

Abstract Guide

An abstract is usually the most important section in an academic paper. Readers usually skim through papers and the abstract is the best way to do so and to get your reader engaged in your work. Your abstract should be well written and should include the following:

- **Problem:** (2 sentences). This is the section where you set the stage with the big context, like stating the importance of the field you are discussing in general and why studying this area is important.
- **Purpose:** (1 sentence). This is mostly your goal or research question you are trying to answer in your manuscript. This goal should fall under the umbrella of the big picture discussed in the problem.
- **Methods:** (2 sentences). This section you talk about the methods you will use, the data sources, the sample size etc.
- **Results and conclusions:** (3-5 sentences). This section you should provide the reader with your main findings from your analysis, in some cases you might include numbers about an impact of a variable from your model which is the most important policy variable from your view based on the purpose of the paper. The reader should be able to understand your findings from this manuscript just through reading this section of your abstract.
- **Takeaway for practice:** (2-3 sentences). Who cares about your findings and why should they care about this paper and what can we do in the future with the findings from your paper in practice.

The abstract is a summary of your paper so make sure it is not longer than half a page single spaced using 12 points font. This way of writing the abstract is adapted from the Journal of the American Planning Association webabstract that was present several years ago, the journal no longer use it but I still think it is one of the best ways to organize an abstract.

In many cases we write an abstract at the beginning of the paper, then we come back and edit it before we send the paper to review etc. In some cases we do not even write the abstract till we are done 100% with all the paper sections.

This document is prepared by Ahmed El-Geneidy, McGill University to guide students working in the Transportation Research Group at McGill (TRAM) group when working on abstracts for academic papers or for students attending classes with him.