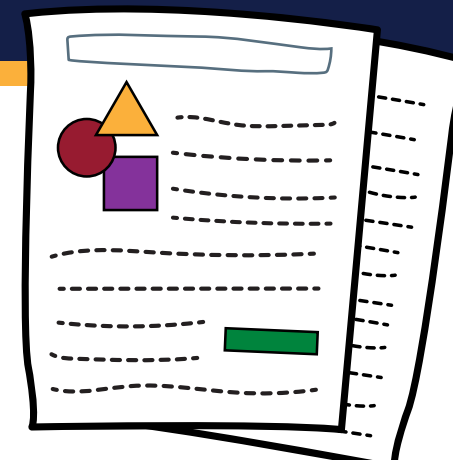


ERIC Guide to Abstract Writing



The Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) currently contains more than 2 million citations for education research and information resources. Abstracts are the primary way that users and the ERIC search engine differentiate between the articles. Abstracts are concise summaries of larger works. An abstract provides a synopsis of the document so that users can assess its usefulness without needing to read the full document file. Abstracts summarize journal articles, research reports, theses, conference papers, or other documents. They help readers quickly discern the purpose and content of the work. Abstracts include five elements that describe the work: **Purpose**, **Methods**, **Results**, **Implications**, and **Additional Materials**.

With so many materials in ERIC to choose from, readers rely on well-written abstracts that clearly summarize the work. ERIC and other search engines use the abstracts to make sure the most relevant articles are displayed first. ERIC also uses abstracts to assign descriptors and other metadata to help users find relevant work. Articles with ambiguous or vague abstracts may be assigned less useful metadata and be less likely to be displayed in results. Thus, fewer people will see the article and even fewer will click on the full text to read the work.


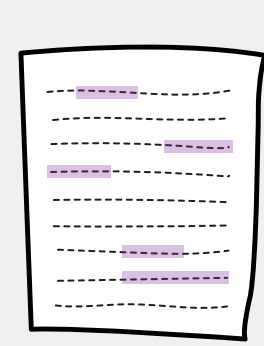

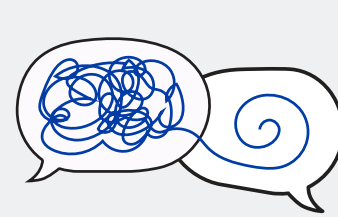


Here are some best practices to improve your abstracts:

- Use **keywords** that will help users find your work. If you are writing an article about strategies to improve second-grade reading, consider including not only the word “reading,” but also frequently searched words like “phonics,” “fluency,” “reading comprehension,” and “vocabulary.” Incorporate these words naturally into the body of the abstract and not as a separate keywords section at the end.
- Use **phrases directly from your content**. The abstract should use the same writing style as the article and contain the same types of words and phrases. You do not need to quote from the article.
- Ensure **accuracy**. Abstracts should use information from the document. Do not add new material or information that is different from the full text of the article.
- Write in **concise and plain language**. Abstracts should use brief, complete sentences that general audiences can understand easily. The ideal reading level for abstracts is for a high school graduate, but most abstracts will be at a college reading level. Avoid jargon and abbreviations.
- Use the **language of the field** by incorporating terms that fellow scholars would use. Examples include methodological terms like “randomized controlled trial” or “regression discontinuity design,” as well as specific examples of the topics studied.
- Consider the **length**. A good abstract is typically 200-300 words. Shorter abstracts usually do not contain enough information to appear in search results, and longer abstracts can be overwhelming for users to read.

These sample abstracts are from [ED559979](#) and [ED650289](#) are examples of well-written abstracts that contain the essential elements.

