

How to write Abstract

Basically, an abstract comprises a one-paragraph summary of the whole paper. Abstracts have become increasingly important, as electronic publication databases are the primary means of finding research reports in a certain subject area today. So everything relevant to potential readers should be in the abstract, everything else not. According to, there are two basic types of abstract:

– **An informative abstract** extracts everything relevant from the paper, such as primary research objectives addressed, methods employed in solving the problems, results obtained, and conclusions drawn. Such abstracts may serve as a highly aggregated substitute for the full paper.

– On the other hand, an **indicative or descriptive abstract** rather describes the content of the paper and may thus serve as an outline of what is presented in the paper. This kind of abstract cannot serve as a substitute for the full text.

A checklist defining relevant parts of an abstract is proposed in, whereas the author suggests each part to be packed into one sentence:

1. Motivation: Why do we care about the problem and the results?
2. Problem Statement: What problem is the paper trying to solve and what is the scope of the work?
3. Approach: What was done to solve the problem?
4. Results: What is the answer to the problem?
5. Conclusions: What implications does the answer imply?

Also, there are some things that should not be included in an abstract, i.e. information and conclusions not stated in the paper, references to other literature, the exact title phrase, and illustrative elements such as tables and figures.

How to write title

The dissertation title is your first opportunity to let the reader know what your dissertation is about. With just a few words, the title has to highlight the purpose of the study, which can often include its context, outcomes, and important aspects of the research strategy adopted. But a poorly constructed title can also mislead the reader into thinking the study is about something it is not, confusing them from the very start.

Expectations (What readers expect from a dissertation title)

There are a number of broad rules to think about when constructing your title. Titles should be (a) descriptive and explanatory, not general, (b) precise, and (c) internally consistent. In addition, titles should avoid using (a) abbreviations, acronyms and initials, or (b) a teasing or cute style. These do's and don'ts are briefly explained below:

Descriptive and explanatory, not general

Each word of your dissertation title carries mean; that is, it helps the reader to understand the core focus of your dissertation. It should not be general, but rather descriptive and explanatory in nature. Broadly, the title may help to explain some of the following:

- The purpose of the research
- The theory (or theories) that underpinned your research
- What variables you examined (or tested)
- Your research design (qualitative, quantitative, mixed)
- The methodology adopted
- The context and/or population studied

Precise

Being precise does not simply mean not waffling. Whilst it would be wrong to say that a dissertation title should be short, it should be concise; that is, you should try and explain what the nature of your research is in fewest words possible. A good starting point is to use simple word orders, as well as common word combinations. For example:

You could say	But it would be better to say
The motivation of employees	Stress in the workplace
Users of Facebook	Facebook users
Stress in the workplace	Workplace stress

Internally consistent

A title can be descriptive, explanatory, and even precise, but fail because it does not reflect what the research is about. In this respect, titles fail to be internally consistent when they make the reader think that the research is about one thing, when it is really about another. For example,

imagine you included the methodological approach adopted in your title, stating that you used a "case study approach". The reader would expect to see in your Abstract, Introduction and Research Strategy chapters (amongst others) the words "case study approach". Whilst this seems obvious, it is surprising how many students are either inconsistent, or confuse the reader by using terms interchangeably. This is a problem even amongst academics, but it is easily addressed. Simply check that each component of your title reflects the research you performed. Being consistent with the language you use in the title and the rest of the dissertation is a good start.

A title should also avoid using:

Abbreviations, acronyms and initials

Leave the use of any abbreviations, acronyms and/or initials to the main body of the dissertation. In the title, such abbreviations, acronyms and/or initials could lead to confusion, as well as have different meanings for different people. In the main body of the dissertation, there is time to clarify any such abbreviations, acronyms and/or initials.

A teasing or cute style

A teasing or cute style of title can be great. It certainly sparks interest. The examples below illustrate this:

Dancing with a giant: The effect of Wal-Mart's entry into the United Kingdom in the performance of European retailers

Dogs on the street, puma on your feet: How cues in the environment influence product evaluation and choice

Something old, something new: A longitudinal study of search behavior and new product introduction

Things that go bump in the mind: How behavioral economics could invigorate marketing

However, sometimes a teasing or cute title style can be confusing and makes it harder for the reader to understand the nature of the dissertation before reading your abstract.

Learning (What the reader learns from a dissertation title)

The person reading your dissertation should be able to understand the core principles and focus of your research just from reading the dissertation title. This is because each word of your dissertation title carries meaning. Understanding this skill is important not only in creating your own dissertation title, but being able to rapidly search the literature for useful articles to support your own work. This section de-constructs two existing titles to illustrate some of the things that can be learnt from titles.

