

Abstract

The “Abstract” section presents the entire lab report in miniature. Abstracts must be quite short, running only a single paragraph. Journals impose different length and style requirements, to which you must pay careful attention.

Abstracts must be strong enough to stand on their own. Your abstract will probably be placed in a collection of abstracts. Readers browse these collections to determine which lab reports are worth reading. If you are trying to attract readers, you should expend a fair amount of energy on the abstract. Note that far more readers will read your abstract than will read the rest of your lab report.

QUANTUM LEAP

I recommend writing the abstract after you have written the rest of the lab report. By writing it last, you can lift key sentences from other parts of the lab report and use them (or slightly modified versions of them) in your abstract.

The following list presents a possible template for creating an abstract:

1. Begin with a sentence or two that summarizes the hypothesis that your experiment addresses. You may optionally phrase this opening as a rhetorical question.
2. In a sentence or two, summarize relevant research on the hypothesis.
3. In two or three sentences, describe the experiment.
4. In one to three sentences, summarize the results.
5. Conclude with a sentence explaining why the results are important.

Abstract

Does a child’s focus correlate with barometric pressure? If so, does it correlate positively or negatively? Tucker (1999) hypothesized a negative correlation, but this assertion has never been tested. Our team used the MISHA CPT to measure the focus of a group of 150 third-grade students. We divided the students into three groups of 50 students. One group took the MISHA CPT when barometric pressure was low, another group took it when barometric pressure was neutral, and the final group took it when barometric pressure was high. The results found that children focused significantly better when barometric pressure was low than when barometric pressure was neutral or high. The results suggest that when diagnosing ADHD, practitioners should give the CPT when barometric pressure is neutral.

