

WRITING AN ABSTRACT

What is an abstract?

- An abstract is a short informative or descriptive summary of a longer report.
- It is written after the report is completed, although it is intended to be read first.
- In a technical report, the abstract appears on a separate page after the table of content and list of illustrations.
- In an essay written for a humanities class, it most likely should appear on a separate page, just after the title page and therefore just before the essay itself.

There are two distinct types of abstracts:

A **DESCRIPTIVE** abstract merely identifies the areas to be covered in the report. It is an extended statement of purpose or scope. Such an abstract is only useful for a very long report, because it demonstrates only the paper's organisation, not its content. A descriptive abstract;

- Tells readers what information the report, article or paper contains.
- Includes the purpose, methods, and scope of the report, article or paper.
- Does not provide results, conclusions or recommendations.
- Is always very short, usually under 100 words.
- Introduces the subject to readers who must then read the report, article or paper to find out the author's results, conclusions or recommendations.

An **INFORMATIVE** abstract summarises the entire report and gives the reader an overview of the facts that will be laid out in detail in the paper itself. It is rarely longer than one page and should never exceed more than 10% of the length of the entire report; otherwise it defeats its own purpose, to communicate specific information from the report, article or paper.

- Includes the purpose, methods and scope of the report, article or paper.
- Provides the report, article or paper's results, conclusions and recommendations.
- Is short – from a paragraph to a page or two, depending upon the length of the original work being abstracted. Usually informative abstracts are 10% or less of the length of the original piece.

Checklist: parts of an abstract

Despite the fact that an abstract is quite brief, it must do almost as much work as the multi-page paper that follows it. It should in most cases include the following sections. Each section is typically a single sentence, although there is room for creativity. In particular, the parts may be merged or spread among a set of sentences.

Use the following as a checklist for your next abstract:

- Motivation:** Why do we care about the problem and the results?
- Problem statement:** What problem are you trying to solve? What is the scope of your work (a generalised approach or for a specific situation)?
- Approach:** How did you go about solving or making progress on the problem?
- Results:** What's the answer?
- Conclusions:** What are the implications of your answer? (Previous results are useful). Are your results general, potentially generalisable or specific to a particular case?

(Koopman, P. 1997)

The abstract included with your paper should conform to the following format.

Title

The title of your abstract should be the same as the title of your research project.

The body of the abstract

The abstract is a very brief overview of your ENTIRE study. It tells the reader: WHAT you did, WHY you did it, HOW you did it, WHAT you found, WHAT it means. The abstract should briefly state the purpose of the research (introduction), how the problem was studied (methods), the principal findings (results) and what the findings mean (discussion and conclusion). It is important to be descriptive but concise – say only what is essential, using no more words than necessary to convey meaning.

Sample abstract

This project is about the most effective way of implementing certain character animation principles in 3D character animation production.

Advances in technology have made 3D character animation available in various media. This project finds out exactly what 3D character animation is and what workflow will be best to develop effective 3D character animation.

The production of the practical product was carried out according to industry standard production pipeline method, starting with pre-production, then production and concluding with post-production. The production phase included modelling, rigging, texturing, rendering and most importantly, animating. During the animation stage, various traditional character animation techniques were applied.

The final result is to achieve natural animation and to document how I implemented some of the traditional character animation techniques.

Character animation is not copying a motion or an action. It is to bring character to life. The motion or action can be expressed in infinite ways because each motion creates characteristics. However, the most effective way to develop character animation is to apply a combination of traditional character animation techniques.

References:

Koopman, P. (1997). *What is an abstract?* Retrieved from <http://www.ece.cmu.edu/~koopman/essays/abstract.html>.

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