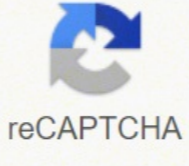




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# Lab report format chemistry high school

Lab reports are an essential part of all laboratory courses and usually a significant part of your grade. If your instructor gives you an outline for how to write a lab report, use that. Some instructors require a lab report to be included in a lab notebook, while others will request a separate report. Here's a format for a lab report you can use if you aren't sure what to write or need an explanation of what to include in the different parts of the report. A lab report is how you explain what you did in your experiment, what you learned, and what the results meant. Not all lab reports have title pages, but if your instructor wants one, it would be a single page that states: The title of the experiment, Your name and the names of any lab partners, Your instructor's name, The date the lab was performed or the date the report was submitted. The title says what you did. It should be brief (aim for ten words or less) and describe the main point of the experiment or investigation. An example of a title would be: "Effects of Ultraviolet Light on Borax Crystal Growth Rate". If you can, begin your title using a keyword rather than an article like "The" or "A". Usually, the introduction is one paragraph that explains the objectives or purpose of the lab. In one sentence, state the hypothesis. Sometimes an introduction may contain background information, briefly summarize how the experiment was performed, state the findings of the experiment, and list the conclusions of the investigation. Even if you don't write a whole introduction, you need to state the purpose of the experiment, or why you did it. This would be where you state your hypothesis. List everything needed to complete your experiment. Describe the steps you completed during your investigation. This is your procedure. Be sufficiently detailed that anyone could read this section and duplicate your experiment. Write it as if you were giving direction for someone else to do the lab. It may be helpful to provide a figure to diagram your experimental setup. Numerical data obtained from your procedure usually presented as a table. Data encompasses what you recorded when you conducted the experiment. It's just the facts, not any interpretation of what they mean. Describe in words what the data means. Sometimes the Results section is combined with the Discussion. The Data section contains numbers; the Analysis section contains any calculations you made based on those numbers. This is where you interpret the data and determine whether or not a hypothesis was accepted. This is also where you would discuss any mistakes you might have made while conducting the investigation. You may wish to describe ways the study might have been improved. Most of the time the conclusion is a single paragraph that sums up what happened in the experiment, whether your hypothesis was accepted or rejected, and what this means. Graphs and figures must both be labeled with a descriptive title. Label the axes on a graph, being sure to include units of measurement. The independent variable is on the X-axis, the dependent variable (the one you are measuring) is on the Y-axis. Be sure to refer to figures and graphs in the text of your report: the first figure is Figure 1, the second figure is Figure 2, etc. If your research was based on someone else's work or if you cited facts that require documentation, then you should list these references. 1. Start with paper and pen: Use pen (blue or black ink) and blank computer paper or graph paper. Don't use pencil, don't use lined paper. If it needs to be typed up, do it by hand first then type it as a second draft. The computer is going to complicate things if you don't have a draft on paper. Trust me on this. 2. Name, Date, Purpose and Procedure Make a simple header including your Name, a Date, and a Title. Just pick a Date—it could be the date the experiment started, when the experiment ended (sometimes it takes more than a day), or when the report was written. Don't allow yourself to get hung up on little details like this... just pick a Date that seems reasonable and keep going. There are 21+ more steps, after all. Pick a Title. The experiment might already have a name, because, for example, you read about it in a lab manual or saw a video on the internet. If not, make something up that relates to the Purpose (comes after title). Decide a formatting style—do you capitalize, underline, center, etc? Again, don't allow yourself to get hung up on the details. Just pick a style for the Title and keep going. Create a section called Purpose or Goal. Decide the formatting style, like a colon (:), underlined, centered vs left justified, etc. Just pick something, and remember to format all the below sections with the same style. Write the purpose or goal in probably 1 sentence. Keep it short. Create a section called Procedure. Use the same formatting style. Keep it short, definitely don't write a book. The writing comes later... List, bullet, or number the basic steps. You may include an equipment list, or the equipment can be explained in the steps. In addition to what you did, the Procedure should say what you measured. You could include a diagram or not. If you have some sort of teacher that gave you some sort of prelab assignment, do the prelab now. The prelab isn't really part of a formal lab report, yet this might not be a formal lab report. The prelab generally would go after the Procedure, unless your teacher told you to put it somewhere else, such as at the end. 3. The Super Important Data Table The Data Table is the heart of the report. Make it at least twice as big as necessary. It should probably take up a whole, entire piece of paper. Make it big. Bigger... Yes a whole page big. I am not kidding. Count exactly how many data (measurements or observations) you have. Decide how they can fit into a grid, and draw the grid with a ruler. Make it nice and straight, and, again, it should be really, really big. Bigger! Even bigger! 