Writing an abstract

What is an abstract? An abstract is a short, non-evaluative, information-dense summary of the contents and purpose of a paper. This summary must be able to stand alone since it may be the only part of the work a reader sees. You may be asked to write an abstract as part of your assignment. Although your abstract is placed in the first section of your assignment, it is best written last. Follow this academic style and format:

1. Format

   • Place the abstract on its own page immediately after the title page and before your paper
   • Use the heading Abstract – centred, top of the page, title case
   • Write a SINGLE paragraph
   • Left align with no indent
   • Double spaced your text
   • Write less than 250 words, depending on the length of the work which follows (no more than than 10% of the total word count of the work)
   • Use a clear, direct writing style that employs short sentences and key words and phrases that quickly identify the content and focus of the work.

2. Read an example

   Abstract

   This study examined the opinions of influential, authoritative employees from the education and legal systems, regarding their perceptions of the role of the law and cyberbullying in Australian schools. Participants were asked whether they thought a specific law for cyberbullying should be introduced, what particular behaviours, if any, should be criminalised and who should be involved. Participants were located across three Australian States. Thematic analysis was used to identify eight main themes within the data, namely (1) uses of the law in general, (2) introduction of a law for cyberbullying, (3) benefits and difficulties of criminalising cyberbullying for young people, (4) conditions for a cyberbullying law for young people, (5) who should be involved in a cyberbullying law, (6) legal sanctions thought to be appropriate, (7) educational and legal solutions and (8) educational interventions for student cyberbullying. Implications include increasing the awareness of how existing legislative responses can be used as deterrents, when working towards more effective cooperation of education and legal systems.

   Acknowledgement of sample abstract (not required as you are the writer)


   1 Title case

   The first word and first word after a colon, and all MAJOR WORDS are capitalised. Use lower case for words of less than 3 letters EXCEPT after a colon. Use title case for titles of journals, magazines and newspapers.
3. Follow the steps

Analysis of example

Abstract
This study examined the opinions of influential, authoritative employees from the education and legal systems, regarding their perceptions of the role of the law and cyberbullying in Australian schools.

1. state the problem

Participants were asked whether they thought a specific law for cyberbullying should be introduced, what particular behaviours, if any, should be criminalised and who should be involved.

2. say why it is under investigation

Participants were located across three Australian States.

3. describe participants and their characteristics

Thematic analysis was used to identify eight main themes within the data, namely (1) uses of the law in general, (2) introduction of a law for cyberbullying, (3) benefits and difficulties of criminalising cyberbullying for young people, (4) conditions for a cyberbullying law for young people, (5) who should be involved in a cyberbullying law, (6) legal sanctions thought to be appropriate, (7) educational and legal solutions and (8) educational interventions for student cyberbullying.

4. give a brief overview of what was done

Implications include increasing the awareness of how existing legislative responses can be used as deterrents, when working towards more effective cooperation of education and legal systems.

5. discuss the main result/findings and consider what the result indicates

CAN ABSTRACTS BE A REFERENCE SOURCE?

- It is preferable that you locate and cite the article itself.
- An abstract can be cited if that is your only available source.
- The reference is the same as for a journal article. Cite the author and date in-text. Place the descriptor [Abstract] after the title.
- If you did not locate the article itself, place Abstract retrieved from URL

Example

In-text: Young et al. (2016)

References