



The Abstract (II)

Identifying sources

Most abstracts will have a sentence near the beginning that contains two elements: the source and a main idea. Notice the use of the present tense in the later examples:

According to Boskin (2004) _____ (main idea)
 Young and Song's 2004 paper on fluoridation discusses _____ (main idea)
 Bernstein (2004) states that _____ (main idea)
 claims
 argues
 maintains
 Barinaga (2006) suggests that _____ (main idea)
 asserts
 hypothesizes
 states
 concludes
 In Tyson's article "Mapping Dark Matter with Gravitational Lenses", _____ (main idea)

There is a range of reporting verbs that you may use when referring to your source material. The following table show the most frequently used reporting verbs from a variety of disciplines, with the most frequent on the left and the sixth most frequent on the far right. As you can see, there are some disciplinary differences.

Discipline	Verbs and Frequency					
Rank	1	2	3	4	5	6
Biology	describe	find	report	show	suggest	observe
Physics	develop	report	study	find	expand	
Electrical engineering	propose	use	describe	show	publish	develop
Mechanical engineering	describe	show	report	discuss	give	develop
Epidemology	find	describe	suggest	report	examine	show
Nursing	show	report	demonstrate	observe	find	suggest
Marketing	suggest	argue	find	demonstrate	propose	show
Applied linguistics	suggest	argue	show	explain	find	point out
Psychology	find	show	suggest	report	demonstrate	focus
Sociology	argue	suggest	describe	note	analyze	discuss
Education	find	suggest	note	report	demonstrate	provide

Hyland, 1999: 342-367.

TASK 1: Take the paper “the Psychopathology of Anorexia Nervosa: A Factor Analytic Investigation” and underline all the reporting verbs. Do your results match with those in the table?

Although in theory summaries are supposed to be objective, this is not entirely true. A variety of reporting verbs can be used in abstract writing to reveal your personal stance toward the source material. Notice how the reporting verbs in the following examples could allow the writer to convey his or her attitude:

Campbell (2004) presumes that all parents are equally capable of helping their children with schoolwork.

The authors speculate that people who scrap their old cars will immediately buy another, new(er) car.

Notice also how the addition of an adverb can even more clearly reveal your stance, which you may want to do when writing in order to critique.

The authors wrongly assume that patients will adhere to the treatment protocol.

TASK 2: Some reporting verbs are less objective than others. In the table shown, can you identify which verbs seem to be objective and which verbs have the potential to be evaluative?

	<i>Objective</i>	<i>Evaluative</i>
<i>describe</i>		
<i>recommend</i>		
<i>claim</i>		
<i>assume</i>		
<i>contend</i>		
<i>propose</i>		
<i>theorize</i>		
<i>support</i>		
<i>examine</i>		

Nominal that-clauses

In formal scientific and technical English verbs are followed by a *that-clause* containing both a subject and a verb.

That-clauses have a variety of functions. In the following sentence the that-clause is the direct object of the verb states:

Benfield and Howard (2000) state that many medical journals are now published in English because of a desire to attract greater readership and to attract better, more international manuscripts.

TASK 3: Here are some introductory statements written in an abstract of the *Transformation of the Nile River Basin*. Which, if any, would you prefer to have written? Why? Edit the weaker sentences.

1. Author Seven Goodman in "Transformation of the Nile River Basin" states that how the region has changed as a result of continuous irrigation.
2. "Transformation of the Nile River Basin" by Seven Goodman claims that changes in irrigation have led to an increase in population.
3. According to "Transformation of the Nile River Basin" Steven Goodman suggests that the Nile River basin has been changed.
4. Goodman in "Transformation of the Nile River Basin" mentions that irrigation has had an impact on the environment and the population.
5. In Goodman's "Transformation of the Nile River Basin" the Nile River basin has been transformed by the introduction of perennial irrigation.

Summary reminder phrases

In longer abstracts, you may want to remind your reader that you are summarizing.

The author goes on to say that...

The article further states that...

(Author's surname here) also states/maintains/argues that...

(Author's surname here) also believes that...

(Author's surname here) concludes that...

In the second half of the paper, (Author's surname here) presents...

If the abstract is quite long, you may want to mention the source author's name at different points (the beginning, the middle and/or the end). When you do mention the author in the middle or end, be sure to use the surname only.

Goodman goes on to say...

Bradley et al. also believe that...

The author further argues that...

Some of the following sentence connectors may be useful in introducing additional information.

additionally	in addition to
also	furthermore
further	moreover

TASK 4: Here are some summary reminder sentences written by some students. Which, if any, of these would you prefer to have written? Try to improve the weaker sentences.

- 1. Bradley finally says meetings tourism may not get rid of all of a city's economic problems.**
- 2. In addition, the article also discusses about the problems that can come about.**
- 3. In Bradley and colleagues conclude that current strategies need to be re-examined.**
- 4. Bradley and others conclude about the current risks that exist.**

Showing similarities and differences

To show similarity

Similarly, According to Fuhrman (2003), mothers generally believe that by the age of six, most children should have their own money to spend. Similarly, Goy (2002) found that most fathers discussed the terms of receiving an allowance with their six-year-old children.