4. Checking Your Work Stop for a moment to reflect. Your Procedure talks about collecting data. Is there exactly one grid square for each measurement? Do all the measurements fit in the Data Table grid? If not, you have a problem. Fix it before moving on. 5. Determine Precision and Bias of Measurement Instruments Be sure to always use a Metric instrument. Note how many decimal places it reads to. Be sure to always write the correct number of decimal places everywhere in the report, no matter what. 6. Recording Your First Measurements As you perform the experiment, record your data in the Data Table. Make sure to use the correct number of decimal places, and always put a unit (like cm for centimeters) after every single number. Always have a unit and the correct number of decimal places. Honestly, this is the main thing most teachers look for when grading lab reports. It's not about having good data, it's about having the correct number of decimal points and units. 7. Planning and Patience Again, take a moment to reflect. Does it seem like all your collected data will fit cleanly into the Data Table? If not, stop and make a better Data Table. 8. Recording Your Other Measurements Keep going and get all the data into the Data Table. 9. Side Calculation of Your Result Got data? Probably you need to calculate something. Do it on scratch paper, not on the report. Get the math all worked out on the scratch paper. 10. Side Calculation of Percent Error Got a result? On the same scratch paper, work out the calculation for percent error (if you know the "correct answer"). Or skip this step. 11. Selecting Sample Calculations for the Report Don't write all your calculations in the report, just one example, or sample, of each type of calculation. For example, if you calculated the volume and surface area of 4 objects (8 calculations total), just write 2 calculations (1 surface area, 1 volume) in your report. Decide which calculations to write... just pick and keep moving. 12. Writing Sample Calculation in the Report Create a section called Sample Calculations. Write down one example of each type of calculation. Be really, really neat and show all the steps, so that somebody could figure out what you did. It's about showing the steps, not getting a good answer. The answer can be bad and that's totally fine. On the other hand, it's super uncool to just show an answer, even a good answer, without showing the steps in the calculation. 13. Results in a Table Create a section called Results. Make a table for your results, just like you made a table for your data. Make it big. Bigger! Do all your results, including percent error and averages, if you calculated such things, fit? If not, do it again. 14. The 4 Main Elements of a Discussion Create a section called Discussion. Now put the report aside and stop writing on it. You need to work out 4 paragraphs as rough and perhaps second drafts before copying it over to your report. Don't get anxious and expect to miraculously inject a perfect Discussion directly into your report instead of first making a rough draft on scratch paper. You are almost there, so don't ruin the report by writing on it before you have a solid rough draft. 15. It's Not Rough Draft The science lab report should have a reasonably polished Discussion, to the best of your imperfect writing ability. Proofread that rough draft, then proofread it again... and once more again... before transcribing it into your report. Your report should not look like a rough draft. Polish it first. 16. Discussion: Paragraph 1 What did you intend to measure (the Purpose) vs actually measure? What did you assume? 17. Discussion: Paragraph 2 Where your results high or low? By how much? 18. Discussion: Paragraph 3 Why were your results high or low? Give a science reason. The most important aspect of the whole report is that this specific paragraph says something scientific. Not my dog ate my experiment, but an actual science explanation. If you really cannot come up with anything, at least pick a few vocabulary words related to the experiment and use them in sentences that show you understand their definitions. Again, this specific paragraph has to, at bare minimum, sound scientific. You can probably fool your teacher into grading your report well so long as this paragraph sounds reasonably scientific. Be sure to put some honest thought into this one... it's highly unlikely that you find something to plagiarize off the internet that would match the rest of the report. If you really need to cheat, don't do it here because it would be SOOOO obvious to anybody who knows how science works. Cheating is hard work, and you are just going to waste lots of time trying. Be the type of person who finishes reports, not a time waster that never finishes things. Your life will be easier this way. 19. Discussion: Paragraph 4 Suggest recommendations to improve the experiment. Don't redo the experiment. Your result is your result, for better or worse, and it's on your "permanent record" at this point. Just write down something that somebody else at some other time and place could possibly do to make the experiment better. Don't actually do it, just recommend. 20. Use a Science Analogy Think you got a good Discussion? It would be greatly enhanced if you could come up with an everyday analogy to explain something scientific in layman's terms. Your report will never be perfect, yet the next report could be better by including an analogy in the Discussion. This is the type of higher level writing that teachers like for A+ grades. If it's your first report, don't get hung up on this. Just keep moving. 21. Proofread the Discussion You transcribed the Discussion into your report. Proofread it. Again. 22. How to Write a Conclusion for a Lab Here's how to write a Conclusion of a lab report: Create a section called Conclusion. Then just restate the (main) result(s) in a sentence or three. Keep it short, keep it simple, don't be creative, and definitely don't introduce any new ideas in the Conclusion of a lab report. Just conclude by restating the result(s). If you forgot to say something important, go back and discuss it in the Discussion. Never discuss anything in the Conclusion. This is probably the worst mistake commonly made. Don't ruin it at the end. Just conclude. Discussion vs Conclusion: Do you see the not-so-subtle difference between the Discussion vs Conclusion? The Discussion always discusses things at length, the Conclusion never does. 23. Assemble Your Report & Keep a Digital Copy Be organized. Number your pages. Staple it. Scan it into a pdf. (Try CamScanner app for a phone, it's free and easy). Give it a good file name. Email yourself a copy of your beautiful report so you never lose it.







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