

WELCOME TO THE PHYSICS LABORATORY!

Physics is the human attempt to explain our world. The success of that attempt is evident in the technology of our society. We are surrounded by the products resulting from the application of that understanding, technological inventions including clocks, medicine, and computers. You have already developed your own physical perception of the world around you. Some of those ideas are consistent with the accepted theories of physics while others are not. This laboratory is designed to focus your attention on your interactions with the world so that you can recognize where your ideas agree with those accepted by physics and where they do not.

You are presented with physics theories in lecture and in your textbook. The laboratory is where you apply those theories to problems in the real world. The laboratory setting is a good one to clarify your ideas through discussions with your classmates. You will also get to clarify these ideas through writing in a report so you can get feedback from your instructor. Each laboratory consists of a set of problems that ask you to make decisions about the real world. As you work through the problems in this laboratory manual, remember that the goal is not to make a lot of measurements. The goal is for you to examine your ideas about the real world. For that reason, you can never “finish” a lab. If you correctly complete a laboratory problem and its analysis to the satisfaction of your lab instructor, you will be given another problem to work on. Your goal in the lab is to spend as much time as possible examining your own ideas about physics in light of the ideas of the other members of your class, your instructor, the lectures, and the textbook. This is the time to reinforce your correct ideas by explaining them to others and modify your incorrect ideas by incorporating the ideas of others while focusing on the physics demonstrated by the equipment.

The three components of the course - lecture, discussion section, and laboratory - each serve a different purpose. The laboratory is where physics ideas, often expressed in mathematics, come to grips with the real world. Because different lab sections meet on different days of the week, sometimes you will deal with concepts in the lab before meeting them in lecture. In that case, the lab will serve as a good introduction to the lecture. In other cases, when the lecture about a topic precedes the lab, the lecture will be a good introduction to the lab.

The amount you learn in lab will depend on the time you spend in preparation before coming to lab.

Before coming to lab each week you must read the appropriate sections of your text, read the assigned problems to develop a fairly clear idea of what will be happening, and complete the prediction and warm-up questions for the assigned problems.

Often, your lab group will be asked to present its predictions and data to other groups so that everyone can participate in understanding how specific measurements illustrate general concepts of physics. You should always be prepared to explain your ideas or actions to others in the class. To show your instructor that you have made the appropriate connections between your measurements and the basic physical concepts, you will be asked to write a laboratory report. Guidelines for preparing lab reports can be found in the lab manual appendices and in this introduction. An example of a good lab report is shown in *Appendix E*. Please do not hesitate to discuss any difficulties you have understanding the material or applying your knowledge with your fellow students or the lab instructor.

WHAT TO DO TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN THIS LAB:

Safety always comes first in any laboratory.



If in doubt about any procedure, or if it seems unsafe to you, do not continue. Ask your lab instructor for help.

A. What to bring to each laboratory session:

1. Bring an 8" by 10" graph-ruled lab journal, to all lab sessions. Your journal is your "extended memory" and should contain everything you do in the lab and all of your thoughts as you are going along. As such, your lab journal is a legal document; consequently you should **never** tear pages from it. For this reason, your lab journal **must** be bound, for example University of Minnesota 2077-S, and **not** of the varieties that allow pages to be easily removed, for example spiral bound notebooks.
2. Bring a "scientific" calculator.
3. Bring this lab manual.

B. Prepare for each laboratory session:

Each laboratory consists of a series of related problems that can be solved using the same basic concepts and principles. Sometimes all lab groups will work on the same problem, other times groups will work on different problems and share results.

1. Before beginning a new lab, you should carefully read the Introduction, Objectives and Preparation sections. Read the sections of the text specified in the *Preparation* section.
2. Each lab contains several different experimental problems. Before you come to a lab, be sure you have completed the assigned *Prediction* and *Warm-up Questions*. The Warm-up Questions will help you build a prediction for the given problem. It is usually helpful to answer the Warm-up Questions before making the prediction. **These individual predictions and warm-up questions will be checked (graded) by your lab instructor before each lab session.**

This preparation is crucial if you are going to get anything out of your laboratory work. There are at least two other reasons for preparing:

- a) There is nothing more dull or exasperating than plugging mindlessly into a procedure you do not understand.
- b) The laboratory work is a **group** activity where every individual contributes to the thinking process and activities of the group. Other members of your group will not be happy if they must consistently carry the burden of someone who isn't doing their share.

