

Research Paper Outline Example: Abstract Style

A research paper outline in *abstract style* consists of short answers to the essential points of your work. Briefly answer these key questions to give direction and shape to your research paper draft. List main points first and then fill out your working outline using more complete sentences and arguments.

1. Why did you decide to do what you did? (background, research problem/question)

Main points in bullet form:

- *since COVID, many university classes are online*
- *online classes save time (no commuting)*
- *Research question: do students attend class more consistently?*

Main points in sentence form:

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, many university courses around the world have been moved online, at least temporarily. Since students have been saving time on commuting, I wondered if attendance rates have increased overall.

2. What exactly did you do? (thesis statement, purpose statement)

Main points in bullet form:

- *attendance scores before (offline) vs during (online) COVID*

Main points in sentence form:

I compared attendance scores for courses that were taught both before (offline) and during (online) the COVID-19 pandemic at my university.

3. How did you do it? (methods, study design)

Main points in bullet form:

- *five subjects (business, law, medicine, psychology, art & design)*
- *one course per subject*
- *asked professors to send me attendance scores*
- *independent samples t-tests (offline vs online)*

Main points in sentence form:

I selected five popular subjects (business, law, medicine, psychology, art & design) and one general course per subject (e.g., "economic theory", "history of art"); then I contacted the professors in charge and asked them to provide me with anonymized attendance scores.

If a professor did not reply or did not agree to send me any data, I chose a different course in the same subject until I found a professor who agreed to support my data collection.

I compared before and after attendance scores with independent samples t-tests.

4. What did you find? (results/findings)

Main points in bullet form:

- *no change: medicine & law*
- *attendance dropped: all other subjects*
- *no difference between ♂ and ♀*

Main points in sentence form:

Attendance did not significantly change for medicine and law, but slightly dropped for the other three subjects since the introduction of online classes. I found no difference between male and female students within the same subject.

5. What does it mean? (interpretation of findings, implications)

Main points in bullet form:

- *students saved time on traveling but attendance similar/lower*

Main points in sentence form:

Even though students saved time on traveling between their home and the campus during the COVID-19 pandemic, they did not attend classes more consistently since classes were moved online. In some subjects, they missed more classes than before.

6. What should you/we/someone else do now? (future research, limitations)

Main points in bullet form:

- *other explanations?*
- *maybe my sample lives close to campus?*
- *maybe psychological effects of COVID life?*
- *make questionnaire to find out more*

Main points in sentence form:

Since I do not have any other information about the students, I can only speculate on potential explanations for my findings. Next, I will put together a comprehensive questionnaire to assess how students have been coping with online classes and how the experiences from this time can benefit university teaching and learning in general.