Writing Good Abstracts According to APA (2018-2019)

An abstract is a brief, yet comprehensive summary of the paper. It tells the reader all the key points within the paper including summary findings or conclusions drawn.

Here are a few key points about the abstract:

- It should be on a separate page that is numbered consecutively with the rest of the paper and immediately follows the title page (therefore, it is page 2).
- The title of ‘Abstract’ is centered at the top of the page but is not bolded. The abstract paragraph begins on the next double-spaced line below and is not indented.
- The abstract is 150-250 words in length.
- No abbreviations should be used in the abstract (they should be spelled out) even if they are used in the paper.
- The abstract will be the last thing you write once the paper is complete. Only then can you truly summarize everything in the paper. Because it is a summary, it should be written in present when discussing results or conclusions and in past tense to describe methods or measurements taken -- but not in future tense.
- The abstract does not evaluate what you’ve written or try to justify it or further support it. There should be no ideas or information in the abstract that are not already in the paper. The abstract is simply reporting what the paper contains.

For further information on abstracts, see pages 25-27 of the 6th ed. of the APA Publication Manual.
Abstract

For the abstract, write a 150-250 word summary of the paper on the second page. Note the page format: The abstract begins on page 2 after the title page with the title of ‘Abstract’ centered at the top of the page but not bolded and the running head appearing top-left but without the words “Running head.” Also note the format for the paragraph, which is not indented. The abstract should include the key points you discuss in the paper as well as any conclusions you have drawn. For example, you might write the following for a paper on the ways in which stereotyping of patients by nurses might affect care in hospital settings. Two types of stereotyping, racial stereotyping and illness stereotyping, are defined in this paper according to a health care perspective. Generally, nurses’ perceptions are that stereotyping does not occur in hospital settings. However, patients’ perceptions are that illness stereotyping is common while racial stereotyping is somewhat less common. Effects of stereotyping can be divided into physical, psychological, and social outcomes and may include, for example, inadequate care, lower self esteem, and social isolation. Nurses need to become more aware of their own biases and stereotyping tendencies and actively work to overcome these to ensure optimal patient care.