C. Laboratory Problem Reports

At the end of every lab (about once every two weeks) you will be assigned to write up one of the experimental problems. Your report must present a clear and accurate account of what you and your group members did, the results you obtained, and what the results mean. A report is not to be copied or fabricated. To do so constitutes Scientific Fraud. To make sure no one gets in that habit, such behavior will be treated in the same manner as cheating on a test: **A failing grade for the course and possible expulsion from the University.** Your lab report should describe your predictions, your experiences, your observations, your measurements, and your conclusions. A description of the lab report format is discussed at the end of this introduction. **Each lab report is due within two days of the end of that lab.**

D. Attendance

Attendance is required at all labs without exception. If something disastrous keeps you from your scheduled lab, contact your lab instructor **immediately**. The instructor will arrange for you to attend another lab section that same week. **There are no make-up labs in this course.**

E. Grades

Satisfactory completion of the lab is required as part of your course grade. *Those not completing all lab assignments by the end of the semester at a 60% level or better will receive a semester grade of F for the entire course.* The laboratory grade makes up 15% of your final course grade. Once again, we emphasize that **each lab report is due within two days of the end of that lab.**

There are two parts of your grade for each laboratory: (a) your laboratory journal, and (b) your formal problem report. Your laboratory journal will be graded by the lab instructor during the laboratory sessions. Your problem report will be graded and returned to you in your next lab session. This is a writing intensive (WI) course so clear and logical written communication using correct English and correct physics is the most important goal of the laboratory report.

If you have made a good-faith attempt but your lab report has a few flaws, your instructor may allow you to rewrite those parts of the report. A rewrite must be handed in, within two days of the return of the report to you by the instructor.

F. The laboratory class forms a local scientific community. There are certain basic rules for interacting in this laboratory.

1. *In all discussions and group work, full respect for all people is required.* All disagreements about work must stand or fall on reasoned arguments about physics principles, the data, or acceptable procedures, never on the basis of power, loudness, or intimidation.
2. *It is OK to make a reasoned mistake. It is in fact, one of the more efficient ways to learn.* This is an academic laboratory in which to learn things, to test your ideas and predictions by collecting data, and to determine which conclusions from the data are acceptable and reasonable to other people and which are not.

What do we mean by a "reasoned mistake"? We mean that after careful consideration and after a substantial amount of thinking has gone into your ideas you give your best prediction or explanation as you see it. Of course, there is always the possibility that you are wrong. Then someone says, "No, that's not the way I see it and here's why." Eventually persuasive evidence will be offered for one viewpoint or the other.

Trying to convince others about your explanations, in writing or vocally, is one of the best ways to learn.

- It is perfectly okay to share information and ideas with colleagues. Many kinds of help are okay. Since members of this class have highly diverse backgrounds, you are encouraged to help each other and learn from each other.*

However, it is never okay to copy the work of others.

Helping others is encouraged because it is one of the best ways for you to learn, but copying is completely inappropriate and unacceptable. Write out your own calculations and answer questions in your own words. It is okay to make a reasoned mistake; it is wrong to copy.

No credit will be given for copied work. It is also subject to University rules about plagiarism and cheating, and may result in dismissal from the course and the University. See the University course catalog for further information.

- Hundreds of other students use this laboratory each week. Another class probably follows directly after you are done. Respect for the environment and the equipment in the lab is an important part of making this experience a pleasant one.*

The lab tables and floors should be clean of any paper or "garbage." Please clean up your area before you leave the lab. The equipment must be either returned to the lab instructor or left neatly at your station, depending on the circumstances. If you leave the lab neater than you found it, everyone will have a more productive experience.

A note about Laboratory equipment:

At times equipment in the lab may break or may be found to be broken. If this happens you should inform your TA and report the problem to the equipment specialist using the Problem Report Form found on the desktop. To use the Problem Report Form you will have to login using your University ID and password. Describe the problem, including any identifying aspects of the equipment, and be sure to include your lab room number.

If equipment appears to be broken in such a way as to cause a danger do not use the equipment and inform your TA immediately.

