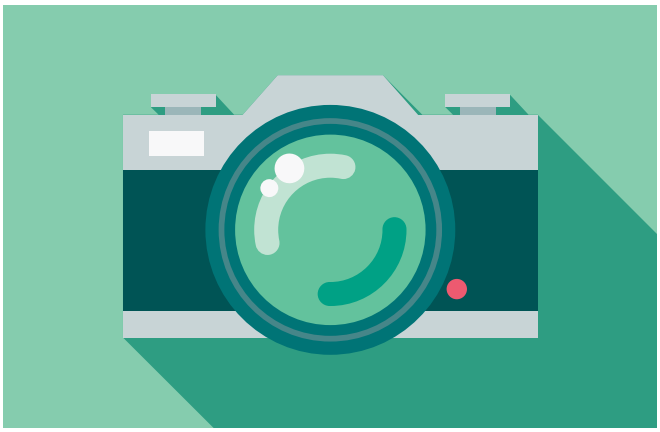
APA STYLE 7th edition

Reading and Understanding Abstracts

Abstracts are short summaries of scientific research articles. This guide will explain how understanding them not only saves time but also helps you conduct better research and write more effectively.

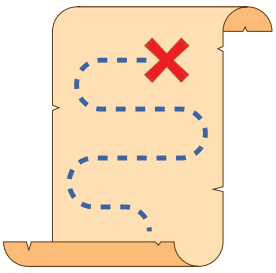
Abstracts Are Snapshots

Abstracts provide a snapshot of a study. Typically, they appear at the beginning of an article and in database search results. Abstracts address the purpose, method, results or findings, and discussion or conclusions in one paragraph of about 250 words. Everything in the abstract will be explained in more detail in the article—and ideally, nothing of great importance in an article will be omitted from the abstract. Reading an abstract is like reading a study guide: It doesn't cover everything, but it prepares you to explore further.



Reading Abstracts Benefits Your Learning

Abstracts are usually a student's first point of contact with professional scientific research. Although reading a whole article can be daunting, reading an abstract is much simpler and the benefits to your learning are direct. Here are some ways reading abstracts helps you learn:



Finding sources quickly
Quickly determine whether articles will be useful



Gaining knowledge
Learn about a new topic by reading abstracts



Writing your own abstracts
Follow the structure of effective abstracts to write your own

Analyze a Sample Abstract

Abstracts follow the same order as the article: introduction, Method, Results, and Discussion or Conclusion. Sometimes the sections of an abstract are even labeled (this is called a *structured abstract*).

Check out the following annotated sample abstract.

Sample abstract sentences	Section	Purpose
Most people agree that romantic relationships greatly affect how we feel. For example, we typically feel happier when getting married but sadder when breaking up. However, previous research primarily focused on changes in cognitive well-being but less so affective well-being around positive and negative relationship events. Set-point theory suggests that subjective well-being might change shortly around such experiences but bounce back in the long run.	Introduction	To introduce the topic and explain why the research is important
Using data from the Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP) study, we examined changes in life satisfaction, happiness, sadness, anxiety, and anger in the 5 years before and 5 years after moving in with a partner (N = 4,399), marriage (N = 3,731), separation (N = 3,538), and divorce (N = 1,103).	Method	To describe how the authors conducted the research, with relevant details about participants and variables examined
Life satisfaction and happiness increased slightly in the years before moving in and marriage. For marriage, these effects were short-lived and diminished after 1 year. Separation and divorce were associated with much larger well-being impairments (especially a strong increase of sadness) that were most pronounced shortly before and after the event and attenuated in the following years. Changes in anxiety and anger were much smaller.	Results or Findings	To describe what the authors found
Our findings suggest that romantic relationship events relate to not only substantial changes in life satisfaction but also affective well-being. These changes vary for different well-being facets, are most pronounced for happiness and sadness at the time of the event, and bounce back in the long run. As one of the first studies on this topic, we demonstrate that set-point theory applies to not only cognitive well-being but also affective well-being around romantic relationship events.	Discussion or Conclusion	To interpret the results, draw conclusions, describe implications for the real world and future research

Continuing Your Journey

Use this template to analyze other abstracts as well as to write your own.

Reading and understanding abstracts will help you enter the world of academic research, make informed decisions about what research is worth your time and effort to read in full, and prepare you to write your own abstracts.



Abstract credit:
Adapted from "Changes in Happiness, Sadness, Anxiety, and Anger Around Romantic Relationship Events," by E. Asselmann and J. Specht, 2023, *Emotion*, *23*(4), pp. 986–996. (https://doi.org/10.1037/emo0001153). Copyright 2023 by the American Psychological Association.

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More information on APA Style can be found in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th ed.) and the *Concise Guide to APA Style* (7th ed.).

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