

WRITING A FORMAL AP BIOLOGY LAB REPORT

Laboratory work is an essential portion of the AP Biology course. The free response questions on the AP Biology exam, are concerned primarily with the laboratory work completed in class. Therefore, to improve critical thinking skills, as well as writing skills, a formal laboratory write-up will be required for all laboratory work. This format will not only help you organize your work for this class, but will become invaluable in your college careers. What follows is a short description of the sections that should be included in your laboratory write-ups.

Verbal communication is transient and easily forgotten, but written reports exist for long periods and yield long-term benefits for the author and others. Scientific research is a community activity. Individual scientists perform experiments to test hypotheses about biological phenomena. After experiments are completed and duplicated, researchers attempt to persuade others to accept or reject their hypotheses by presenting the data and their interpretations. The lab report or the scientific paper is the vehicle of persuasion; when it is published, it is available to other scientists for review. If the results stand up to criticism, they become part of the accepted body of scientific knowledge unless later disproved.

In some cases, a report may not be persuasive in nature but instead is an archival record for future generations. For example, data on the distribution and frequency of rabid skunks in a certain year may be of use to future epidemiologists in deciding whether the incidence of rabies is increasing. Regardless of whether a report is persuasive or archival, the following guidelines apply.

Format

A scientific report usually consists of the following:

1. Title
2. Abstract
3. Introduction
4. Materials and methods
5. Results
6. Discussion
7. Literature cited

Please word-process (or type) your lab reports. DO NOT HAND-WRITE THEM. See your instructor before the due date if you have special concerns or issues. Reports may NOT be submitted electronically.

EVERY STUDENT MUST SUBMIT THEIR OWN LAB REPORT, EVEN IF THE EXPERIMENTS WERE DONE AS A GROUP.

There is general agreement among scientists that each section of the report should contain specific types of information. AP Biology lab reports must conform to the following requirements.

1. Title page:

- One page
- Title centered, in middle of page