In summary, the key to making any community work is **RESPECT**.

Respect yourself and your ideas by behaving in a professional manner at all times.

Respect your colleagues (fellow students) and their ideas.

Respect your lab instructor and his/her effort to provide you with an environment in which you can learn.

Respect the laboratory equipment so that others coming after you in the laboratory will have an appropriate environment in which to learn.

WHAT IS EXPECTED IN A LAB REPORT? HOW IS IT HANDLED?

1. Your instructor will assign you a problem to write up after you have complete all of the assigned problems for a lab.
2. A cover sheet for each problem must be placed on top of each report handed in to the instructor. A cover sheet can be found at the end of every lab. *It gives you a general outline of what to include in a report.*
3. A report is always due **within two days of being assigned.**
4. **A problem report must be an organized, coherent display of your thoughts, work, and accomplishments.** It should be written using a word processor recommended in English that is *clear, concise, and correct.* It may help you to imagine that hundreds of people will read your report and judge you by it. **Communication is the goal of the report.** In many cases, communication can be aided greatly by use of tables and graphs.
5. A sample report is included in *Appendix E.* Listed below are the major parts of a laboratory report.

MAJOR PARTS OF A LABORATORY REPORT:

COVER SHEET

See the end of this introduction for a sample cover sheet.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

State the problem you were trying to solve, and how you went about it. Describe the type of physical behavior explored, and provide a short summary of the experiment

PREDICTION

This is a part of the lab where you try to predict the outcome of the experiment based on the general knowledge of Physics. Generally, you start from fundamental laws or principles and derive the theoretical expression for the measured quantity. Later you are going to use your prediction to compare with experimental results.

EXPERIMENT AND RESULTS

Give a detailed description of how you made your measurements and what results you obtained. This usually involves an organized and coherent display of labeled diagrams,

tables of measurements, tables of calculated quantities, and graphs. Explanations of all results must occur in correct English that is clear enough to allow a reader to repeat your procedure.

Mathematical calculations connecting fundamental physics relationships to the quantities measured should be given. Any interesting behavior should be explained. Difficulties performing the experiment should be described as well as any subtleties in the analysis.

All data presented must be clearly identified and labeled. Calculated results should be clearly identified. Anybody should be able to distinguish between quantities you measured, those you calculated, and those you included from other sources. Clearly assign uncertainties to **ALL** measured values -- **without uncertainties, the data is meaningless.**

CONCLUSIONS

Here you should answer the following questions: What behavior did you observe? Was it different from what you expected? Why? (E.g.: What were the possible sources of uncertainties? Did you have any major experimental difficulties? Was your initial prediction based on incorrect physics that you now understand) How do your results compare with the physics presented in your textbook or during lectures? What assumptions did you make in your analysis and were they justified?

SAMPLE COVER SHEET

PHYSICS 1201 LABORATORY REPORT

Laboratory I

Name and ID#: _____

Date performed: _____ Day/Time section meets: _____

Lab Partners' Names: _____

Problem # and Title: _____

Lab Instructor's Initials: _____

Grading Checklist	Points*
LABORATORY JOURNAL:	
PREDICTIONS (individual predictions and warm-up questions completed in journal before each lab session)	
LAB PROCEDURE (measurement plan recorded in journal, tables and graphs made in journal as data is collected, observations written in journal)	
PROBLEM REPORT:	
ORGANIZATION (clear and readable; logical progression from problem statement through conclusions; pictures provided where necessary; correct grammar and spelling; section headings provided; physics stated correctly)	
DATA AND DATA TABLES (clear and readable; units and assigned uncertainties clearly stated)	
RESULTS (results clearly indicated; correct, logical, and well-organized calculations with uncertainties indicated; scales, labels and uncertainties on graphs; physics stated correctly)	
CONCLUSIONS (comparison to prediction & theory discussed with physics stated correctly ; possible sources of uncertainties identified; attention called to experimental problems)	
TOTAL (incorrect or missing statement of physics will result in a maximum of 60% of the total points achieved; incorrect grammar or spelling will result in a maximum of 70% of the total points achieved)	
BONUS POINTS FOR TEAMWORK (as specified by course policy)	

* An "R" in the points column means to rewrite that section only and return it to your lab instructor within two days of the return of the report to you.

