MSEF
Massachusetts Science
+ Engineering Fair

Project Component – Abstract

What is an Abstract?

After completing their project, students will often have a lot of information that they can share. An abstract is a single paragraph that summarizes the entire project and what the student has accomplished, thus focusing on the essential information. An abstract should be brief (200-250 words) and should summarize the background, methodology, results, and conclusions of a project. Although the abstract is the first section a reader will encounter when they open a project report, it will be the last section that a student writes and often takes some editing and rewriting.

Why should you create an Abstract?

In the presentation of their work, students must effectively explain their research and why it was interesting to investigate, but they may only have a 90-second elevator ride to tell someone. Students can think of the abstract as an "elevator speech": creating an abstract helps them to identify the key findings and essential details of their project and communicate them in a concise manner. Additionally, abstracts are typically necessary to publish project reports in peer-reviewed journals and present at professional conferences, thus giving students experience.

Setting Up Your Abstract

Basic Requirements:

- The question and hypothesis (OR design problem and statement of purpose)
- A description of the experimental design or prototype
- A brief outline of methods
- A summary of results and what they mean
- A conclusion
- Any ideas for future research on this topic (optional - dependent on remaining space)

For examples, **search the Project Database** to see abstracts from the International Science and Engineering Fair.