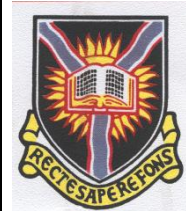


THE ABSTRACT – Journal Articles



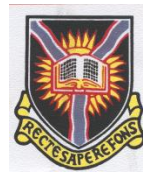
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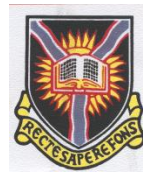
Definition

- What is an abstract
 - It is a brief summary of
 - a research article
 - Thesis
 - Review
 - In-depth analysis of a particular subject or discipline
- Used by the reader to quickly ascertain the paper's purpose



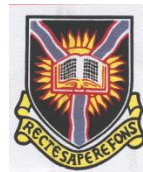
Purpose of an Abstract

- It should be comprehensible alone, even if the entire article is not available
- It is used by many organizations as the basis of selection
- Most literature database search engines index only abstracts (Full paper: payment or membership)
- Index articles for quick recovery and cross-referencing



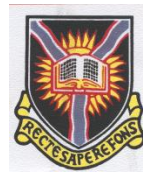
Goal of an Abstract

- The basis of readers choosing to purchase or read a full article
- Helps readers or researchers remember key findings on a topic
- Helps readers understand the text by outlining key points prior to reading the full text
- *Therefore, a tremendous skill is required in writing an abstract*



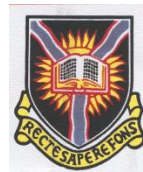
Limitations of an Abstract

- Protected under copyright law
- It does not contain the full details of the methodology, results, critical discussion
- It is not adequate for decision making by clinicians
- Not adequate for literature review for theses and dissertations



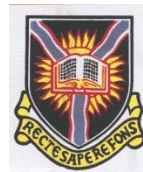
Questions the Abstract Should Answer

- Why did you do this study or project
- What did you do and how
- What did you find
- What did the findings mean
- *An abstract is written in the past tense*



The Message of the Abstract

- Why should I bother to read it? **Title**
- Why did you do it? **Introduction and Objectives**
- How did you do it? **Methods**
- What did you find? **Results**
- What does it mean? **Discussion**
- What should I do now? **Conclusion**



Helpful Tips for the Abstract

- Reread the article *with the goal of abstracting in mind*
- Look specifically for these main parts of the article
 - Purpose
 - Methods
 - Scope
 - Results
 - Conclusions, Recommendations



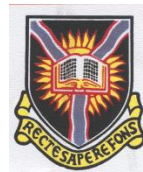
Helpful Tips for the Abstract

- Use headings and table of contents as a guide
- After rereading, write a draft without looking back at what you are abstracting
- Revise your draft, doing the following:
 - Drop unnecessary information
 - Eliminate wordiness
 - Correct grammar, construction
 - Check spelling, punctuation etc



The Building Blocks of the Abstract

- The Problem
- The Significance
- The Objective[s]
- Methods - What was done
- Results (incl. Statistics)
- Significance & Implication of the Results
- Conclusion, Key Words [MeSH]

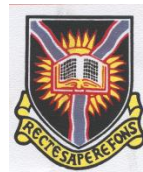


Formats of the Abstract

There are 2 main types

- Non-Structured (Narrative) Abstract
- Structured Abstract

Both types contain the same elements or building blocks



Structured Abstract

- The building blocks are presented in various formats under specific sub-headings
 - Background
 - Objective
 - Design
 - Setting
 - Materials, patients, participants
 - Main outcome measures
 - Results
 - Conclusion, keywords



Structured Abstract Examples

Int. J. Gynecol. Obstet.

- Background
- Methods
- Results
- Conclusions
- Keywords

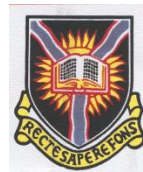
Ghana Med. J.

- *Called 'Summary'*
- Objective
- Design
- Setting
- Methods
- Results
- Conclusion
- Keywords



Abstract for New Device/ Technology

- The abstract for the above has 4 components:
 - Purpose: aim , rationale
 - Description: detailed description of new knowledge or technology and the methodology
 - Evaluation: detailed statistical analysis comparing it with existing knowledge on the topic
 - Conclusion: Sure statements based on the discovery made by the research

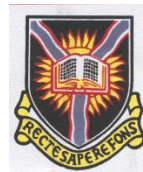


Exceptions to Abstracts

- The following do not require abstracts
 - Essay
 - Commentary
 - Letters to the editor
- The number of words is between 150 words (narrative) to 250 words (structured)
*****Consult the Journal***
- ***No references are listed in the abstract***

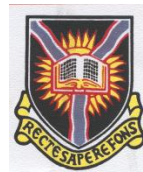
Tips and Warnings

- Embed *keywords* in the first 20 words of your abstract. This will make it visible to the major internet search engines if you publish on line (skills and experience required)
- Emphasize the information not the author unless he/she has *noteworthy credentials*
- Never introduce new knowledge into the abstract
- Read aloud to a colleague or a friend, make sure it sounds coherent and natural



Keywords

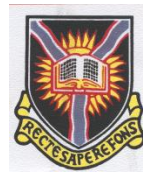
- Most journals require the inclusion of keywords as part of the manuscript submitted
- Keywords are *not any words*: they are MESH (MEdical Subject Heading) words
- They are listed by the indexing databases such as PubMed/Medline
- They are used to locate papers



Keywords Format

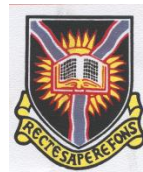
- The first letter of the word is in capitals and the words are separated by commas
- Example (BJA):

Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation, Clinical Competence, Medical Education, Patient Simulation



Conclusion

- In the 21st century the world has become very competitive
- Editors of biomedical journals are bombarded with numerous manuscripts everyday
- So *you must justify the selection of your article for publication*
- *This starts with the writing of a good abstract*



THANK YOU!

