Dissertation and Thesis Abstracts

Abstracts occur in a variety of forms when you’re job searching. Review the recommendations and the descriptions to ensure you have various kinds of abstracts prepared when you begin the academic job hunt.

Some recommendations for abstract writing

- **Audience**: Begin with the understanding that your audience – be it grant funders, legislators, educators, or the general public – is not used to reading scholarly writing from your particular discipline. They may be interested in your work, but unequipped to navigate the complexities of your area of study.

- **Language**: Avoid long or complex words. Eliminate jargon – specialized language that you might use with your professional peers – which a more general audience might not understand. Explain acronyms, abbreviations, or terms specific to your discipline that a general audience might not understand.

- **Sentence Structure**: Write in active voice, and keep sentence structure simple. If you don’t need a particular word to convey your message, delete it.

- **Organization**: Organize your thoughts clearly, in a way that is clear and easy to follow. Read with an eye toward eliminating details or extraneous thoughts that don’t contribute to the reader’s understanding of your work.

- **Readability**: If you are unsure about the level at which your public abstract is written, use a readability formula to see whether the writing is suitable for a general audience. Ask a friend from outside your discipline to read your public abstract, and highlight words, phrases, or ideas that are unclear to them.

This information is taken from “How to Write a Dissertation Abstract,” https://www.grad.uiowa.edu/academics/thesis-and-dissertation/preparing-formatting/public-abstract
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<th>Type</th>
<th>Length</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Public Abstract</strong></td>
<td>up to 250 words</td>
<td>a summary of the research/work targeted to a general audience and written in lay terms</td>
<td>translational and functions as an &quot;elevator pitch&quot; for your research; a professional development opportunity to gain experience in articulating the value and/or purpose to broader audiences, including legislators, the media, and members of the public.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>CV Abstract</strong></td>
<td>brief paragraph (3-4 sentences)</td>
<td>included on the CV in the Education section, immediately under the entry for your PhD; similar to the dissertation paragraph used in your cover letter, but contextualized so it can stand on its own; avoids theoretical jargon, although key terms may be employed if defined</td>
<td>equivalent of a short elevator pitch on your CV to summarize research</td>
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<td><strong>Long Abstract</strong></td>
<td>two single-spaced pages</td>
<td>structure often mirrors the structure of your dissertation, with a chapter-by-chapter breakdown in succeeding paragraphs; details may be pulled from your dissertation proposal; spend more time (a full paragraph or two) setting up the theoretical and methodological frameworks for your dissertation; fully flesh out analysis/results, outcomes, or other conclusions</td>
<td>stand-alone document sent either with initial job materials or when requested as supplemental materials; may also be used in your actual dissertation</td>
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**Recommended resource**
- Cheryl Ball. “How to Write Research Statements.” [https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2014/10/06/essay-how-write-research-statements-applying-academic-jobs](https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2014/10/06/essay-how-write-research-statements-applying-academic-jobs)
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| Short Abstract | 250 to 350 words  | includes the following components • Brief description of the thing you're studying (e.g., what are you studying?)  
• Theoretical framework (e.g., what disciplinary lenses are you using to study X idea/concept/texts)  
• Methodological framework (e.g., how are you studying that thing)  
• Main research questions (why you are studying that thing)  
• Discovered or potential results of your study (e.g., what's the outcome of studying that thing).  
• Significance of your study (e.g., why are those outcomes important to your discipline, to humanity, etc.) | provides a stand-alone description of your thesis or dissertation |

**Recommended resources**

Cheryl Ball. “How to Write Research Statements.” [https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2014/10/06/essay-how-write-research-statements-applying-academic-jobs](https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2014/10/06/essay-how-write-research-statements-applying-academic-jobs)

University of Kentucky, College of Arts and Science. “Sample Dissertation Abstracts.” [https://english.as.uky.edu/dissertation-abstracts](https://english.as.uky.edu/dissertation-abstracts)