

Assignment type: *Abstract*

Source: *Used with students in various writing courses and workshops at McGill University*

Structuring the content of an abstract

Swales and Feak (2009) offer guidelines for structuring a conference abstract (p. 45). They analyzed abstracts to see what writers in a variety of academic disciplines did, and from the examples they looked at, they extrapolated the following features of abstracts. These features can be used as guidelines for writing abstracts.

- a) Outlining/promoting/problematising the research field or topic
- b) Justifying this particular piece of research/study
- c) Methodological, demographic, or procedural comments
- d) Summarizing the main findings
- e) Highlighting its outcome/results
- f) Further observations (implications, limitations, future developments)

Instructions:

1. Read a peer's draft abstract.
2. Underline as many features as you can that appear in the abstract and on the Swales and Feak list. Use the letters a) to f) to identify the features.
3. Discuss your findings with your peer.

Swales, J.M. & Feak, C. B. (2009). *Abstracts and the writing of abstracts*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.