

How to Keep a Lab Notebook

- Handwriting must be legible.
- All notes should be written in pen
- Errors should be crossed through with a single line, not erased or obliterated.
- Everything you do in the laboratory should be recorded in your lab notebooks, including notes, drawings, data, speculations, etc. Everything from your initial strategy through planning, execution and interpretation and should be in your notebook.
- Keep in mind that reports and presentations will be prepared from the notebook. You should have much more information recorded in your notebook than you can or should put on a poster or into a presentation.
- It's important to note that an experiment must be thoroughly documented in your notebook if it is going to be presented in a talk, poster, paper, etc. If it is not described thoroughly and legibly in your notebook, it doesn't count as having been done.
- Pages for each experiment should include:
 - Title of experiment and date.
 - The Hypothesis and/or Objective(s) of the experiment: what you are trying to do and why you are trying to do it.
 - The Protocol for the experiment.
 - Any deviations from your written procedure. This includes changes both intentional and accidental.
 - Observations: everything that happens during your experiment that may have a bearing on the outcome or interpretation of the experiment (this includes color, precipitate, time, temperature, etc).
 - Data: raw and calculated. Use complete sentences, tables and graphs where appropriate. Show sample calculations with steps and units.
 - Discussion: Interpret your results. Refer back to your predictions. Draw conclusions about experiment. Make suggestions for further experiments or refinements to the procedure.

(modified from <http://www.colorado.edu/mcdb/MCDB3140/notebooks.html>)