

Definition of genre

A laboratory report provides a formal record of an experiment. The discussion of objectives, procedures, and results should be specific enough that interested readers could replicate the experiment.

Format

Although most laboratory reports will include the following sections, some experiments will require a different format. Tailor your report so that it adequately explicates your specific experiment.

- *Abstract*: a brief informational synopsis of your experiment, typically under 200 words. Strive to use informational or declarative rather than descriptive prose. (See Genre Handout, “Abstracts.”)
- *Introduction*: identifies the experiment to be undertaken. Explains its objectives and significance, and provides the background necessary to understand it. When appropriate, the background should indicate theoretical predictions.
- *Procedures* (or *Methods*): the procedures section should provide readers with enough information that they could replicate your experiment if they so desired. Select the level of detail appropriately.
- *Results and Discussion* (sometimes presented as separate sections): conveys results relevant to the goals of the experiment. Analyzes the results and discuss their implications. Acknowledges possible sources of error. Considers presenting information visually with graphs and tables; provide figure captions.
- *Conclusions*: this section places specific results into the context of the experiment as a whole. (If your laboratory report is short, the Discussion section may serve as a sufficient conclusion.) Evaluates the results in light of the objectives stated in the introduction.
- *Appendices*: this is the place to include data too extensive or tangential to warrant inclusion in the main body of the report, but necessary as procedural or analytical evidence.

Helpful link

This handout is condensed from information published by the University of Vermont Engineering Department at <http://www.writing.eng.vt.edu/workbooks/laboratory.html>.