

# ABSTRACT WRITING

Francis Bacon once said, "*reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; but writing an exact man*"



# REASONS FOR NOT WRITING

- ◆ **Difficulty knowing *where* to start**
- ◆ **Not knowing *how* to start**
- ◆ **Anxiety about *writing* skills**
- ◆ **Lack of confidence**



# WHAT IS AN ABSTRACT ???

- ◆ **An abstract is a very concise statement of the major elements of your research project. It states the purpose, methods, and findings of your research project.**
- ◆ **An abstract is a condensed version of a full scientific paper.**



## Contd...

- ◆ **Length:** between 150 and 250 words.
- ◆ **Layout:** usually one single paragraph; font size is different from the main text.
- ◆ **Position:** usually at the beginning of the paper (but it can appear elsewhere, e.g. in book of abstracts or on-line).





### **Descriptive abstracts**

A descriptive abstract indicates the type of information found in the work. It makes no judgments about the work, nor does it provide results or conclusions of the research. It does incorporate key words found in the text and may include the purpose, methods, and scope of the research. Essentially, the descriptive abstract describes the work being abstracted. Some people consider it an outline of the work, rather than a summary. Descriptive abstracts are usually very short—100 words or less.

### **Informative abstracts**

The majority of abstracts are informative. While they still do not critique or evaluate a work, they do more than describe it. A good informative abstract acts as a surrogate for the work itself. That is, the writer presents and explains all the main arguments and the important results and evidence in the complete article/paper/book. An informative abstract includes the information that can be found in a descriptive abstract (purpose, methods, scope) but also includes the results and conclusions of the research and the recommendations of the author. The length varies according to discipline, but an informative abstract is rarely more than 10% of the length of the entire work. In the case of a longer work, it may be much less.

# ABSTRACTS ARE NOT...

- ◆ **Not substitutes for the article and should not be cited as references**
- ◆ **Not a summary of the entire article; should present main finding**
- ◆ **Do not contain enough information for a critical evaluation of the research**
- ◆ **Not fully peer-reviewed; up to 60% are never followed by a complete scientific article**




# CHARACTERISTICS OF AN ABSTRACT

- ◆ **Accurate, coherent, and readable**
- ◆ **Concise, specific, and selective**
- ◆ **Self-contained, i.e, stand alone**
  - Complete and internally consistent
  - No references
  - No tables or figures
  - No or few abbreviations (must be defined)
  - Conclusions should be based on data/info presented within the abstract



# WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF ABSTRACT ?

- ◆ **Introduce** journal articles
  - ◆ **Inform readers** about the article content
  - ◆ **Help readers to decide** whether or not to read the article
  - ◆ **Overview** conference programs, abstract collections and book chapters
- 

# WHY SHOULD I KNOW HOW TO WRITE ABSTRACT ???

- ❑ Helps you **present** complex information in a clear, concise manner
- ❑ Helps you **read** abstracts more effectively
- ❑ Helps you **conduct** research
- ❑ Helps you **write** abstracts for future publications
- ❑ Helps you **condense** report information into a short format for database searches





# FOUR C's OF ABSTRACT WRITING

- ❖ **Complete** — it covers the major parts of the project/case
- ❖ **Concise** — it contains no excess wordiness or unnecessary information.
- ❖ **Clear** — it is readable, well organized, and not too jargon-laden.
- ❖ **Cohesive** — it flows smoothly between the parts.





