

The Abstract summarizes four essential aspects of the report: the purpose of the experiment, key findings, significance and major conclusions. The abstract often also includes a brief reference to theory or methodology. The information should clearly enable readers to decide whether they need to read your whole report. The abstract should be one paragraph of 50-200 words (the samples below have 58 and 74 words).

Quick Abstract Reference

Must have:

- Purpose
- Brief method
- Key result(s)
- Most significant point of discussion
- Major conclusion (including error).

May Include:

- Brief theory

Restrictions:

- ONE page
- 200 words MAX.

Sample Abstracts

“Our goal was to approximate the gravitational acceleration of an object by applying Newton’s second law of motion. We used a swinging pendulum to find the acceleration due to gravity. Our derived value for g was: $(9.78 \pm .080) \text{ m/s}^2$. When compared to the known value of $(9.80011 \pm .0002) \text{ m/s}^2$, the pendulum provided a result that was within 0.306%.”

“ The experimenters measured the speed of sound in air by clapping into a microphone placed at one end of a large cardboard tube abutting a wall and measuring the echo time in a room at $23.1 \text{ }^\circ\text{C}$. The speed of sound was found to be $336 \pm 9 \text{ m/s}$. The actual speed of sound at that temperature is 345 m/s . The percent error of the experiment was only 2%, and the result was within tolerance. ”

A note about verb tense:

- The *experiment* is already finished. Use the past tense when talking about the experiment.
“The objective of the experiment was...”
- The report, the theory and permanent equipment still exist; therefore, these get the present tense:
“The purpose of this report is...”

“Bragg’s Law for diffraction is ...”

“The scanning electron microscope produces micrographs ...”

Adapted from University of Toronto, Writing Advice Centre: The Lab Report.
<https://advice.writing.utoronto.ca/types-of-writing/lab-report/>