Dissertation titles are made up of a number of components. Each of these components tells the reader something about your research. Think of a component as a single word (or just 2-3 words) that convey something meaningful about your research. This may be the focus of your research, the main theory or theories adopted, your chosen methodology, research design or methods, the population that you studied, where the research was conducted, what variables you used, and so forth. The purpose of this section is to illustrate the main components of some existing titles to research papers so that you can understand what the reader is able to learn from a dissertation title.

The two main parts of these titles are the **area of interest** (and **focus**) of the research, which we group together, and the **methodological components** that the researchers want to draw attention to. Looking at these titles again, we've put the area of interest (and focus) in **blue** and the methodological components in **green**.

Barriers to Internet banking adoption: A qualitative study among corporate customers in Thailand

Problems with partnerships **at work:** Lessons **from an Irish case study**

There are a wide range of components that can be used in a dissertation title, you will only need to choose those that are most appropriate for your research; that is, those components that capture the essence of your research.

Your area of interest and the focus of your research

All dissertation titles should include is the purpose of the research. When you think about how to explain this in a dissertation title, it may help to think about the purpose of your research in two ways: (a) your area of interest; and (b) the focus of your research.

Your area of interest is the broader theme or topic that your dissertation addresses, whilst the focus is the particular angle or aspect of that theme or topic that you are tackling. In some cases, the area of interest will be a theory (or theories) that underpin your research. In the example titles below, we illustrate the **areas of interest** in **blue text** and the **focus** in **green text**.

Barriers to Internet banking adoption: A qualitative study among corporate customers in Thailand

Problems with **partnerships** at work: Lessons from an Irish case study

The direct marketing-direct consumer **gap:** Qualitative insights

Success factors for **destination marketing web sites:** A qualitative meta-analysis

Networking as marketing strategy: A case study of small community businesses

Mentoring women faculty: An instrumental case study of strategic collaboration

Consequences of the psychological contract for the employment relationship: A large scale survey

The dynamic nature of conflict: A longitudinal study of intragroup conflict and group performance

Sometimes an *area of interest* is sufficiently narrow that you do not need to distinguish between this and a particular *focus* within that area. Areas of interest remain in blue text.

Organizational knowledge leadership: A grounded theory approach

Organisational citizenship behaviour of contingent workers in Singapore

In other cases, you may feel that the particular *focus* of an *area of interest* is not amongst the most important aspects of your research. Since you have a limited word count for titles, perhaps you consider another component (e.g., some part of the research strategy) to be more important. As a result, you could choose to include only the area of interest in your dissertation title [see blue text].

An empirical investigation of signalling in the motion picture industry

Furthermore, you may have *multiple areas of interest*, which either provide greater *overall* focus for your dissertation title or make it impractical to also include the particular *focuses* for each of these. Alternately, your *focus* may be sufficiently narrow and recognizable that you do not need to include the broader *area of interest*. Either of these explanations *could* have been the case in the following titles. We highlight the *potential area of interest or focus* in red text.

Business corruption, public sector corruption, and growth rate: Time series analysis using Korean data

Corporate governance, ownership and bank performance in emerging markets: Evidence from Russia and Ukraine

High-involvement work practices, turnover and productivity: Evidence from New Zealand

Business networks, corporate governance and contracting in the mutual fund industry

You may be looking at some of these examples and thinking: Why is that word (e.g., contingent workers) or that word (e.g., motion picture industry) *not* the focus or area of interest? If so, please read on. We use many of the same examples to illustrate the different components you may want to include in your dissertation title. Therefore, you will see why we characterise some of these words under different headings.

The outcome(s) of your research

Whether your dissertation is theoretically or empirically driven, or some combination of the two, sometimes you will also have a practical component to your dissertation; that is, you want to draw attention to particular outcomes that you feel are particularly important. It may be that these outcomes are just one aspect of your dissertation or they may be more fundamental, reflecting the way that the study was design. Take the following two example outcomes. The **area of interest** remains in **blue text**, whilst the **focus** remains in **green text**. The **outcomes** are highlighted in **orange text**.

Problems with **partnerships** at work: **Lessons** from an Irish case study

The above example *focuses* on the *problems* associated with *partnerships*, which is the *area of interest*. However, the authors also want to draw attention to the fact that the research provides *lessons* that can be learnt to address such problems. These *lessons* are the *outcome*. However, these *lessons* are clearly just one aspect of the research, since it also *focuses* on the *problems* associated with *partnerships*.

