Writing informative abstracts
Abstracts are often the least considered but most important part of any paper. Most readers of a journal will read most of the abstracts, but very few will read the full papers. Perhaps 95% of readers will read only the abstract. The need for abstracts to be terse often causes difficulty and can taint what is otherwise a perfectly acceptable style of writing. The following suggestions should help to reduce the need for authors to re-write their abstracts.

The abstract should not be a table of contents in prose, neither should it be an introduction. It should be informative. Tell the reader what the research was about, how it was undertaken and what was discovered, but not how the poster or paper is organized. The main findings must be summarized. If there are too many of them, then just exemplify them in the abstract. The essential elements of the abstract are:

• Background: A simple opening sentence or two placing the work in context
• Aims: One or two sentences giving the purpose of the work
• Method(s): One or two sentences explaining what was done
• Results: One or two sentences indicating the main findings
• Conclusions: One sentence giving the most important consequence of the work.

The following guidelines have been extracted from recent criticisms of real abstracts. This may help to overcome some of the most frequent problems:

• Do not commence with "this paper…", "this report…" or similar. It is better to write about the research than about the paper
• Similarly, do not explain the sections or parts of the paper
• Avoid sentences that end in "…is described", "…is reported", "…is analysed" or similar. These are simply too vague to be informative
• Do not begin sentences with "it is suggested that…", "it is believed that…", "it is felt that…" or similar. In every case, the four words can be omitted without damaging the essential message
• Do not write in the first person in any form. Thus, not only should you avoid 'I', but also 'we', "the author", "the writer" and so on. Again, this is because the abstract should be about the research, not about the act of writing
How to use Web CT

1. Get to the web page, either through the link off of my home page or by typing:

http://elvis.sccd.ctc.edu:8900/

on your favorite browser

2. Click "Log in to MyWebCT" Your user name is the first letter of your first name followed by your last name without any spaces. Remember, this is the first name you registered under.

Your password is the last six digits of your student number, which is not your social security number. I have used the name you registered under, so make sure you use your legal name and not nicknames. If that doesn’t work, then try adding a “2” after your last name, and try again.

Example: Joe Bogus with a student number 970-05-0202.

Login name: jbogus
Password: 050202

Click “Log in”.

3. Click on “AST100TF”.

4. On the left side of the screen, click, under Evaluation Tools, on “My Grades”. Make sure that everything you think you’ve turned in has a numerical score next to it; if not, talk to me during class. For further details, click the “View statistics” to see how you are doing compared to your colleagues on exams. Enjoy!

5. Don’t forget to log out. Remember to do this so that your grades are not easily accessible to the next user of the computer!