Log Book Guidelines

You must keep a logbook for the laboratories. All work on the lab projects should be recorded in the logbook as the work is done. Even your rough calculations and thoughts about how to proceed on the projects should be entered. The reader should be able not only to reproduce your work from the logbook, but also should be able to understand why you made certain choices from your comments in the logbook.

There are several reasons for using and properly maintaining a log book:

First, the logbook serves as a record of design ideas, design calculations, experimental procedures and data, library research, diagrams, graphs, photographs, lists, phone numbers, addresses, etc. – the “nuts and bolts” of the project. The logbook is therefore a means of managing the project.

Second, the logbook is the primary source for progress reports and other technical documents, such as applications for patents, or papers submitted to a professional society, or proposals for new work.

Third, the logbook provides the technical chronology of the project, and thus provides a legal record of work done. This is particularly important when it comes to filing a patent claim, or defending one in court.

Fourth, the logbook becomes indispensable when the work you have done is to be continued by someone else. Frequently you will need to refer to work done on past projects, and a well-written logbook can often save you from repeating an experiment or a calculation.

You will quickly forget work and ideas, so write them down, in detail.

Write your logbook as though:

i. You are anticipating that someone else will eventually continue the work.
ii. It may be needed to back patent priority claims in court.
iii. One day you will be famous, and your logbooks will be made public.

Logbook requirements:
1. The logbook must be bound (spiral notebook is not acceptable).
2. Each page must be numbered.
3. No pages should be torn out and no blank or extra pages should exist.
4. All entries must be in ink.
5. Project title, principal investigator (your name) and a brief statement of the project should appear at the front of the logbook.
6. List partners for each lab or project.
7. All entries must be signed and dated.
8. Blank areas must be crossed out.
9. Mistakes should be lined out and initialed, still legible.
10. Number, label, and caption every figure, table, graph, etc.
11. Data sheet copies, program listings, design ideas from trade journals, web page printouts, faxes, textbook page copies etc can be glued or taped in the logbook. Sign and date so that the writing is half on the logbook page and half on the entered page. (Supplementary items too large for the logbook can be kept in a binder and referenced in the logbook.)
12. Leave a few pages at the beginning for use as a table of contents.
13. Do your work in the logbook i.e. don’t work on scratch paper then copy into logbook. Record a narrative – what you are doing and why i.e. record what you are thinking.
14. Record phone numbers and summarize conversations with vendors about parts.
15. Can keep floppy disk, zip disk, or CD in a sleeve fixed to the back cover to keep successive versions of software.
16. Make timely entries i.e. make entries at least every week. If nothing accomplished, enter that in logbook.
17. It is permissible to write only on the facing page leaving the opposite page as a scratch work area.
18. It is permissible to write “continued on page xx” and “continued from page yy” if needed.

Courtesy of Dr. Hemmelman