

From the Executive Editor's Desk ¹

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The purpose of the notes in this series is to offer some basic advice for authors of papers submitted to PMWJ, particularly those who wish their work to be peer reviewed. The notes are aimed at those starting out on their writing career, rather than experienced authors. What I hope to do is make the process easier by explaining what we look for and how this helps ensure that readers actually read your work.

We all want our written work to be read so the important first step is capturing the reader's attention. I pointed out that it is the title that provides the hook to catch the reader and offered some very limited advice. Having caught the eye of the reader, we need then to make sure their interest is strengthened so that they move on to read your magnum opus.

There are many aspects to preserving the reader's interest and the very first is to give them a little more detail of what they can expect in the paper – in other words, the Abstract. This is a critical component of your paper, so it is important to understand its purpose and structure. Broadly speaking, there are two types of Abstract, as explained by Andrade (2011):

Informative Abstract

The majority of abstracts are informative. While they do not critique or evaluate a work, they do more than describe it. A good informative abstract acts as a surrogate for the work itself. That is, the researcher presents and explains all the main arguments and the important results and evidence in the paper. An informative abstract includes the information that can be found in a descriptive abstract [purpose, methods, scope] but it also includes the results and conclusions of the research and the recommendations of the author. The length varies according to discipline, but an informative abstract is usually no more than 300 words in length.

Descriptive Abstract

A descriptive abstract indicates the type of information found in the work. It makes no judgements about the work, nor does it provide results or conclusions of the research. It does incorporate key words found in the text and may include the purpose, methods, and scope of the research. Essentially, the descriptive abstract only describes the work being

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summarised. Some researchers consider it an outline of the work, rather than a summary. Descriptive abstracts are usually very short, 100 words or less

Empirical studies usually have Informative Abstracts while literature based studies usually have Descriptive Abstracts.

So what do we, at PM World Journal, expect, you might ponder. Both types of Abstract work, depending on the nature of the paper. However, we expect the Abstract be a concise summary that tells the reader the purpose of the paper, what methods were employed, a high level outline of what you found and what conclusions you draw from your findings.

The following gives a more detailed account of what to include in your Abstract

- **Background and Purpose:** State the general topic, why it matters, and the specific research gap or question.
- **Methods:** Describe the study design, scope, and how data or materials were gathered.
- **Results:** Highlight the most important data, trends, or findings.
- **Conclusions:** Explain what the findings mean and their broader implications.

In general, an Abstract should be between 150 and 300 words. PMWJ expects the text to be a single block, with no paragraphs and is followed by up to 6 key words to aid searching. Under no circumstances should more key words be offered.

Reference

Andrade C. (2011) How to write a good abstract for a scientific paper or conference presentation. Indian J Psychiatry. 2011 Apr;53(2):172-5.

About the Author



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Dr. Miles Shepherd is Executive Editor, Advisor and International Correspondent for the *PM World Journal* in the United Kingdom. He retired from a 30 year career in the British Army in 1994. He is also managing director for MS Projects Ltd, a consulting company supporting various UK and overseas Government agencies, nuclear industry organisations and other businesses. Miles has over 35 years' experience on a variety of projects in UK, Eastern Europe and Russia. His PM experience includes defence, major IT projects, decommissioning of nuclear reactors, nuclear security, rail and business projects for the UK Government and EU. His consulting work has taken him to Japan, Taiwan, USA and Russia. Past Chair and Fellow of the Association for Project Management (APM), Miles is also past president and chair and a Fellow of the International Project Management Association (IPMA). He was, for seven years, a Director for PMI's Global Accreditation Centre and is past Chair of the ISO committee developing new international standards for Project Management and for Program/Portfolio Management. He served on British Standards Institute project management committee (2002 – 2026) including 5 years as Chair. He was involved in setting up APM's team developing guidelines for project management oversight and governance. Miles is based in Salisbury, England and can be contacted at miles.shepherd@msp-ltd.co.uk.

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