Likewise... According to Fuhrman (2003), mothers generally believe that by the age of six most children should have their own money to spend. Likewise, Goy (2002) found that most fathers discussed the terms of receiving an allowance with their six-year-old children.

In the same fashion... Mothers thought their daughters should spend their own money on makeup, hair, care products and nail polish. In the same fashion, mothers also felt that their sons should spend their own money on less essential items such as baseball cards.

As in X, in Y... As in Fuhrman's study, in our study middle-class children generally thought that they should have to do some household chores in exchange for their allowance.

Like X, Y... Like the middle-class children generally in Fuhrman's study, middle-class children in our study generally thought that they should have to do some household chores in exchange for their allowance.

The same... Fuhrman found that most middle-class children thought that they should have to do some household chores in exchange for their allowance. The same was true for middle-class children in our sample.

To show contrast

In contrast,.... Over 75% Britons feel children should receive money on special occasions. In contrast, only 20% of Germans think this is appropriate.

Unlike X, Y... Unlike Germans, Britons feel no restrictions should be imposed on how children spend their money.

In contrast to... In contrast to Germans, who believe that parents should have some say over how children spend their pocket money, Britons feel no restrictions should be imposed on a child's spending.

On the other hand, ... According to Fuhrman, Germans believe that

parents should have some say over how children spend their pocket money. Britons, on the other hand, feel no restrictions should be imposed.

...; *however*,...

..., *but*...

MacKenzie (2003) argues that our petroleum reserves will not make it through the next half century; however, Day (2003) believes that reserves will double in the next half century and will last another 100 years.

Whereas..., ...

..., *whereas*...

Whereas MacKenzie (2003) argues that our petroleum reserves will not make it through the next half century, Day (2003) believes that reserves will double in the next half century and will last another 100 years.

Verbal expressions of Similarity

To show similarity

<p><i>To be similar to</i> <i>To be comparable to</i> <i>To resemble</i> <i>To correspond to</i></p>	<p><i>The conclusion that emerges from this study is similar to that in Lee et al. (2003)</i></p>
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To show contrast

<p><i>To differ from</i> <i>To contrast with</i> <i>To be different from</i></p>	<p><i>The conclusion in this study differs from that in Barber et al. (2002)</i></p>
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TASK 5: Read the following summary of Wilson and Ziv and find the devices used by the author to highlight similarity or difference.

Wilson and Ziv both maintain that humour serves a social function. For one, jokes reveal the social hierarchy. The authors agree that superiors freely joke about those in lesser positions. Subordinates, including minority groups, can privately joke about those in "higher" positions in order to reduce tension and feelings of frustration. For another, humour is beneficial for a group. Although Ziv more clearly explains this point, Wilson would agree that joking about nongroup members can not only help unify a group, but can also play a role in establishing individual identities.

While both Wilson and Ziv analyze joking in terms of relationships among individuals, Ziv has a somewhat broader view. Ziv argues that humour is a way to exert social control.

Jokes frequently focus on situations where social norms have been broken. Therefore, in order to avoid becoming the victim of a joke, people tend to follow social conventions (Adapted from Norrick, N.N., 1993. *Conversational Joking*. Indiana University Press, 1993.

Some notes on plagiarism

Plagiarism is best defined as a deliberate activity –as the conscious copying from the work of others. The concept of plagiarism has become an integral part of North American and Western European countries. It is based on a number of assumptions that may not hold true in all cultures. One is a rather romantic assumption that the writer is an original, individual, creative artist. Another is that original ideas and expressions are the acknowledged property of their creators (as is the case with a patent for an invention). Yet another is that it is a sign of disrespect –rather than respect- to copy without acknowledgement from the works of published authorities.

Of course, borrowing the words and phrases of others can be a useful language learning strategy. We would encourage you to borrow standard phraseology of your field and skeletal phrases when appropriate, but not special expressions.

TASK 6: Here are some approaches to writing, beginning with a plagiarizing approach and ending with an acceptable quoting technique. Where plagiarism stop? Draw a line between the last approach that would produce a plagiarism and the first approach that would produce acceptable original work.

1. Copying a paragraph as it is from the source without any acknowledgment.
2. Copying a paragraph making only small changes, such as replacing a few verbs or adjectives with synonyms.
3. Cutting and pasting a paragraph by using the sentences of the original but leaving one or two out, or by putting one or two sentences in a different order.
4. Composing a paragraph by taking short standard phrases from a number of sources and putting them together with some words of your own.

5. Paraphrasing a paragraph by rewriting with substantial changes in language and organization, amount of detail, and examples.
6. Quoting a paragraph by placing it in block format with the source cited.