# **Guide to Abstracts | QC Writing Center**

**What is an abstract?**

* An abstract is a 150- to 250-word paragraph that provides readers with a quick overview of your essay or report and its contents. It should express the thesis (or central idea) and the key points made, as well as any implications or applications of the research discussed in the paper. In other words, it is a concise summary of the entire paper.
* The function of an abstract is to objectively **describe**, not to evaluate or defend, the paper.
* The abstract should begin with a brief but precise statement of the problem or issue, followed by a description of the research method and design, the major findings, the conclusions reached, and the implications of the findings.
* Abstracts should **not** be written in the first person or the simple future tense (“In this essay, I will…”).
* Abstracts also contain a list of important keywords: these facilitate database searches and enable readers to further gloss the contents.

**An ineffective abstract looks like:**   
This paper will look at the human genome project and its goals. I will prove that scientists have ethical and moral questions about genetic engineering because of this project.

**A better worded abstract looks like:**   
Begun in 1988, the human genome project intends to map the 23 chromosomes that provide the blueprint for the human species. The project has both scientific and ethical goals. The scientific goals underscore the advantages of the genome project, including identifying and curing diseases and enabling people to select the traits of their offspring, among other opportunities. Ethically, however, the project raises serious questions about the morality of genetic engineering. To handle both the medical opportunities and ethical dilemmas posed by the genome project, scientists need to develop a clear set of principles for genetic engineering and to continue educating the public about the genome project.

Keywords: human genome project, human genome, genome, chromosomes, scientific ethics, genetics, genetic diseases, genetic engineering