

THE STRUCTURE OF ACADEMIC WRITING

If any text is expected to be orderly written, in the case of academic writing this aspect becomes crucial. Although each publisher usually indicates specific guidelines to authors, scholars must be previously aware of a recurrent structure that, with slight variations, pertains to the different phases and development of almost any academic genre. In this section we will go through the most relevant parts of such initial structure.

WARMING UP:

1. Think of an academic genre that you are particularly interested in: Which sections from the box do you recognize? Can you order them? Can you briefly describe them? Can you add any more, and explain to what genres they belong?

results	title	introduction	discussion	conclusion
abstract/summary	method/ procedure	research question	appendix/appendices	
theoretical framework	state or the art		bibliography/references/works cited	
literature review	acknowledgments	directions for further research		
limitations	theory section	checklist		

Let us also briefly discuss other concepts related with academic publishing; Can you think of any other?

citation and referencing	plagiarism	editing tools	proof-reading
tables, graphs and figures	impact indexes	spelling	typesetting
keywords			

2. Now, let us watch a **video** about the parts of a specific academic genre. While you watch it for the first time, write down the name of all the sections mentioned:

Title, abstract...

While you watch it for the second time, write down at least one characteristic of each section, using just keywords in note-taking style e.g.:

Title: provides the name of the report.

3. Let us have a look at a checklist for a specific academic genre, available in **Appendix I**: Which of the checklist tips do you consider more useful and why?

Source: *MOOCs Course*, www.futurelearn.com, University of Sheffield.

YOUR PRESENTATION TO THE ACADEMIC WORLD: TITLE AND ABSTRACT OF A RESEARCH PAPER

The title and abstract of your proposal is the first item that publishers / conference committees / possible readers will read. This will allow them to decide whether to go ahead with the rest of the paper or not. Therefore, this initial section of almost any research genre must be carefully devised.

General characteristics of a good title:

1. It should be “catchy”, that is, attract the attention of the reader.
2. It should predict the content in an orderly form.
3. It should be preferably, although not exclusively, based on NOMINALIZATION.
4. It must contain the KEY CONCEPTS of the research paper.

To this simple scheme, several variations may be added: a subtitle after a colon; an indirect question; a short quotation or statement. In all cases, the title must no be longer than 10-15 words.

Let us introduce your own title in this table, and see if it meets the standards or there is scope for improvement:

Title	St. 1	St. 2	St. 3	St. 4	Comments

The structure of the abstract usually depends on specific publishing guidelines. Sometimes, these ask for a complete summary of the different article sections. However, some basic rules are:

“The abstract is a condensed and concentrated version of the full text of the research manuscript. It should be sufficiently representative of the paper if read as a standalone document.”

“The abstract must be as detailed as possible within the word count limits specified by the journal to which the paper is intended to be submitted. This will require good precise writing skills, as well as a fine judgment about what information is necessary and what is not.”

Source: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3136027/>

The abstract and the issue of cohesion: While cohesion (i.e., the precise reference between elements of a text, usually marked by using pronouns and demonstratives) affects all sections of an academic text, it is especially important in the abstract. Contrary to the Spanish language, where gender and plural marks are much clearer, reference items in English, such as “it” or “they” may refer to a wide range of previous nouns. In such cases, disambiguation is necessary:

... ***This** is the main effect whenever the force is applied.* Within a paragraph, “this” may refer to a previous noun, a noun phrase, or a verb phrase. The reader will establish the identification if it is near the referred item. E.g.:

Under such tension,	the deck buckles. buckling is produced.	This is the main effect...
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If that is not the case, (i.e., when the referred item is too far from the demonstrative), the repetition of the whole item is preferred. E.g.:

Under such tension,	the deck buckles, buckling is produced,	since the materials used in its construction lack in resistance qualities.	This — Buckling is the main effect...
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Questions for discussion: What is the difference between the introduction and the abstract? At what stage of the research paper should these introductory sections be written?

FURTHER REFLECTION:

Check the title and abstract of your article and introduce any necessary changes according to the guidelines given. Submit it in the given format, which allows for aside corrections:

Title, abstract and keywords	Corrections