

Tic TAC

Teacher Introduction



An important committee at most telescopes around the world is the Time Allotment Committee, or TAC. This committee reviews all requests made for use of their telescopes. The TAC then decides who gets to use the telescopes and how much time they get. They also have the unfortunate job of telling some scientists that their proposals will not get time.

The first part of a proposal is the abstract. An abstract is a summary of the proposal. It is short and summarizes the proposal. After the abstract comes the science justification. The astronomer has to convince the TAC that this is a scientifically important project. Figures are often included to help the astronomer make his or her case. A plan for what is going to be looked at and explanation of the telescope and instrument needed comes next. Finally, if the astronomer has been at the McDonald Observatory before, an update on the previous research is included.

In this activity, students are going to review six different abstracts. They will need to come up with a rubric for assessing each one. It is helpful, although not absolutely necessary, to do the “Astro-Madness” activity prior to this one. This activity acquaints the students with the telescopes and instruments available at the McDonald Observatory.

In designing the rubric, try to get students to think about the following things:

- ★ How well is the abstract written?
- ★ Did the person use good grammar and punctuation?
- ★ Is the project scientifically important?
- ★ How much time are they asking for? Is it reasonable?
- ★ Is the person using an appropriate instrument and telescope (only consider this if you have done the “Astro-Madness” activity)

Students may only grant time to two proposals. They must also be prepared to justify not only why they chose certain proposals, but also why they rejected others.