Implementation of **Deming's style** of **quality management**: An action research in a plastics company

The above example reflects research interested in *quality management*, the *area of interest*. Within this area of *quality management*, the authors *focus* on *Deming's style* of quality management. However, the authors want to draw attention to a particular *outcome* of the research, which is the *implementation* of Deming's style of quality management. The use of the word *implementation* highlights the practical aspect and outcome that the research attempts to achieve. The authors emphasize this further in the title by identifying the *research methodology* that guided the research, namely *action research*, which is known for its practical goals. Therefore, unlike the first example, where the outcome was just one aspect of the research,

this second example highlights how to use a title to emphasize research that has a much more *practical outcome*.

Important components of your research strategy

There are a number of components to the *research strategy* that you select to guide your dissertation. These components include things like your chosen: (a) research design; (b) research methodology; (c) approach within a research methodology; (d) research method(s); (e) use of longitudinal data; (f) sampling strategy; and (g) data analysis techniques.

In some cases, since your chosen *research strategy* includes so many components, your dissertation title should only include those components that were particularly important to your study. These **components of research strategy** are highlighted **blue text**.

Research design

To illustrate the *research design* that was used, whether *qualitative*, *quantitative* or *mixed methods* (or other words that mean more or less the same thing):

Qualitative research design

Barriers to Internet banking adoption: A **qualitative study** among corporate customers in Thailand

The direct marketing-direct consumer gap: **Qualitative insights**

The impact of market and organizational challenges on marketing strategy decision-making:
A **qualitative investigation** of the business-to-business sector

Success factors for destination marketing web sites: A **qualitative meta-analysis**

Quantitative research design

An empirical investigation of signalling in the motion picture industry

A quantitative method for structuring a profitable sales force

An empirical analysis of price discrimination mechanisms and retailer profitability

Mixed methods research design

A multimethod examination of the benefits and detriments of intragroup conflict

Research methodology

To illustrate the research methodology adopted:

Implementation of Deming's style of quality management: An *action research* in a plastics company

Organisational knowledge leadership: A *grounded theory approach*

Networking as marketing strategy: A *case study* of small community businesses

The impact of pay-for-performance on professional boundaries in UK general practice:
An *ethnographic study*

Approach within a research methodology

To emphasise an *approach* within a broader *research methodology*. We used the word *approach* because some *research methodologies* are not straightforward, but can be approached from a number of different angles; that is, there are different approaches that can be adopted within these research methodologies (e.g., *instrumental, exploratory* and *comparative* approaches within *case study research*):

Mentoring women faculty: An instrumental case study of strategic collaboration

Knowledge management in practice: An exploratory case study

International strategic human resource management: A comparative case analysis of Spanish firms in China

Research method(s)

To highlight a particular *research method(s)* that was used:

Consequences of the psychological contract for the employment relationship: A large scale survey

Eliciting knowledge management research themes and issues: Results from a focus group study

Stream restoration in the Pacific Northwest: Analysis of interviews with project managers

Use of longitudinal data

To emphasise that the data you used extends over a number of years (*use of longitudinal data*) or the study was conducted over a long time period (although only the former is likely to apply to dissertation research, since this is usually only a few months long):

Effects of impression management on performance ratings: A longitudinal study

The dynamic nature of conflict: A longitudinal study of intragroup conflict and group performance

Sampling strategy

To highlight some aspect of your *sampling strategy* (i.e., the *situated nature of your study*):

A country, group of countries or region

High-involvement work practices, turnover and productivity: Evidence from New Zealand

Organisational citizenship behaviour of contingent workers in Singapore

Corporate governance in Scandinavia: Comparing networks and formal institutions

Corporate governance, ownership and bank performance in emerging markets: Evidence from Russia and Ukraine

An industry

Business networks, corporate governance and contracting in the mutual fund industry

Accelerating adaptive processes: Product innovation in the global computer industry

A type of organization

Hybrid organizational arrangements and their implications for firm growth and survival: A study of new franchisors

A group or committee

Earnings management and corporate governance: The role of the board and the audit committee

People

Toward a better understanding of the psychological contract breach: A study of customer service employees

Data analysis techniques

To emphasise a particular *data analysis technique* used:

Do their words really matter? Thematic analysis of U.S. and Latin American CEO letters

Academics as professionals or managers? A textual analysis of interview data

The role of rhetoric content in charismatic leadership: A content analysis of Singaporean leader's speeches

Business corruption, public sector corruption, and growth rate: Time series analysis using Korean data

Marketing international tourism to Australia: A regression analysis

Now that you have a sense of these different components, it is time to think about creating your dissertation title. When you have done this, you need to think about the style of your title. Since dissertation titles often follow a specific written style (e.g., APA style, MLA style, AMA style, etc.), which explains when to capitalize words, which words to capitalize, how to deal with quotation marks, abbreviations, numbers, and so forth.

