



Help With: Abstracts

An abstract is a brief summary of your paper. In academic writing the abstract is important because many readers first read the abstract to determine if the entire article is worth reading.

Abstracts are not a part of your essay; they go *before* your essay. The abstract should be a single paragraph in block format, usually without paragraph indentation in APA. The length depends on the journal or institution to which you are submitting, but abstracts are typically between 150 and 200 words. Generally it's easier to write your abstract *last*, after you have written your paper.

Weak abstract:

Lamb Production and Survival in Lambing Areas of a Bighorn Sheep Population Wintering on Big Creek in Central Idaho

This report discusses current population trends in Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep that live in the Big Creek drainage in Idaho. Concerns exist because of population die offs caused by Pasteurella. Extensive monitoring of the population was completed in the summer of 2001 and compared with data collected from 1988 to 1990. The report discusses the average number of lambs born in different areas over three different time periods. The report shows when lambs die. Conclusions are presented and recommendations for further fieldwork are provided.

This abstract is weak because it merely lists the report's contents. It does not provide details on the main results or arguments. There are few terms likely to be indexed by a search engine.

Strong abstract:

Lamb Production and Survival in Lambing Areas of a Bighorn Sheep Population Wintering on Big Creek in Central Idaho

The Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep population in the Big Creek drainage in Central Idaho experienced a sudden population decline from 1988 to 1990 as a result of Pasteurella. Extensive investigation during that period provided information on lamb production and survival during the die-off phase. After ten years of minimal monitoring of lamb production, a survival survey was conducted on the Big Creek population during the summer of 2001. The results of this survey established the average number of lambs: 100 ewes for three different lambing areas across three different time periods. These were compared to similar data collected during the summer of 1991. Results show a high survival ratio through the beginning of August 2001 (avg. 86:100) compared with a significantly lower ratio in August 1989 (avg. 19:100) and August 1990 (avg. 12:100). This suggests that the 2001 Big Creek bighorn sheep population is not experiencing late-summer Pasteurella mortality. Rather, mortality is occurring at a different time of the year and continued monitoring is needed to make an accurate determination of the causes.

This abstract is not better because it's longer—it's better because it gives useful details. The author summarizes the paper and emphasizes main points, background, results, and specific conclusions. It also has key words which internet search engines will index, making it more likely that a potential reader will find the paper in a search.