

# Executive Summary

AKA: Abstract



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Secondary*

An **Executive Summary** or '**Abstract**' is a very brief (1-2 page) version of your project's final report. Someone reading it should have enough info to understand your project.

An Executive Summary/Abstract should have the following five mini-sections:

- **Introduction.** This is where you describe the purpose for undertaking your project. Why should anyone care about the work you did? You have to tell them why. Did you explain something that should cause people to change the way they go about their daily activities?  
  
If you made a new app or process, how is it better, faster or cheaper than what is already out there? Motivate the reader to finish the Executive Summary/Abstract and read the full report.
- **Problem Statement.** Briefly identify the problem you solved or the hypothesis you investigated.
- **Procedures.** What was your approach for investigating the problem? Don't go into detail about materials unless they were critical to your success. Do describe the most important variables if you have room.
- **Results.** What answer did you obtain? Be specific and use numbers to describe your results. Do not use vague terms like "most" or "some".
- **Conclusions.** State what your project contributes to the community you have provided the solution for. Did you meet your objectives? Did you meet the design criteria.

Often it's better to write the Executive Summary last, after the full report is complete. You can then copy, paste and summarise key items from the report.

## Things to Avoid

- Avoid **jargon or any technical terms** that most readers won't understand.
- Avoid **abbreviations or acronyms** that are not commonly understood unless you describe what they mean.
- Executive Summaries do **not** have a bibliography or citations.
- Executive Summaries do **not** contain tables or graphs.
- The Executive Summary must **focus on this project**.
- Since you have worked with a Mentor, your Executive Summary should only include procedures done by you and you should not put acknowledgements to anyone else in it.

## Why Is an Executive Summary (or Abstract) Important?

Your project Executive Summary lets people quickly determine if they want to read the entire report. Consequently, at least ten times as many people will read your Executive Summary as any other part of your work. It's like an advertisement for what you've done. If you want people to be excited about your project, then write an exciting, engaging Executive Summary!

Since an Executive Summary is so short, each section is usually only one or two sentences long. Consequently, every word is important to conveying your message. If a word is boring or vague, find a better one! If a word is not adding something important, cut it!

But, even with the Executive Summary brief length; don't be afraid to reinforce a key point by stating it in more than one way or referring to it in more than one section.

## How to Meet the Page Limit

Most authors agree that it is harder to write a short description of something than a long one. Here's a tip: for your first draft, don't be overly concerned about the length. Just make sure you include all the key information.

Then take your draft and start crossing out words, phrases, and sentences that are less important than others. Look for places where you can combine sentences in ways that shorten the total length.

Put it aside for a while, then come back and re-read your draft. With a fresh eye, you'll probably find new places to cut. Before you know it, you will have a tightly written Executive Summary.

## Checklist: a good project Executive Summary or Abstract

	Question	
<b>1</b>	Does your project Executive Summary/Abstract include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Introduction</li><li>• Problem Statement</li><li>• Procedures</li><li>• Results</li><li>• Conclusions</li></ul>	Yes/No
<b>2</b>	Did you review the list of "Things to Avoid" in a project Executive Summary/Abstract?	Yes/No
<b>3</b>	Did you write the Executive Summary/Abstract so that the reader is motivated to learn more about your project?	Yes/No