

Writing Your Abstract: A Quick Guide

Your abstract is your first impression; it is how you engage your audience and convince them to engage with your work. Write with your audience in mind, so think about who you are trying to reach and write an abstract to cater to them. Remember, your abstract can change depending on your audience, meaning your presentation abstract for a conference can be completely different from a publication or assignment abstract so do not focus too intently on creating a one-size-fits-all version.

Critical Elements of Your Abstract

The Truth

Be sure you share the full story with your audience. This is not a time to be sensationalist; you want to be sure you are giving accurate and truthful information about your study and do so in a quick and engaging way. This is the most important piece of your abstract; it should guide all of your decisions.

The Why

State why your study is important. The why should be your first sentence. This can be filling a research gap, the urgency of your topic to the field, the importance of your research to solving a problem, or engaging in a debate. Whatever the reason your work is important, lead with

The What

What is your study about? Tell your audience in a concise, but specific way. Build from your why statement, lead your audience through your research. Tell them not only why your work is important but what specifically this project is about.

The How

Walk your audience, quickly, through how you conducted your research. Tell them your methodology and/or theoretical framework. You may want to mention your participants and how they were selected or identified, but depending on your research this may not be necessary.

The Conclusion and Findings

Share a brief, one sentence, summary of your major finding(s). You will not be able to share everything, so focus on the most important piece(s). Provide a quick wrap-up of any conclusions and/or the main argument from your project. Your conclusion should also include a quick closing statement that gives future directions for research, implications, or other important piece you want to leave your audience thinking about.

One Potential Template

The format for your abstract is simple and can be tailored to fit your personal style. However, here is one potential format that includes the above-listed critical elements in a fill in the blank format. You can modify this to fit your writing and presentation style but be sure to include all the elements!

In this field there is a significant problem in (the Why) _____

This project explored (the What) _____

It accomplished this by/through (the How) _____

This project found (the Findings) _____

These findings suggest (the Conclusion) _____

which is critical to/highlights potential implications/etc (the Closing Statement) _____

Example Abstracts

Behavioral Training and Support Groups to Empower Local Foster Parents *

Written by: Catie Smeyne, School of Education, University of Cincinnati

Each year, approximately a quarter of a million children are placed in the foster care system due to instances of childhood abuse, neglect, and/or parental incarceration (Neiheiser, 2015). The foster care system aims to provide necessary supports for youth in these displaced situations, but the evidence still suggests that placement in the foster care system exacerbates the risk for difficulties across behavioral, social, and academic domains (Chamberlain et al., 2008; Lawrence et al., 2006; Neiheiser, 2015). Though foster parent training is mandated by federal law, and supported by most state statutes, the majority of implemented foster parent trainings lack strong empirical support (Chamberlain et al., 2008). Therefore, despite the knowledge that youth in the foster care system are at a high risk for challenging problems, foster parents continue to lack meaningful supports to manage these issues (Chamberlain et al., 2008). Given limited government funding and statutes that fail to meet the needs of vulnerable children within the welfare system, there is a high need for accessible, evidence-based programming that both equips and supports committed foster parents to mediate the needs of foster youth (Rhodes et al., 2001).

The field of applied behavior analysis (ABA) offers a potential source of evidence-based solutions that may better equip foster parents to care for youth within the foster care system (Chamberlain et al., 2008). Though research in ABA has predominantly focused on treatment for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, evidence suggests that the principles of behavior analysis can and should be applied to a wider variety of populations (Cooper et al., 2020). There has been a recent and advantageous push to apply trauma informed practices within ABA research and practice, which offers an even more promising opportunity for the principles of ABA to effectively serve vulnerable populations, including foster youth (Lotty et al., 2020; Rajaraman et al., 2022). This oral presentation will describe a research study performed to evaluate whether an established behavioral parent training program, Boys Town Common Sense Parenting, can address the unique needs of foster parents, and whether continuation of relevant supports using a structured peer-group supervision model allows foster parents to feel both equipped and empowered to implement positive caretaking practices.

This session will describe the experiences of a diverse group of nine foster parents who participated in the program, including a discussion on the promising results of the behavioral skills training for both experienced and novice foster parents. We will also discuss lessons learned and the role behavioral professionals (e.g., BCBAs, school psychologists) can play in efforts to support foster families and youth.

The Impact of Mass Shootings on the Stock Market*

Written by: Lauren Jaeger, Megan Rivera, & Matthew Lehman, School of Criminal Justice, University of Cincinnati

Mass shootings are a unique phenomenon in the United States that affect the economy and society in many ways. Recent mass shooting events have contributed to a growing public concern surrounding these incidents. A cross-national study of 171 countries concluded that from 1966 to 2012, the United States accounted for 31% of mass shootings, while only comprising 5% of the world's population. Existing research on mass shootings has largely focused on the impact of mass shootings on gun sales, gun control policy, mental health outcomes, and various socioeconomic conditions.

Comparatively, fewer studies have been conducted analyzing the economic impact of mass shootings, particularly in relation to the stock market. This project provides an investigation into the effects mass shootings have on various sectors of the stock market. To assess the impact, we investigated the trend in stock values of several publicly traded companies following notable high fatality mass shootings. Findings reveal significant stock change in each of the 7 categories. These findings suggest that high fatality mass shootings correlate with changes in the stock market, making it critical to investigate this phenomenon further to see how these changes may affect our nation's economy.