

5 September 2002
From: Ben Schafer
To: WIE Section 2 – Fall 2002
Re: Lab write-ups

Technical communication is difficult for many engineers, but communications is one of the most important functions you will perform. Engineers have technical knowledge that they must communicate *clearly* to non-engineers. When we fail at this, people fear technology, or otherwise may make uninformed decisions. The inability of engineers to communicate “what they do” is a significant problem for all of us today. To rectify our communication problem is not an easy task, yet we must do it. In this class you will regularly have a chance to exercise your communication skills – in class, in labs, in essays, and in projects.

Your lab write-ups are one place to practice your formal technical communication skills. The write-up should be clear, concise, organized, and neat.

Type up your lab write-ups – I have seen your handwriting – it is as bad as mine.

Lab write-ups should include the following

- Identifying information
 - team members
 - date, section, etc.
 - title of project/lab
- Objective Statement/Paragraph
 - always include this! – “Why did you do this lab?” in your own words
- Observations
 - All data gathered in the lab
 - All non-biased commentary on the process
- Discussion
 - include all question and answer portions in this section of the lab
 - discuss the quality of your answer in addition to giving the answer
- Conclusion Statement/Paragraph
 - For our purposes – comment on whether or not the lab has met the objectives you have stated – explain why, yes or no?

Notes

BE FORMAL – BE NIT-PICKY – BE CLEAR – DON’T BE FANCY

Include units in all measurements

Examine error in measurements quantitatively and qualitatively

Figures should be included at every chance and should be neat! neat! neat!

labeled axis, clear plots, clear line choices, no chart junk

FACT: the worst looking xy plot on the planet? Microsoft Excel defaults

Tables should be included at every chance and should be neat! neat! neat!

Treat your write-ups professionally. Answer all questions thoroughly, and you will have no problems with the write-ups.