



## GENERAL STRUCTURE OF A LAB REPORT

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This handout will describe the general formatting of a lab report or scientific article. It will break down the contents of each of the five sections of this genre.

While the format may vary slightly between subjects and specific courses, the typical lab report for undergraduate papers contains the following ordered sections:

### **Abstract**

- Serves as brief overview of entire paper
- Contains 1-3 sentences describing each section of the paper
- Written last, after all other parts of paper are finalized

### **Introduction**

- Presents background information and description of the issue being studied
- Connects previous research to the current study
- States the hypothesis of the current study
- Generally written “broad to narrow”
  - Broad overview of topic and real world consequences, which is gradually narrowed down to the paper’s specific experiment

### **Methods**

- Clearly states the procedure of the experiment, step by step
- Includes measurements, tools and equipment, and schedule of experiment
- Written in past tense
- Does not use passive voice

### **Results**

- Plainly describes outcomes of experimental trials
- Includes graphs and tables, as necessary
- Does not interpret or attempt to explain any findings
- Identifies statistical significance and trends without explanation

### **Discussion**

- Interprets results and interesting findings of the experiment
- Provides explanations for significant findings
- Applies findings to real world situations and the current knowledge in the field
- Generally written “narrow to broad”
  - Interpretation of the specific findings of the current study, which are then applied to broader issues