherever you're writing your paper.Before you edit with ProWritingAid, make sure the suggestions you are seeing are relevant for your document by changing the document type to "Abstract" within the Academic writing style section.You can use the Readability report to check your abstract for places to improve the clarity of your writing. Some suggestions might show you where to remove words, which is great if you're over your word count.We hope the five steps and examples we've provided help you write a great abstract for your research paper. An abstract is a short summary of your (published or unpublished) research paper, usually about a paragraph (c. 6-7 sentences, 150-250 words) long. A well-written abstract serves multiple purposes: an abstract lets readers get the gist or essence of your paper or article quickly, in order to decide whether to read the full paper; an abstract prepares readers to follow the detailed information, analyses, and arguments in your full paper; and, later, an abstract helps readers remember key points from your paper. It's also worth remembering that search engines and bibliographic databases use abstracts, as well as the title, to identify key terms for indexing your published paper. So what you include in your abstract and in your title are crucial for helping other researchers find your paper or article. If you are writing an abstract for a course paper, your professor may give you specific guidelines for what to include and how to organize your abstract. Similarly, academic journals often have specific requirements for abstracts. So in addition to following the advice on this page, you should be sure to look for and follow any guidelines from the course or journal you're writing for. Abstracts contain most of the following kinds of information in brief form. The body of your paper will, of course, develop and explain these ideas much more fully. As you will see in the samples below, the proportion of your abstract that you devote to each kind of information—and the sequence of that information—will vary, depending on the nature and genre of the paper that you are summarizing in your abstract. And in some cases, some of this information is implied, rather than stated explicitly. The Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, which is widely used in the social sciences, gives specific guidelines for what to include in the abstract for different kinds of papers—for empirical studies, literature reviews or meta-analyses, theoretical papers, methodological papers, and case studies. Here are the typical kinds of information found in most abstracts: the context or background information for your research; the general topic under study; the specific topic of your research the central questions or statement of the problem your research addresses what's already known about this question, what previous research has done or shown the main reason(s), the exigency, the rationale, the goals for your research—Why is it important to address these questions? Are you, for example, examining a new topic? Why is that topic worth examining? Are you filling a gap in previous research? Applying new methods to take a fresh look at existing ideas or data? Resolving a dispute within the literature in your field? . . . your research and/or analytical methods your main findings, results, or arguments the significance or implications of your findings or arguments. Your abstract should be intelligible on its own, without a reader's having to read your entire paper. And in an abstract, you usually do not cite references—most of your abstract will describe what you have studied in your research and what you have found and what you argue in your paper. In the body of your paper, you will cite the specific literature that informs your research. Although you might be tempted to write your abstract first because it will appear as the very first part of your paper, it's a good idea to wait to write your abstract until after you've drafted your full paper, so that you know what you're summarizing. What follows are some sample abstracts in published papers or articles, all written by faculty at UW-Madison who come from a variety of disciplines. We have annotated these samples to help you see the work that these authors are doing within their abstracts. The social science sample (Sample 1) below uses the present tense to describe general facts and interpretations that have been and are currently true, including the prevailing explanation for the social phenomenon under study. That abstract also uses the present tense to describe the methods, the findings, the arguments, and the implications of the findings from their new research study. The authors use the past tense to describe previous research. The humanities sample (Sample 2) below uses the past tense to describe completed events in the past (the texts created in the pulp fiction industry in the 1970s and 80s) and uses the present tense to describe what is happening in those texts, to explain the significance or meaning of those texts, and to describe the arguments presented in the article. The science samples (Samples 3 and 4) below use the past tense to describe what previous research studies have done and the research the authors have conducted, the methods they have followed, and what they have found. In their rationale or justification for their research (what remains to be done), they use the present tense. They also use the present tense to introduce their study (in Sample 3, "Here we report . . .") and to explain the significance of their study (In Sample 3, This reprogramming . . . "provides a scalable cell source for. . ."). Reporting new findings about the reasons for increasing economic homogamy among spouses Gonalons-Pons, Pilar, and Christine R. Schwartz. "Trends in Economic Homogamy: Changes in Assortative Mating or the Division of Labor in Marriage?" Demography, vol. 54, no. 3, 2017, pp. 985-1005. Analyzing underground pulp fiction publications in Tanzania, this article makes an argument about the cultural significance of those publications Emily Callaci. "Street Textuality: Socialism, Masculinity, and Urban Belonging in Tanzania's Pulp Fiction Publishing Industry, 1975-1985." Comparative Studies in Society and History, vol. 59, no. 1, 2017, pp. 183-210. Reporting a new method for reprogramming adult mouse fibroblasts into induced cardiac progenitor cells Lalit, Pratik A., Max R. Salick, Daryl O. Nelson, Jayne M. Squirrell, Christina M. Shafer, Neel G. Patel, Imaan Saeed, Eric G. Schmuck, Yogananda S. Markandeya, Rachel Wong, Martin R. Lea, Kevin W. Eliceiri, Timothy A. Hacker, Wendy C. Crone, Michael Kyba, Daniel J. Garry, Ron Stewart, James A. Thomson, Karen M. Downs, Gary E. Lyons, and Timothy J. Kamp. "Lineage Reprogramming of Fibroblasts into Proliferative Induced Cardiac Progenitor Cells by Defined Factors." Cell Stem Cell, vol. 18, 2016, pp. 354-367. Note: This journal calls this paragraph at the beginning of the article a "Summary," rather than an "Abstract." This journal provides multiple ways for readers to grasp the content of this research article quickly. In addition to this paragraph-length prose summary, this article also has an effective graphical abstract, a bulleted list of highlights list at the beginning of the article, and a two-sentence "In Brief" summary. Reporting results about the effectiveness of antibiotic therapy in managing acute bacterial sinusitis, from a rigorously controlled study Note: This journal requires authors to organize their abstract into four specific sections, with strict word limits. Because the headings for this structured abstract are self-explanatory, we have chosen not to add annotations to this sample abstract. Wald, Ellen R., David Nash, and Jens Eickhoff. "Effectiveness of Amoxicillin/Clavulanate Potassium in the Treatment of Acute Bacterial Sinusitis in Children." Pediatrics, vol. 124, no. 1, 2009, pp. 9-15. Abstract "OBJECTIVE: The role of antibiotic therapy in managing acute bacterial sinusitis (ABS) in children is controversial. The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of high-dose amoxicillin/potassium clavulanate in the treatment of children diagnosed with ABS. METHODS: This was a randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled study. Children 1 to 10 years of age with a clinical presentation compatible with ABS were eligible for participation. Patients were stratified according to age (