# QUALITIES OF AN EFFECTIVE ABSTRACT

- 
- Are one or more well-developed paragraphs, which are unified, coherent, concise, and able to stand alone (200-300 words)
  - Use an introduction-body-conclusion structure in which the parts of the report are discussed in order: purpose, research questions, methods, findings, conclusions, recommendations
  - Follow strictly the chronology of the report
  - Add no new information - merely summarizes report
  - Contain stand-alone qualities - the abstract can be understood without reading the paper
  - Are intelligible to a wide audience
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# CONTENTS OF AN ABSTRACT

- ◆ Define purpose and scope of study, ie, the question

## **Introduction**

- ◆ Describe materials and methods used

## **Materials and Methods**

- ◆ Summarize the results

## **Results**

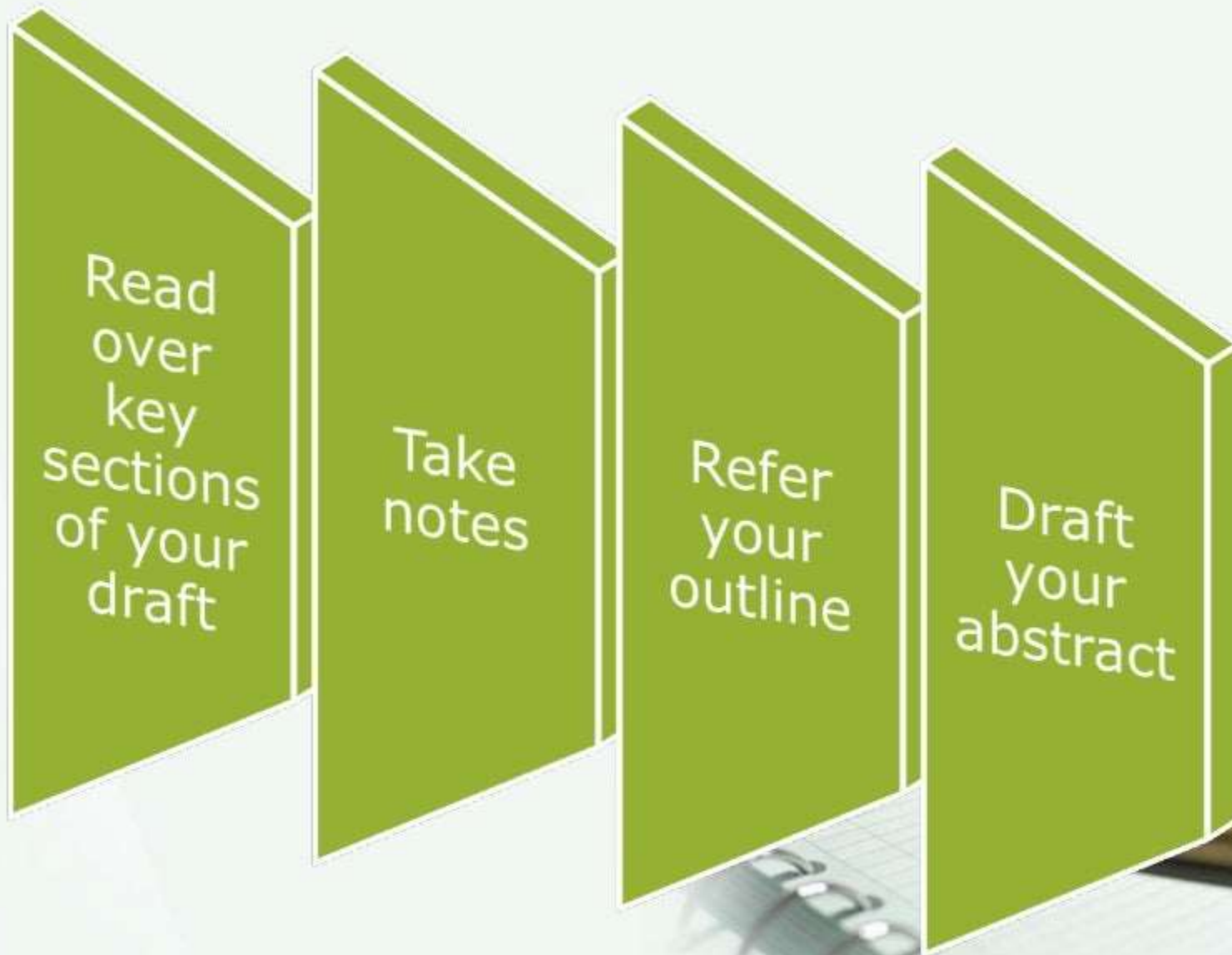
- ◆ State the conclusions and their implications

## **Discussion**





# HOW TO WRITE AN ABSTRACT ???




## Contd...

Remember that an abstract typically contains: **topic, research question, methods, results and conclusion.**




Read your paper in its entirety: keep the above categories in mind and **underline the key points** as you read.