Element to Include	Sample Abstract 1 (ED559979)	Sample Abstract 2 (ED650289)
Purpose (Introduction or Problem): Why did you do this study? Include one to two sentences summarizing the background, purpose, objectives, and hypotheses of the research.	The purpose of this study was to understand the learning trajectories of the growing numbers of English learner students in Arizona, especially those who struggle to pass state English language arts and math content tests.	Theoretical models hold that written products (e.g., quality of written composition) are the outcome of the writing process (e.g., translation, transcription, revision) and skills and knowledge on which the writing process draws (e.g., language, transcription, cognitive skills).
Methods (Process): How did you do the research? With whom did you do it? When and where did you do it? Explain the relevant components of the study, which can include research design, data, analysis, details of sampling, tests, demographics, geographic location, variables, controls, conditions, data gathering procedures, or any other specifics.	This study followed three cohorts of English learner students in Arizona (kindergarten, grade 3, and grade 6) over six school years, 2006/07 through 2011/12, to assess their progress in English proficiency and their academic progress in English language arts and math content knowledge.	In the present study, we examined the relations among writing quality; the writing production process measured by writing fluency; and language, cognitive, and transcription skills, using longitudinal data from English-speaking beginning writers who were followed from kindergarten to Grade 2 (N= 261). Children’s working memory, attentional control, spelling, handwriting fluency, vocabulary, grammatical knowledge, and writing quality were measured in kindergarten, Grade 1, and Grade 2. Writing fluency was measured in Grade 2 in two ways, using a process-based measure, writing burst length (chunks of text produced between pauses during writing), and a product-based measure, the number of words produced per total writing time.
Results (Findings): What did you find out from doing the research? Outline the key findings, including experimental, correlational, and theoretical results.	More than 90 percent of Arizona’s English learner students scored at or above the required level for reclassification as fluent English proficient students. Their cumulative passing rate was highest for the English language proficiency test, followed by academic tests in English language arts and math. English learner students who were eligible for special education services had the lowest passing rates on all three tests. In general, English learner students in higher grades had lower cumulative passing rates on all three tests than students in lower grades.	Results from structural equation modeling showed that Grade 2 writing fluency was moderately related to Grade 2 writing quality (0.40) and completely mediated the relations of Grade 1 spelling and handwriting fluency skills to Grade 2 writing quality. In contrast, Grade 1 vocabulary was directly related to Grade 2 writing quality over and above Grade 2 writing fluency. Kindergarten working memory was indirectly related to Grade 2 writing fluency via Grade 1 spelling skill.
Implications (Discussion): What do the findings mean going forward? Consider how the results connect to policy and practice, and make suggestions for future research.	Educators might consider devoting additional attention to improving teaching practices and support services to help the English learner student subgroups with the poorest performance (i.e., students in higher grades, students eligible for special education services, students eligible for school lunch programs, and/or and male students).	These findings indicate that the writing production process measured by writing fluency mediates the relations of transcription skills to writing quality, and executive function is indirectly related to writing fluency via transcription skills for beginning writers.
Additional Materials : What else is included? Mention appendices, visuals, references, or other included information.	The following are appended: (1) Arizona programs that provide context for the study; (2) Data and methodology; and (3) Additional findings.	This paper was published in <i>Journal of Educational Psychology</i>, 116(4): 590-607, 2024. EJ1423090

Here’s how the sample abstracts demonstrate the best practices described above:

Best Practice	Sample Abstract 1 (ED559979)	Sample Abstract 2 (ED650289)
 Keywords	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reclassification • English learner • English proficient 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transcription • Cognitive skills • Structural equation modeling
 Phrases directly from the content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The abstract’s purpose statement includes phrasing from the “why this study” section of the full document. • The abstract’s methods section includes phrasing from the full document’s “what this study examined” section. • The abstract’s results section is taken directly from the key findings section on the document’s front page. • The implications in the abstract are taken directly from the full document’s “study implications” section. 	<p>The abstract’s content summarizes the full work. Although sentences in the abstract are not lifted directly from the article, the abstract condenses paragraphs into single sentences. For example, the abstract says, “These findings indicate that the writing production process measured by writing fluency mediates the relations of transcription skills to writing quality, and executive function is indirectly related to writing fluency via transcription skills for beginning writers.” The full text says, “This study advances our understanding of how a written product, writing quality, is predicted by the writing production process measured by writing fluency as well as language, cognitive, and transcription skills ... had higher quality writing, and this was explained directly by transcription skills and indirectly by executive functions such as working memory.”</p>
 Accuracy	The abstract accurately describes the content of the full document.	The abstract accurately describes the content of the full document.
 Concise and plain language	The language in the abstract reflects the reading level of a college graduate. The abstract could be improved by using clearer language and shorter sentences, but it still is more readable than the average ERIC abstract.	This abstract has the reading level of a professional. This reading level is average for ERIC abstracts. The authors would benefit from simplifying their writing style.
 Language of the field	The abstract includes terms like “learning trajectories” and “reclassification as fluent English proficient.”	The abstract includes terms like “handwriting fluency skills,” “writing burst length,” and “working memory.”
 Length	230 words	250 words