American Psychological Association (APA) style, 6th edition

To our knowledge, the APA style does not distinguish between titles for articles as a whole and dissertations. As such, we have based this style guide on the requirements for titles set out by the APA style guide, 6th edition. The main considerations when writing your dissertation title from a style perspective are: (a) capitalisation in titles and subtitles; (b) quotation marks; (c) numbers; and (d) hyphenated compounds. Each of these considerations is present below with associated examples:

Capitalisation in titles and subtitles

The first letter of a title and subtitle should be capitalised. A subtitle should be separated using a colon or em dash (i.e., — and not the shorter - en dash) and then a single space (i.e., Title: Subtitle OR Title — Subtitle). If a subtitle follows a title that ends with a question mark, a colon should not follow the colon (i.e. Title? Subtitle NOT Title?: Subtitle) **[examples in bold below]**.

Many Forms of Culture

Children Reason About Shared Preferences

Leadership: Why Gender and Culture Matter

Change Over Time in Obedience: The Jury's Still Out, But It Might Be Decreasing

What Makes a Good Team Player? Personality and Team Effectiveness

Does the Stepladder Technique Improve Group Decision Making? A Series of Failed Replications

Do not capitalise **articles** (i.e., a, an, the) unless they are the first letter of a title or subtitle **[bold below]**:

What Makes **a** Good Team Player? Personality and Team Effectiveness

Inferring **the** Outcome of **an** Ongoing Novel Action at 13 Months

Do not capitalise **prepositions** that have three or fewer letters (e.g., as, at, by, in, of, off, on, to, up) **[bold below]**:

Women and Women **of** Color **in** Leadership: Complexity, Identity, and Intersectionality

Sensitivity **of** 24-Month-Olds **to** the Prior Inaccuracy of the Source: Possible Mechanisms

Do not capitalise **conjunctions**, whether **coordinating conjunctions** (e.g., and, but, or, for, nor) or **subordinating conjunctions** (e.g., because, as, since) **[bold below]**:

Women **and** Women of Color in Leadership: Complexity, Identity, **and** Intersectionality

Follow-Up Outcome in Short-Term Group Therapy **for** Complicated Grief

All **adjectives, adverbs, nouns, pronouns, and verbs** should be capitalized, in addition to all words that have four letters or more.

Quotation marks

If quotations marks are used in a title, they should be double (i.e., "..."), not single (i.e., '...'):

Preschoolers Infer Ownership From "Control of Permission"

"If You Wrong Us, Shall We Not Revenge?" Social Identity Salience Moderates Support for Retaliation in Response to Collective Threat

Numbers

APA includes quite a number of rules regarding the use of numbers. The following examples are based on the assumption that the rules for using numbers in-text are the same for titles. Whilst it would be worth referring to Chapter 4 of the Concise Rules of APA Style, 6th edition, for more information, we can say that:

Numerals should be used for:

- (a) numbers of 10 or more (e.g., 10, 25, 43)
- (b) ages (e.g. 24-Months-Old), dates (e.g., 13 June 2009), exact sums of money (e.g., \$24.95), scores or points on a scale (e.g., a 5-Point Likert scale), and time (e.g., 1 hr 26 min)

Inferring the Outcome of an Ongoing Novel Action at **13 Months**

Sensitivity of **24-Month-Olds** to the Prior Inaccuracy of the Source: Possible Mechanisms

Numbers should be spelt out when they are:

- (a) numbers that start a title
- (b) numbers under 10 (e.g., three, five, seven)
- (c) common fractions (e.g., two-thirds)

A **Two-Dimensional** Model of Intergroup Leadership: The Case of National Diversity

Identifying **Two** Potential Mechanisms for Changes in Alcohol Use Among College-Attending and Non-College-Attending Emerging Adults

Hyphenated compounds

When hyphenated compounds capitalised in titles, both words should be capitalised (compared with just the first word in reference lists, for example) [**bold below**]:

Working Memory Span Development: A **Time-Based Resource-Sharing** Model Account

Gene-Environment Interactions Across Development: Exploring DRD2 Genotype and Prenatal Smoking Effects on**Self-Regulation**

Identifying Two Potential Mechanisms for Changes in Alcohol Use Among College-Attending and Non-College-Attending Emerging Adults

Co-Leader Similarity and Group Climate in Group Interventions: Testing the **Co-Leadership, Team Cognition-Team Diversity** Model

Follow-Up Outcome in **Short-Term** Group Therapy for Complicated Grief