After you finish reading, **create your abstract step-by-step** based on your underlined material.

# WRITING THE PARTS OF AN ABSTRACT

## STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS:

1. Write **1-2 introduction sentences** that explain topic, purpose, and research question(s).
  2. Write **1-2 sentences describing your research methods** (this may also include the type of data analysis you used).
  3. Write **1-2 sentences describing the results / findings.**
  4. Write **1-2 sentences containing your conclusions and recommendations.**
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# WHAT TO INCLUDE ???

## ◆ To put it simple:

- What the author did?
- How the author did it?
- What the author found?
- What the author concluded?



# WHAT NOT TO INCLUDE ???

- ◆ **Information not contained in the original work**
- ◆ **References to other work**
- ◆ **Quotations from the original work or from other works**
- ◆ **Lengthy explanations of words and concepts**
- ◆ **Unexplained acronyms or abbreviations**
- ◆ **Tables and maps**






# REVISING THE ABSTRACT

- **Read your abstract all the way through:**
  - add transition words to tie ideas together,
  - eliminate unnecessary content and add in things that are missing,
  - correct errors in mechanics, and proofread.



# PRIOR TO SUBMISSION

## CHECK YOURSELF DID YOU:

- **Follow the instructions!!!!**
  - **Include headings *exactly as stated* in the instructions/template?**
  - **Use short, clear sentences; one idea per sentence?**
  - **Limit your abstract to the word count/character count requirement?**
  - **Edit, edit, edit**
  - **Check grammar, syntax and punctuation**
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- A fountain pen with a wooden barrel and a silver nib is lying on a piece of white lined paper. To the left of the pen, a silver stapler is partially visible, also resting on the paper. The background is a soft-focus image of a desk.

# WHY ABSTRACTS ARE NOT ACCEPTED?

**Most common deficiencies encountered (in order of frequency):**

- Poor presentation**
- Weak discussion**
- Lack of originality**
- Poor methods**
- Inappropriate statistical analysis**
- Inadequate results**





# HOW TO IMPROVE ???

- ◆ **Writing is an art, you can learn**
- ◆ **Read published manuscript and abstract carefully in major journals and focus on detail**
- ◆ **Practice; practice; practice**
- ◆ **Get help from your mentors and colleagues**
- ◆ **Attend classes in writing skills/read books**
- ◆ **Make the abstract the best part of the article**
- ◆ **Make sure it stands alone**
- ◆ **Double check every piece of data**

# SOME WRITING TIPS

- ❖ **Active voice is preferable to passive voice**

- ❖ "We studied 15 patients with ARDS." is much better than "Fifteen patients with ARDS were studied."

- ❖ **Always use the full term before you refer to it by acronym [for example, Orthotopic Liver Transplantation (OLT)]**

- ❖ **Write only one thought per sentence.**


- ❖ **Eliminate unnecessary words**

- ❖ **Ensure that verb tenses are consistent and correct**





# MAKE THE ABSTRACT EASY TO READ

- **Do not use abbreviations without first defining them.**
  - **Don't omit articles or other little words in an effort to save space.**
  - **Avoid jargon.**
  - **Write in the third person singular.**
  - **Use active verbs rather than passive verbs.**
  - **Use short sentences, but vary sentence structure so that the abstract doesn't sound choppy.**
  - **Use complete sentences.**
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# CLOSING THOUGHTS

Faraday once said, **“Work; finish; publish”**



Handwritten text in cursive script, possibly reading "The End of the World".

