Guidelines for Keeping a Laboratory Notebook

The laboratory notebook is a record of all activity in the laboratory. It serves as documentation of your attendance, preparedness, observations, data, and calculations. You absolutely must have your lab notebook with you at all times in the laboratory!

- Must be written in pen. NO pencil! Nothing should ever be erased or “whited-out”. Mistakes should be crossed out with one line and corrected information written below the original entry.
- Reserve the first page for a table of contents.
- Begin numbering the pages immediately following the table of contents, and number each page until you reach the end of the notebook.
- Never leave any pages blank, and do not tear any pages out.
- Graphs, charts, spectra, and other outside hardcopies of data should be attached (tape, glue, staple) in your notebook in the appropriate locations.
- Each experiment should begin on a new page.
- Sign and date following each experiment.

Format of an Experiment in Laboratory Notebook

Page 1: Title Page – Course name, student name, student email address, instructor name.

Page 2: Table of Contents

Each experiment should contain the following (begin on Page 3 of notebook)

1. **Title of experiment and date.**
2. **Purpose/Objective of experiment.** This should be 1-2 sentences in your own words.
3. **Chemicals/Reagents used.** This information can be found in the lab manual. Be sure to include important safety information and hazards associated with chemicals where applicable.
4. **Procedure.** DO NOT just copy the lab manual procedure! Complete sentences are not required. This should be you giving yourself instructions to perform the experiment in as much detail as you need. You will follow your written procedure in the laboratory. **Lab manuals will NOT be used in the lab.**
5. **Data.** Record all data collected during the experiment. It may be helpful to prepare data tables in your notebook before you perform the experiment to stay organized.
6. **Calculations.** Perform all your calculations in the lab notebook. It is okay to make mistakes! Neatness is not important! You will transfer your data calculation to the lab report pages in the lab manual to turn in.

All your work should be done in the lab notebook, not on scratch paper.

The prelab portion of each experiment consists of steps 1-4 above. **You must have this completed in your lab notebook before you come to lab.** You will not be allowed to perform the experiment if this is not completed because you will not have an experimental procedure to follow.