

# ABSTRACT WRITING

## Presenting Your Work to an Interested Person Whose Time is Limited

### General

Readers are interested in your work. They may have experience in your discipline and they are experts with their research agendas. It's your research agenda that is new for them.

### 2 Steps

Take a 2-step approach

**Generalist Feedback:** Work with a Writing Assistant in the University Writing Commons. If they can understand the process and overall purpose, then you're ready for step 2.

**Specialist Feedback:** Work with a GA or a Professor in your discipline. They know the details and once your writing is organized from step 1, they'll have an easier time showing you where you need more attention to the details.

[nau.edu/iwriting/uwc](http://nau.edu/iwriting/uwc)



## Readers Ask...

1. What's this one about? [[Thesis or Purpose Statement](#)]
2. Why does presenter think that they can reach that conclusion? ["Based on the data ... "]
3. How is the presenter setting up their research? Is it possible? [[theoretical or application](#)]
4. Which kinds of research has the presenter studied? Are they aware that there are studies on the same topic? [[Look for patterns in the work cited pages](#)]
5. What is this presenter aiming to conclude? [[Always include the conclusion](#)]



## Poignant and Succinct

If your reader can visualize what you're doing with the least amount of words as possible, then you're golden. Use more details, specifics, exact language than you're probably used to. Make an appointment with the UWC –

[nau.edu/iwriting/uwc](http://nau.edu/iwriting/uwc)

## Come Find Us!

University Writing Commons  
Monday-Thursday

- Green Scene Café: 9-12
- Inclusion and Multicultural Services: 9-12
- Cline Library, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor: 9-5

Friday

- Cline Library, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor: 9-1

We get busy, so plan ahead.

Know that if you do your homework at one of our sites, you can always walk over and see if we have any no-shows. "I'll be right there working. If there are any no-shows, I'd like to take that appointment." Make sure that your name is down on a list and return to the desk at the half-hour.

The more feedback that you get, the narrative that you're writing will become clearer for you.

## How to Prepare for the 5 Qs

1. The Thesis Statement or Purpose Statement is core for writing abstracts. It's often easier to talk it through first.
2. All researchers show that their work is not on a whim. You took time to think about other researchers' studies. Which studies pushed you into the current work that you are doing?
3. Make your research design clear. Is this a 5-week study? A 2-year study? A scaffold-study, a set of 25 interviews, a collection of 50 water samples from a creek? Be super specific.
4. Work cited shows you who your researchers read. Look through the articles that influence your work/thinking and see who influenced their work.
5. All abstracts include the findings, the conclusion, the overall purpose for the work. Don't leave the reader guessing what the conclusion is.

## General Information

1. Abstracts are often easier to write AFTER the larger paper is written. If you don't have a paper, then put a presentation together first. The information that you put on your slides will be the necessary detail that ought to be in your abstract.
2. You don't need introductory or background sentences. State it as you would when you're in a hurry and your professor is off to a meeting.
3. Find out from your professor what your discipline requires for the abstract.
4. In general, Intro., background, aims, research rationale, results.
5. Word Count: 200-300 (depends on your discipline; so 250 is a good number if it's not clear)
6. Keep the technical language and jargon in the larger paper, not in the abstract.

All writing takes practice. The more you write, the better you can answer what is "filler language" and what is too technical.