The Art of Abstract Writing

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Your title is your sign
Your abstract is your shop window
What does a bad abstract look like?

What’s wrong with it?

A bad abstract might:
1) fail to convey content,
2) fail to convey importance,
3) be too long,
4) take too long to get to the point, etc...

“The VAT treatment of cloud computing: legal issues and practical difficulties”

In this contribution, the author deals with some selected legal and practical issues related to the VAT treatment of cloud computing technologies. Cloud computing is major a phase of development and expansion, and is likely to have new tax challenges in the future. In particular, in the first part of the contribution some aspects of the relationships between cloud computing and the ‘VAT concepts’ of fixed establishment and immovable property are discussed. In the second part, some practical issues deriving from the localisation and identification of the customer are presented with a special eye on the most recent OECD proposals.
Is this a good abstract?

“Improving Academic Advising Through Student Seminars: A Case Study”

Effective advising can be a challenge for most criminal justice and criminology programs due to the high enrollment and the variety of careers available in the field. One technique designed to address these challenges is the group advising method. The purpose of this study was to examine the details, processes, and execution of a particular group advising method, called student advising seminars, implemented over a two-year period in a criminal justice department at a four-year state-owned university. Preliminary data measuring student accountability and satisfaction are also examined. The findings indicate student advising seminars, as it is described in this case study, have a potential of providing effective and efficient advising.
Is this a good abstract?

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"Policing and social identity: procedural justice, inclusion and cooperation between police and public"

Accounts of the social meaning of policing and of the relationship between police and citizen converge on the idea that police behaviour carries important identity-relevant information. Opinions of and ideas about the police are implicated in the formation of social identities that relate to the social groups it represents – nation, state and community. Procedural justice theory suggests that judgements about the fairness of the police will be the most important factor in such processes. Fairness promotes a sense of inclusion and value, while unfairness communicates denigration and exclusion. Furthermore, positive social identities in relation to the police should on this account promote cooperation with it. This article presents an empirical test of these ideas in the context of the British policing. Data from a survey of young Londoners are used to show that perceptions of police fairness are indeed associated with social identity, and in turn social identity can be linked to cooperation. Yet these relationships were much stronger among those with multiple national identities. Police behaviour appeared more identity relevant for people who felt that they were citizens of a non-UK country, but for those who identified only as British there was a weaker link between procedural fairness and social identity, and here legitimacy judgements were the main ‘drivers’ of cooperation. Theoretical and policy implications are discussed.

Keywords: policing, procedural justice, social identity, cooperation
Elements of a good abstract

• Readability
• Clarity
• Coherence
• Succinctness
• Impact
“Regulatory challenges of robotics: some guidelines for addressing legal and ethical issues”

Robots are slowly, but certainly, entering people’s professional and private lives. They require the attention of regulators due to the challenges they present to existing legal frameworks and the new legal and ethical questions they raise. This paper discusses four major regulatory dilemmas in the field of robotics: how to keep up with technological advances; how to strike a balance between stimulating and prevailing regulatory activity; effective role and context of regulators; – that of the role and innovative context of robotics. KEYWORDS: Robotics, regulation, regulatory dilemmas, technology regulation, smart regulation, responsible innovation, soft law
Elements of a good abstract

Accessibility

• Key Words

• Use of Language

• Reader Perspective
New Terrorism is increasingly deploying women in the field as combatants. Female suicide bombers have proven to be highly effective, precisely because of the persistence of gender stereotypes in target societies. Women terrorists convey a powerful message of political seriousness, heighten the sense of intimidation and threat, and attract greater mass media attention—all key strategic objectives of New Terrorism. Gender stereotypes are also at work in explanations for women's recruitment or unwillingness to participate in the conflict: they are viewed as venuable or unvaluable or undisciplined, or they are considered more political hotspots. 

Sisters in Terrorism? Exploding Stereotypes
Kathy Laster & Edna Erez
Pages 63-69 | Published online 31 May 2015

Keywords: stereotypes, terrorism, war on women
Elements of a good abstract

• Argument
• Importance
• Interest
“Extreme weather event attribution science and climate change litigation: an essential step in the causal chain?”

The 2017 North Atlantic hurricane season caused the highest disaster-related losses ever seen in the United States, with many people asking questions about the causes and liabilities for the impacts of these kinds of events. As climate-related loss and damage mount, there is growing interest in the role of law in dealing with the complex and multi-scalar problem of climate change. This article builds on a shorter piece entitled ‘Acts of God, human influence and litigation’ published by the authors in Nature Geoscience in August 2017. It is an interdisciplinary and cross-jurisdictional analysis of the emerging science of extreme weather event attribution (which analyses the human-influenced likelihood of an extreme weather event) and the role of the courts in determining liability.

Keywords: climate change, climate change litigation, attribution science, duty of care, causation, proximate cause, foreseeability, climate change adaptation, loss and damage, climate change liability
These are the most important things to remember when it comes to writing your abstract:

**Readability**
- Must be self-contained and make sense on its own

**Argument**
- Clearly state your contribution
- Must contain a clear message
- Why is your contribution important?

**Accessibility**
- Accurately reflect your article’s content
- Clear, straightforward language
- Key Words
- Concise – stick to word limits
- What does your audience want to learn?

**Audience**
- How does it contribute to your audience’s knowledge?
- Use language your audience is familiar with
Links to Further Reading

https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2011/06/20/essential-guide-writing-good-abstracts/

http://wordsinbold.com/six-reasons-research-abstract-poorly-written/

https://authorservices.taylorandfrancis.com/abstracts-and-titles/

https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/abstracts/

http://advice.writing.utoronto.ca/types-of-writing/abstract/

https://www.editage.com/insights/a-10-step-guide-to-make-your-research-paper-abstract-more-effective