

Writing Assignment 2

Due at beginning of lab, November 3.

Write a *Presentation Abstract* for the projectile motion experiment.

This will be very similar to the “Abstract” as described in the lab manual (page 7). You should always think of an Abstract as being a summary of a longer presentation of results, such as the *Brief Report* that you wrote previously. A good way to understand what should be in an Abstract is to imagine writing a full Brief Report, and then summarizing it without losing any of the important points. In fact, in the practice of research science, the writing of an Abstract frequently **does** occur after writing the full-blown report, journal article, or whatever.

There are actually two categories of Abstracts, depending on whether they are the summary of a written report (such as a journal article submitted for publication), or the summary of an oral presentation (such as a talk or poster presented at a conference).

An *Article Abstract* is written with the knowledge that a full written report will be published, in which anyone who is interested can read about the details. Therefore, the function of an Article Abstract is more to allow others to quickly find your work, understand what it is, and to entice them to read the full report. Since all the details will be published, and since the abstracts need to be archived for easy searching, there are stringent limitations on the type of contents. This is the kind of abstract described in the lab manual.

A *Presentation Abstract* still serves to entice people to come listen to your presentation. However, the abstract itself may be the only thing that will be published in print. At the same time, it is unlikely that the abstracts will be archived. Because of these two facts, there are often less stringent limitations on Presentation Abstracts:

- A few equations are usually allowed, although no derivations.
- One not-too-complex figure, graph, or table may be allowed. We will allow one here.
- The length may at times be a bit longer. For this assignment, the limit is 1.5 pages (12pt font, double-spaced) **including** any graphs, etc.

Key items, in either type of Abstract, are conciseness and high information density. For example,

- A title page is wholly inappropriate
- Don't use headings such as “**Statement of Purpose:** In this lab...” In fact, even the stock phrase “The purpose of this lab was” is a waste of words. Instead, your statement of purpose sentence should get straight to the point.
- Similarly, a list of equipment followed by a separate description of how it functioned is a waste of space. A single sentence can serve both functions.
- Minor or inconsequential equipment should be omitted. Everyone can guess that you used a meter stick to measure lengths. It makes no difference which computer program you used to make your graph. In fact, it makes no difference whether you used a computer at all. You presumably would have obtained the same results with a slide rule, except that it would have taken much more time.