

## Directions for Major Assignment #2: Abstract ENC 3241

In this assignment, you will be writing an abstract for the article below (including an MLA citation) and submitting the abstract in a memo format.

An abstract summarizes the purpose and highlights the major points of a longer piece of writing. Abstracts are written for many formal reports, academic articles, and many other longer works. Their primary purpose is to enable readers to decide whether to read the entire work. As you read in your textbook, there are different types of Abstracts. For this assignment, you will be doing an **informative abstract**, so you will be highlighting key takeaways for readers. You will summarize or “abstract” one page of a much larger report. Abstracts summarize the information in a single article, so you will **not** need to do any outside research. You should also **not** editorialize or make up information to add to your word count.

Your abstract will be about:

*Pew Research Center: “STEM Jobs See Uneven Progress in Increasing Gender, Racial and Ethnic Diversity”* by Richard Fry, Brian Kennedy, and Cary Funk.

<https://www.pewresearch.org/science/2021/04/01/stem-jobs-see-uneven-progress-in-increasing-gender-racial-and-ethnic-diversity/>

You do not need to read the entire report; just write the abstract about the page in the link above. You should also note that the format above is not in correct MLA format.

### Required Elements:

1. You should include the following information in the header of your paper using a memo format:

To: Professor Jones  
From: (your name)  
Date: (the date)  
Re: (insert appropriate header here)

*Do not include a title; “Abstract assignment” in the “Re” field. Instead, be descriptive and tell me what the topic is. After the header information, add a line break before the citation.*

2. Begin the body of the memo by providing the full citation information for the article in MLA format (if you don’t know how to do this, the OWL at Purdue [<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/>] is a good online source). Make sure to provide all of the appropriate information, including the access date. Add another line break before you begin the abstract.

3. Next, provide your abstract. Be sure to read the assigned pages on abstracts in our textbook before beginning this assignment. You should read the article carefully to make sure you extract the required information. Remember that I will have read the article, so I will be looking to see that you capture its essential information succinctly. While this is a short assignment, it is also one that you will have to spend some time on. Please see the sample abstract at the end of this assignment description.

The abstract must be a self-contained unit, a complete report-in-miniature. Within a single paragraph, you need to present quite a bit of specific information that is both readable and that

## Directions for Major Assignment #2: Abstract ENC 3241

captures the scope of the article. *You do not have to follow the order in which the authors present information in your abstract.* After the abstract, include your word count in parentheses. It should be between 290-310 words. (See next page for details)

*Do these things:*

- Keep the abstract in one paragraph and single-space your text.
- Include enough specific information about the article to satisfy most of the needs of a busy executive, student, or teacher.
- Tell the reader *what* the article says, and not just *that* the article says it (i.e. Don't say "The authors talk about income inequality." Instead, tell me what they said about income inequality.)
- Make sure that the information that you include in the abstract is accurate and reflects what the authors actually say.
- Use fluent, easy-to-read prose, broadly following Standard Academic English. Please see the sample abstract below for a good model.
- Be consistent in tone and emphasis with the report. You do not need to follow the arrangement, wording, or proportion of the original. In fact, reorganizing information to put similar information together can make the abstract more readable.
- You should make use of abbreviations and numerals that will not confuse the reader. For example, "DNA" can certainly stand for deoxyribonucleic acid.
- The abstract should be about 300 words long. It should not be shorter than 290 words or longer than 310 words. Include a word count at the end of your abstract in parentheses [e.g., (304 words)]. It is easy to find the word count using Word. Any abstract shorter or longer than this will be significantly marked down.

*Do not do these things:*

- Include tables or illustrations.
- Quote, ask questions, or use exclamation points.
- Use jargon. It is your job to make the article understandable to busy executives, students, or teachers. Throwing fancy words around without working hard to explain your ideas undermines good communication in all professions.
- Make up information or add your own research to the abstract. The abstract should only be about this particular article.
- Use contractions. In other words, use "Do not" as opposed to "Don't."
- Start your abstract with the phrase "this article," "this report," or "the author." I would like to make the point that "Researchers who are engaged in the prevention of adolescent depression are restructuring their methods" is a stronger first sentence of a summary than "This article examines the restructuring of research programs that are engaged in the prevention of adolescent depression."
- In the body of the abstract, there is no need to mention the title, the names of the authors, their institutional affiliations, or their academic and/or professional credentials. The citation information is enough.

