

Extended Project Qualification

Writing an Abstract for your Project

What is an Abstract?

An abstract is a concise and clear summary of:

- **What you set out to do and why**
- **How you did it**
- **What you found**
- **(Conclusions/recommendations)**

which is capable of being read independently of your report.

It is **NOT**:

- an introduction – its purpose is to **summarise** not introduce
- a plan to which your project is written – it is written last to summarise what your report contains.
- extracts from your main report – it must stand alone.

It should be the **first** page of your project and is therefore the **first** thing to be read by the assessor and forms the **first** impression of your work.

How long should it be?

Length is very important. Between 100 and 300 words will be adequate provided you write concisely and are **summarising**, not re-writing, the contents of your project.

What should an abstract include?

- **Purpose:** Why did you undertake the study? What were you examining, or testing or investigating. Return to your research question and ensure you have re-stated it concisely, coherently and clearly. A good opening is often, "My field study tested .", "My dissertation investigated . . .", "This project examines".
- **Methodology:** What was done and how did you do it? Be **specific**, don't make generalised comments. This will differ depending on whether your project is dissertation or an investigation/field study (**see Step 1 below**)
- **Conclusions:** What did you find? State **specific** outcomes and, if appropriate, draw conclusions e.g. "My investigation found that there was a significant relationship between"

When should I write my abstract?

At the end, **AFTER** you have finished your project

A five step guide to writing your abstract

Step 1:

Without looking at your dissertation, write, for each of the bulleted points below, a **concise** but **information-rich** sentence stating:

Dissertation	Investigation/Field Study
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What the study set out to do• What themes and ideas you identified in your reading• How you used these themes and ideas to reach your conclusions• What conclusions you drew	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What the study set out to do• What method(s) you adopted• What results were achieved• What conclusions can be drawn• What recommendations your research leads you to make (if appropriate)

Step 2:

Add further sentences as required (and if word count permits)

Step 3:

Edit and revise your sentences for greater precision, clarity and conciseness.

Step 4:

Add further content but do not exceed 200 words.

Step 5:

Return to your abstract after a gap of at least a day. Read it as a stand-alone document and revise as necessary. **If necessary do this several times** and over a period of time.

Examples from previous extended projects

Investigation/Field Study Abstract

“UK habitats provide important niches for many indigenous plant and insect species. This project aims to investigate which habitats are the most diverse, and so which habitats conservation efforts should be concentrated on. Four habitats were investigated: coniferous woodland, deciduous woodland, wild flower meadowland and heathland. Quadrat, sweep net and soil test samples were investigated and the results analysed using several different methods including pie charts and bar charts, and also a chi squared statistical test. I concluded that the wild flower habitat was the most diverse in terms of plant and insect life but also discussed how this is one of the rarest in the UK, and what we could do to increase peoples awareness of this problem.”

Dissertation Abstract

“The aim of my EPQ was to research and find out more about recent Spanish history and how Spanish culture has developed in the last century. I focussed specifically on how the dictator Francisco Franco Bahamonde stunted Spanish culture in the years 1936-1975. I decided to research the different methods Franco used to stunt Spanish culture. I chose to focus on Catholicism and nationalism, repression and censorship. The research that I conducted proved to be successful and informative. I realised that Franco imposed a Catholic and nationalist dictatorship in Spain. He repressed any cultural diversity and provincial traditions which included the censorship of regional languages. The repression within the Franco regime was almost unimaginable and the treatment of homosexuals and women was abominable. This dissertation establishes that Franco did stunt Spanish culture during his dictatorship and explains the methods that Franco used to achieve his “perfect Spain” with no alternative Spanish culture other than that he created.”