
WRITING AN ABSTRACT

WHAT IS AN ABSTRACT?

In general, an abstract is a self-contained, short, powerful statement that describes a larger work.

WHAT IS NOT AN ABSTRACT?

An abstract is not a review or an introduction. It does not evaluate the work being abstracted. While it contains key words found in the larger work, the abstract is an original document rather than an excerpted passage.

WHY WRITE AN ABSTRACT?

- Selection: Abstracts allow readers who may be interested in a longer work to quickly decide whether it is worth their time to read it
- Indexing: Online databases use abstracts to index larger works

HOW DO I WRITE AN ABSTRACT?

- Components vary according to discipline:
 - APA ABSTRACT:
 - Placed on a separate page right after the title page
 - Includes the bolded, centered title of “**Abstract**”
 - Usually no longer than 250 words
 - Usually written for the social sciences or sciences
 - May contain the research problem, hypotheses, methods, results, and implications of the research
 - MLA ABSTRACT:
 - Not usually required so it’s important to ask your professor
 - Should be between 100-250 words or 5-7 sentences
 - Usually written for the humanities
 - May contain the thesis, background, and conclusion of the larger work
 - Descriptive abstracts, a form of MLA abstracts, are usually around 100 words with the goal of giving a very brief overview of the paper (summary) without going into any details, and are aimed at enticing the reader to read the paper
- All abstracts include:
 - The most important information first
 - The same type and style of language found in the original, including technical language

Schedule your online or in-person tutoring appointment today at Madonna.mywconline.com
Additional online resources can be found at www.madonna.edu/owl

- Key words and phrases that quickly identify the content and focus of the work
- Clear, concise, and powerful language
- Abstracts may include:
 - The thesis of the work, usually in the first sentence of the abstract
 - Background information that places the work in the larger body of literature
 - The same chronological structure as the original work
- Abstracts do not include:
 - Extensive reference to other works
 - Information not contained in the original work
 - Definition of key terms
- Tips for writing an abstract:
 - Avoid copying and pasting from your paper
 - Begin your abstract with a clear statement of your argument, your research problem, or thesis
 - Avoid ambiguous, lengthy, and complicated sentences
 - The last sentences should be about the conclusions that you arrived at in your paper
 - Make sure you read through to ensure that you have covered all the main points of the paper and that there isn't anything in the abstract that isn't discussed in the paper
 - Ask yourself questions about your paper: To write a thorough informative abstract, you should ask yourself various questions about the purpose and results of your work and make sure they are answered in the abstract

SAMPLE ABSTRACT IN APA FORMAT:

Gregg, M. (2021). Girlhood in the great outdoors. *Silicon Valley Sociological Review*, 19(1), 43-49.

<https://scholarcommons.scu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1016&context=svsr>

Women have historically been socialized to interact with the environment as caretakers or consumers, which has contrasted with men's role as an environmental conqueror. These roles have had an enduring effect on how girls have interacted with their identities and the available avenues for environmental activism. This paper investigates how those roles have manifested in two case studies: the Girl Scouts and VSCO girls. The Girl Scouts have historically focused on environmental service projects and teaching girls outdoors skills, and it uses cookie sales to fund these endeavors. VSCO girls embody an outdoorsy and sustainability inspired aesthetic and purport to "save the turtles," and VSCO girls must purchase environmentally sustainable products to enact their aesthetic both stylistically and environmentally. As gender roles have evolved, this research investigates the ways in which girlhood informs, enables, and limits these activists' environmental impact. By looking at the similarities and differences between an organization such as the Girl Scouts, which has enabled girls' environmental activism for over a century, and a modern community such as the VSCO girls, whose activism is intrinsically tied to the technology and society of today, this case study comparison seeks to understand how social constructions of girlhood have shaped and continue to shape girls' means of environmental activism.

Keywords: Girls Scouts, VSCO, outdoors, environment, sustainability, girlhood, activism

**Schedule your online or in-person tutoring appointment today at Madonna.mywonline.com
Additional online resources can be found at www.madonna.edu/owl**

SAMPLE ABSTRACT IN MLA FORMAT:

Buurma, Rachel Sagner, and Laura Heffernan. Abstract of "The Classroom in the Canon: T. S. Eliot's Modern English Literature Extension Course for Working People and *The Sacred Wood*." *PMLA*, vol. 133, no. 2, Mar. 2018, p. 463.

Literary critics have long imagined that T. S. Eliot's *The Sacred Wood* (1920) shaped the canon and methods of countless twentieth-century classrooms. This essay turns instead to the classroom that made *The Sacred Wood*: the Modern English Literature extension school tutorial that Eliot taught to working-class adults between 1916 and 1919. Contextualizing Eliot's tutorial within the extension school movement shows how the ethos and practices of the Workers' Educational Association shaped his teaching. Over the course of three years, Eliot and his students reimagined canonical literature as writing by working poets for working people—a model of literary history that fully informed his canon reformation in *The Sacred Wood*. This example demonstrates how attention to teaching changes the history of English literary study. It further reveals how all kinds of institutions, not just elite universities, have shaped the discipline's methods and canons.

SAMPLE DESCRIPTIVE ABSTRACT IN MLA FORMAT:

Freedman, Penelope. "Shakespeare and Gender." *Literature Compass*, vol. 1, no. 1, 15 Dec. 2005, pp. 1-3.

The impact of feminist critics over the last twenty-five years has shaped the way gender in Shakespeare has been considered. Sketching the approaches feminist criticism has taken, this article goes on to highlight the importance now attached to stage performance and the role of the female actor.

**Schedule your online or in-person tutoring appointment today at Madonna.mywonline.com
Additional online resources can be found at www.madonna.edu/owl**