

Workshop:  
Writing for a scholarly journal  
10 June 2021

# Writing a title, keywords and abstract to make your article discoverable

Louise van Heerden  
SciELO SA Operations Manager  
Academy of Science of South Africa



## Writing to be discovered:

The aim is to optimise the discoverability of your article by:

- choosing the right title and keywords; and
- writing an abstract that search engines will find.

# Google Scholar

You will also recognise these search (limit) options from the search screens in databases offered by academic libraries

	Search Index	Search Term	
	Title		
Operator	Operator	Search Index	Search Term
OR	AND	Keyword	
Operator	Operator	Search Index	Search Term
OR	AND	Abstract	

# Writing to be discovered: make your reader come to you



- Where the haystack represents all the articles on your topic in the world;
- The needle represents your article; and
- The magnet represents your choice of title and keywords.



# Step 1 – The title

## Create a search-engine-friendly title

- An accurate and concise article title will make readers **want to read** the abstract of your article.
- **Short, easy to understand, and conveys the important aspects** of the research.
- No unnecessary words.
- Provide enough information about what makes this article **interesting**.
- Indicate the **relevance** of the research to the reader.



## Step 1 – The title (cont.)

- Keep in mind the **audience** of your article / the people who will benefit from reading your article:
  - What are they researching?
  - What are they looking for?Make sure your title provides an easily discoverable answer to these questions.
- Think about how **you** search for articles in your field and which words and phrases will **work well** in the field of your research?



## Step 2 – The keywords

Your keywords are words or phrases that searchers would be likely to type into the search block to find your research.

Keywords do not necessarily appear in the title of the article.



Google Scholar





## Step 2 – The keywords (cont.)

You can use specific phenomena or issues as keywords, e.g. climate change, air pollution, sustainable development or genetic engineering.

Be specific – not too broad or vague

Test the keywords on Google Scholar or a subject database yourself and see if you find similar articles.

Google Scholar



# Step 3 - The abstract

Writing to be discovered:



The abstract of your article can be compared to the trailer of a movie (an 'abstract' of the full movie, as such).

So, write it in a way that will **appeal** to the reader and make the reader want to read the **full article**.



FULL MOVIE

abstract



Full-text





## Step 3 (cont.)

### Structure of the abstract

- Indicate the purpose of your research (**Why** you did it?)
- Describe the research method you used (**How** you did it?)
- **What** you did?
- Explain the results of your research (What you found?)
- **What** it means?
- **What** recommendations arise from your article ?
- For a good example see: <https://sajs.co.za/article/view/8607>

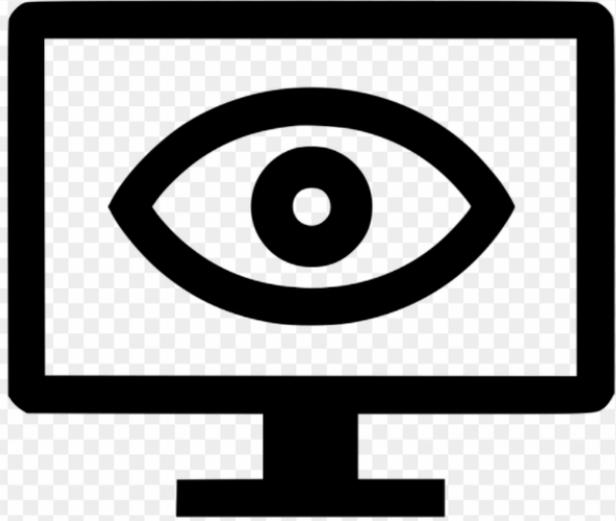
# Other tips for writing abstracts

Writing to be discovered:



- Write the abstract **after** you've written the article (clearer picture)
- Check the journal's recommended word count
- What to avoid:
  - New information that you did not refer to in the article.
  - Undefined abbreviations, e.g., UP -> University of Pretoria
- Ask a colleague to check your abstract for you.
- Recheck the journal's *abstract guidelines* and its *target audience*.

Writing to be discovered:



Track the citations to your research over time

Dimensions: Citations received

See: <https://badge.dimensions.ai/details/id/pub.109194538>



# Acknowledgements

At the end of the article

Some search engines and databases do pick up these details

- Sources of funding
- Details of people that contributed to the article or research, but aren't considered as co-authors.

## Acknowledgements

We are grateful for the critical feedback provided by the Education Consultant of the Faculty, Dr Ina Louw. We thank Juan Erwee from the Disability Unit for generous support for the student and the researchers, and the student for his willingness to share his learning experiences with the researchers. We are also grateful for the participation of the lecturers, tutors, lab managers, and librarians. This research was partially funded from a DHET grant for Scholarship of Teaching and Learning.



Support provided  
The Faculty  
People by name  
Students  
Researchers  
Lecturers  
DHET, etc.

Further reading:

American Journal Experts <http://www.aje.com/en/arc/editing-tip-writing-acknowledgments/> and  
Acknowledgement Sample <https://acknowledgementsample.com/acknowledgement-sample-for-a-research-paper/>