### **Other directions:**

Submit to Webcourses in a .doc, .docx, or pdf document by the due date and time.

Directions for Major Assignment #2: Abstract  
ENC 3241

**Sample abstract:**

There are several descriptions of abstracts in our textbook, but they do not really describe the general kind of abstract that I want you to write. This example comes from a previous course, and it is a good example of this type of document. This writer carefully read (and reread) the article and skillfully summarized it. There are no wasted words, and the writing is very clear.

MacNeilage, Peter F., Lesley J. Rogers, and Giorgio Vallortigara. "Evolutionary Origins of Your Right and Left Brain." *Scientific American* 301.1 24 June 2009.

Over the past few decades, the scientific community has shifted from a belief that right-handedness and strongly lateralized brains (where each hemisphere specializes to perform certain tasks) are uniquely human traits to the knowledge that other animals also have strongly lateralized brains with task distribution between hemispheres similar to that in humans. Despite this shift, many still consider humans unique, claiming that lateralization in other animals is unrelated to lateralization in humans. One hypothesis that has been gaining support claims that specialization between hemispheres began about 500 million years ago and evolved through descent with modification. Originally, the left hemisphere specialized in controlling behavior under ordinary circumstances, with the right specializing in detecting and responding to unexpected stimuli. Many animals tend to use the right side of the body, and thus the left hemisphere, in ordinary actions like feeding or communication. Humpback whales usually develop abrasions for feeding only on the right side of the jaw. Sea lions, dogs, and monkeys use the left hemisphere to interpret calls from other members of their species. Most chimpanzees use the right hand when manipulating objects and communicating. The right hemisphere is used in situations requiring immediate action, such as recognizing social companions and behaviors or avoiding predators. Fish, amphibians, birds, and mammals react quicker to predators seen from the left (with the right hemisphere) than from the right. In nonthreatening situations, many vertebrates watch for predators with the left eye. Strongly lateralized brains are more efficient at multi-tasking than weakly lateralized brains. In one study, chicks with strongly lateralized brains could simultaneously separate food from pebbles and respond to a predator's approach, while chicks with weakly lateralized brains were slower to separate the food from the pebbles and failed to notice the predator. The realization that lateralization is not uniquely human leads to questions about consciousness and self-awareness in other animals. (309 words)

Directions for Major Assignment #2: Abstract  
ENC 3241

**Grading:**

Criteria	Ratings					Pts
Abstract Content That you accurately summarize the information in the article for readers to understand the key findings and takeaways						4.5 pts
	4.5 to >3.38 pts Full Marks	3.38 to >2.25 pts Meets most expectations	2.25 to >1.13 pts Fair Meets some of the assignment requirements	1.13 to >0.0 pts Meets few expectations	0 pts No Marks	
Abstract Prose and Style That you use easy to understand prose that broadly conforms to academic English and remains consistent in tone and style						4.5 pts
	4.5 to >3.38 pts Full Marks	3.38 to >2.25 pts Meets most expectations	2.25 to >1.13 pts Fair Meets some of the assignment requirements	1.13 to >0.0 pts Meets few expectations	0 pts No Marks	
MLA Citation That you include a correctly formatted MLA citation	1.5 to >1.13 pts Full Marks	1.13 to >0.78 pts Meets most expectations	0.78 to >0.38 pts Fair Meets some of the assignment requirements	0.38 to >0.0 pts Meets few expectations	0 pts No Marks	1.5 pts
Memo Format and Word Count That you include your abstract in a correctly formatted memo and remain within the word-count						1.5 pts
	1.5 to >1.13 pts Full Marks	1.13 to >0.78 pts Meets most expectations	0.78 to >0.38 pts Fair Meets some of the assignment requirements	0.38 to >0.0 pts Meets few expectations	0 pts No Marks	
Total Points: 12						