Abstract Guidelines

Tips for Writing Abstracts

What is an Abstract?

An abstract is a short statement about your research or project designed to give the reader a complete, yet concise, understanding of your paper’s research and findings. It gives a thorough overview of your paper or project.

What is the Purpose of an Abstract?

A well-prepared abstract allows a reader to quickly and accurately identify the basic content of your research or project. Readers should be able to read your abstract to see if the related research is of interest to them.

What Should be in an Abstract?

A model abstract should contain the following elements:

- a statement of the purpose of your study
- the research methods/methodology used to arrive at your results and/or conclusions
- the results observed
the conclusions drawn from your study and their significance

How to Structure an Abstract

The abstract should be no more than 250 words.

1. PURPOSE: Explain the purpose of your study/paper. Ideally in 1-3 sentences, state the primary objectives and scope of the study or the reasons why the document was written. Also state the rationale for your research. Why did you do the research? Is the topic you are researching an ignored or newly discovered one? Why is it significant? Here you should include your hypothesis if appropriate.

2. METHODS: In terms of methodology (research methods), clearly state the techniques or approaches used in your study. For papers concerned with non-experimental work (such as those in the humanities, some social sciences, and the fine arts) describe your sources and your use/interpretation of the sources.

3. RESULTS: Describe your results (the findings of your experimentation), the data collected, and effects observed as informatively and concisely as possible. These results may be experimental or theoretical, just remember to make note of that in your abstract. Give special priority in your abstract to new and verified findings that contradict previous theories. Mention any limits to the accuracy or reliability of your findings if appropriate.

4. CONCLUSION: Your conclusions should in essence describe the implications of the results: Why are the results of your study important to your field and how do they relate to the purpose of your investigation?

Two Examples of a Well-Structured Abstract

Dryland Grain Sorghum Water Use, Light Interception, and Growth Responses to Planting Geometry
J. L. Steiner

ABSTRACT

Crop yields are primarily water-limited under dryland production systems in semiarid regions. This study was conducted to determine whether the growing season water balance could be manipulated through planting geometry. The effects of row spacing, row direction, and plant population on the water use, light interception, and growth of grain sorghum [Sorghum bicolor (L.) Moench] were investigated at Bushland, TX, on a Pullman clay loam (fine, mixed, thermic Torrertic Paleustoll). In 1983, which had a dry growing season, narrow-row spacing and higher population increased seasonal evapotranspiration (ET) by 7 and 9 cvo, respectively, and shifted the partitioning of ET to the vegetative period. Medirti population crops yielded 6.2 and 2.3 Mg/ha of dry matter and grain, respectively. High population resulted in high dry matter (6.1 Mg/ha) and low grain yield (1.6 Mg/ha), whereas low population resulted in low dry matter (5.4 Mg/ha) and high grain yield (2.3 Mg/ha). Row direction did not affect water use or yield.
In 1984, dry matter production for a given amount of ET and light interception was higher in the narrow-row crops. Evapotranspiration was less for a given amount of light interception in the narrow-row crops and in the north-south row crops. In conclusion, narrow row planting geometry appears to increase the partitioning of ET to the transpiration component and may improve the efficiency of dryland cropping systems.

Inequalities Embedded in the United States Legal System through the Lens of Tribal Governments

Jessica Arthur Kathleen

ABSTRACT

Through the past 500 years, American Indians have been subjected to inequalities through the United States legal system as a result of the federal government’s jurisdiction in Indian country, thus making tribal governments less powerful in Indian country and further expanding a jurisdictional void. Using scholarly literature accessed through the University of Massachusetts Amherst library database, law reviews, congressional legislation, and Supreme Court holdings this paper examines how the tribal government’s power continues to be chipped away by Congress, through jurisdictional decisions and legislation, which develop in favor of the federal government. The three sovereign entities that have jurisdiction in Indian country are the federal government, tribal governments, and state governments. However, this judicial framework is complex and depends on the following: location, the crime, who committed the crime (the perpetrator), and whom the crime was committed against (the victim). Therefore, due to criminal jurisdiction in Indian country being based on the political status of American Indians it exemplifies inequalities in the United States legal system. In order to preserve and protect the economic, social, and cultural attributes of American Indians, tribal justice systems need to maintain their power. By taking away power from tribal government and allowing federal and state governments to prosecute crimes, it sends a message that tribal governments lack authority and are inferior to handle certain crimes. More importantly, the basic right of allowing tribal governments to maintain law within their reservations is fundamental to their survival as a community.

Additional Tips

- When possible, write your paper first, and then write the abstract.
The abstract should be approximately 250 words. Proofread your abstract several times -- submit your very best work.
Know your audience and target your abstract accordingly.
Have a peer read your abstract and then tell you what your research is about. If he or she has difficulty explaining your research, chances are your abstract requires revision.

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