Hello, and welcome to Writing the Abstract for Your Graduate Capstone Thesis. In this third, and final, video we will review how to revise and edit your abstract.

Please be sure to download or view the Video 3 Sample Abstracts for Editing Handout. Take a few minutes to look through it before continuing. We will be referring to it extensively throughout this presentation.

As we proceed, keep in mind a few crucial rules.

- Your abstract must contain the 4 components: purpose of the research, methodology, findings, and conclusion.
- The body of the abstract is limited to 150-200 words.
- What you report in your abstract must be consistent with what you reported in your thesis or capstone paper.
- As with your research paper, the abstract must be presented in clear, well-written sentences which are grammatically correct.

You should plan to spend some time preparing your abstract. An abstract is a specific kind of writing, one most authors are not familiar with. It is a good idea let your first draft sit for a day or two. Then, when you come back to revise it, you can look at your writing with fresh eyes.

Revision is the process of changing a text in order to make corrections or improve the writing.

Our work in this revision has 4 goals. First, we want our abstract to be accessible to a wide range of readers. To make this happen, we will revise the level of the writing so that it can be understood by an educated non-expert.

Second, we want our abstract to be easily understood. For this, we will work on improving our writing to make it clearer. This will involve editing sentences that are too long, reducing wordiness within sentences, checking for any awkward or incorrect word choices, and eliminating repetitive information.

Third, we want to make sure our abstract is technically correct in terms of its grammar, spelling, and punctuation. This will require that we double-check all of the sentences and words and make the necessary corrections.

And finally, we have to make sure our abstract is of the correct length.

Please look at Abstract A on page 1 of the Video 3 Handout. You should notice several things about it.

Its word count is 300 words.

The first five sentences repeat the same information.
The section that reports the findings of the study includes general findings and more detailed information that includes some statistical percentages. And overall, while accurately reporting the original study, the draft abstract is a little too wordy.

Because of its length, the repetition of information, the uneven presentation of the study’s findings, and the wordy, sometimes overly-long sentences, this abstract is not satisfactory.

Now we’ll show you how we revised our Sample Abstract. Let’s take a moment to take a look at Abstract A before we do any revision.

The sentences in blue are from our Video 2 worksheet; the ones we used to organize the key sentences. You’ll recall that we said the headings from our worksheet outline would not be included in our final draft. Often these organizing sentences are not used either. Or if they are, they are revised to fit the required structure of the informative abstract we are writing.

The rest of the sentences in black are all of the key sentences we selected from our worksheet’s outline.

On pages 2 and 3 of the Video 3 Handout you’ll see Draft 1 before 1st revision and Draft 1 after 1st revision. The before version shows our first pass at revising. The text highlighted in yellow is text we are going to delete.

The first 5 sentences state the same information in different ways. We only need to say it once. So we’ve made the decision to delete the first 4 sentences. We chose to keep the 5th sentence because it tells best what the investigation was about. That is, it tells our reader the purpose of the study (older driver safety) and what was actually studied (the effect of age and cognitive function in relation to driving errors and self-regulation decisions).

The three remaining sentences highlighted in yellow are the ‘organizing sentences’ from our worksheet. We can go ahead and delete those.

Now take a look at the Abstract B - Draft 1 after revision. We’ve removed redundant information and unnecessary sentences. And our abstract is down to 230 words! So far so good!

ABSTRACT C, on page 4 of the handout, shows Draft 1 before the 2nd revision. Our job here is more focused. We want to tighten up our writing so that our reader has a precise and clear understanding of our study. Our goal will be twofold: to make our sentences straightforward and uncomplicated and to make sure the information contained covers the full study accurately.

Not all of the Abstract C text needs to be revised. This is often the case as abstracts are based on an existing document which should be well-written to begin with. Only the text highlighted in yellow will be either rewritten (or deleted). To make it easier for you to see what’s being talked about, we’ve made sentences from the Methodology section red and the sentences from the Findings section green.
The first sentence we have revised is, “The sample consisted of 178 drivers, aged 65 to 88 years.” There is nothing wrong with the sentence grammatically. The reason we are changing it is so that it flows more smoothly from the sentence before.

So we have rewritten it to read “One hundred and seventy eight drivers, aged 65 to 88 years, participated.” Now these two sentences, read together, read more smoothly from one to the next.

An abstract that reads well not only helps the reader understand it better, it demonstrates that the author – YOU – have a good command of your material. This, in turn, gives your reader confidence in you as a researcher.

The next piece we will revise is the Methodology section. (This is the red print highlighted in yellow.) Here is where the abstract is wordy. The information is good, but it’s taken us 3 sentences to say it! So we’ve done a little work to reduce the wordiness by combining the three sentences into one. Here is what we did.

In the first sentence, we took out the name of the test. Since this study was not about the test itself, but only its use, we don’t need to include its name. And, knowing we wanted to combine the three sentences, we rearranged the structure of this sentence and put the subjects of the study, the drivers, first. And then we added the verb completed, which was the verb from the next sentence in this section.

What we’ve done from a writing standpoint, THEN, s arrange the sentence so that we can create a list of the activities - or methods - used in the study. This was just a matter of keeping the list of activities and deleting information that, as it happens, had been already stated in the very first sentence of our abstract. Thus, we shortened the abstract and, at the same time, removed redundant information.

So now our 3 sentences have been turned into one which reads as follows, “The drivers completed a computer-based visual test screening instrument for older drivers, an on-road driving test, a self-report questionnaire, and follow up interview.”

Our last revision is to the Findings section. We deleted the sentence containing the information about variance percentages. This is not because this information doesn’t matter.

Because one goal of abstract-writing is to make the abstract accessible to a wide range of readers, we revised the Findings section so that it could be understood by an educated non-expert. It is worth noting here that abstracts written for a specialist-audience will often include very technical findings information. For your APUS Thesis or Capstone paper, however, you should consider that your intended audience will be generalists rather than specialists.

The last revision we made was to change one phrase and remove another. We replaced the phrase with the test name -- “The FOV predicted” -- with the words “The visual test screening test predicted.” And the final phrase, “when the person was tired or ill” was deleted altogether since the focus of this particular finding was the older person’s choice to ask someone else to drive not that their physical condition.

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Abstract D on the handout shows the final draft of our abstract. By deleting repetitive information and detailed, specialist findings, by combining sentences, and by rewriting a few sentences and phrases, we shortened the 2\textsuperscript{nd} draft of our abstract from 230 to 176 words. Perhaps more importantly, we crafted a tightly written, well-organized, and easy-to-follow summary of our larger study.

Our last action was to double-check the abstract for any spelling errors and misplaced or incorrect punctuation. We also looked for any grammatical errors, such as making sure that a subject and its verb matched as both singular or both plural; that there were no incomplete or fragment sentences; that we avoided using “I” or “We;” and that we wrote the entire abstract in the past tense.

In this video we reviewed how to revise and edit an abstract for your thesis or capstone paper.

To make the abstract accessible to a wide range of readers, we revised our writing so that it can be understood by an educated non-expert.

To make our abstract more easily understood, we made our writing clearer by editing sentences that were too long, reducing wordiness within sentences, checking for any awkward or incorrect word choices, and eliminating repetitive information.

To make our abstract technically correct, we double-checked its grammar, spelling, and punctuation. And finally, we made sure our abstract was between 150 and 200 words in length.

Remember, the abstract is a required component to your thesis or capstone paper. You will find information on the correct the format for the abstract in the \textit{End of Program Assessment Manual for Graduate Studies}.