# Understanding Abstracts [Video Transcript]

You’ve narrowed your search and filtered your results and located some articles with promising titles, but how do you decide which of your results you need to read further?

That’s right, by reading the abstract. But what is an abstract?

An abstract is a short summary of the journal article, usually 100 to 200 words in length.

Some abstracts may use subheadings to help clearly define the content, whereas others may just be a short paragraph. Exact layout will depend on the guidelines for the individual journal, however the content will usually be similar.

Background: this isn’t always included, but may give an indication as to why the research was undertaken.

Aims and Objectives: here the author will state the purpose of their research and explain what they were trying to achieve. It will outline their hypothesis.

Methods: this is an important section and outlines the research methods used. It will give an early indication if the research is primary or secondary and the types of methods used. The types of methods used will help you decide if the research is quantitative, qualitative or a mix of methods.

Results: the results section will summarise key findings from the research. Remember that the abstract is very short, so this may just include headline results.

Conclusion: the author may also include a short conclusion which indicates the significance of their research and what the results mean.

If there are words you don’t recognise or understand in the abstract, don’t worry, this happens to all of us at some time. Do a quick search to get a definition or look in a textbook to gain a broader understanding of the topic.

It is also useful to note any keywords included as these may help you expand your search further.

Once you are satisfied that the abstract indicates relevancy and quality, it is important to read the article in full to understand the research.