

DARREL S. METCALFE STUDENT MANUSCRIPT CONTEST

How to write a winning student manuscript

The American Society of Agronomy, Crop Science Society of America, and Soil Science Society of America sponsors the National Student Manuscript Contest. Students from active SASES clubs compete on both the local and national level.

Before you begin

Before you begin writing, acquaint yourself with the contest rules, think of a newsworthy topic, consult with your club advisor or department head, organize your information, and be aware of the deadlines—both locally and nationally.

Read the accompanied brochure—"Darrel S. Metcalfe Student Manuscript Contest Official Rules." Note rule: "Each paper must be an original effort by one author. General worth is important. Each author is encouraged to select an appropriate subject and title, but is encouraged to consult with others to find out what might make a good subject." Remember that the top three winning manuscripts will be reviewed for potential publication. You will be writing an article ranging in style from a popular magazine to a journal article, so spend time reading current issues of farm and trade magazines, as well as appropriate journals.

Your manuscript should be factual, not your personal opinion. It should contain valuable information to U.S. farmers, preferably the large agricultural sectors of our country—the Corn Belt, as opposed to Iowa, or the Southeast.

To assist in finding an idea that can be described in a 4 to 6 page article, contact some of the graduate students in your department or attend graduate or senior seminars, and ask permission to report on someone's work. Incorporate the contest into a paper, perhaps required by one of your professors.

Remember that the contest judges are interested in new research information, not something already printed in a farm magazine.

How to write the manuscript

Once you have decided on a topic and have discussed the idea with the researcher or your advisor, you're ready to begin writing. Again, review the rules listed in "Official Rules." Note rule: "The literary style of the paper will depend upon the format chosen (original research report, term paper, or popular magazine article). The technical style must be that of the *ASA Style Manual*, specifically that of the *Journal of Natural Resources and Life Sciences Education*."

How to prepare visuals

Photographs are important to any magazine article, although some information is better shown in an illustration or line drawing.

You should try to use at least two visuals, photos or illustrations, or one of each. However, visuals are not required. More illustrations, if needed to adequately define a problem or piece of information, will be accepted.

The use of black-and-white or color figures, tables, photographs or illustrations are suitable. The Information Service, Extension Service, or the publishing department at your university may prove to be good sources of photos.

Refer to the document for more information.

Originality

This contest is to judge the author of the manuscript, its content, readability, organization and use of photos or illustrations (when used). It is not a contest to judge who can copy or summarize previously published information or manuscripts edited by advisors or friends.

Remember it is your idea and your hard work, hopefully you will be duly recognized for your efforts and originality.

This contest offers a valuable experience for undergraduates, particularly to those who become researchers, who need to report their findings, as well as to those whose future employment may require proposal and report writing or presentations.

Review and abide by all of the rules. Do not let a small technicality disqualify your efforts.