

A CHECKLIST FOR LAB REPORTS AND SCIENTIFIC PAPERS*

- Is the title concise and does it adequately describe the contents? For example, with the title “Substance Y Alters Blonial Structure of Elephant Bone Marrow,” researchers interested in substance Y, blonial structures, elephants, or bone marrow should recognize that the article may be of interest to them.
- Are the appropriate headings and subheadings included, in proper order? A typical scientific paper includes the following sections: title page, table of contents, abstract, introduction, body (with various subsections), conclusions, appendix. A typical lab report includes the following sections: title, abstract, introduction, methods, results, discussion, and references.
- Are the tone and style appropriate? Scientific writing, for the most part, is intended to be more factual than entertaining and is not embellished with descriptive language or anecdotes, humor, and dialogue.
- Does the writer use passive voice, the generally accepted convention? The writer of a lab report, for example, should use the passive past tense: “Solution A was centrifuged,” not “I centrifuged Solution A.”
- Are sentences short and to the point, expressing facts clearly and concisely? Does the writer answer all basic questions about the topic?
- Have conventions related to symbols and abbreviations been observed?

* Information taken from Ryan, Leigh. *The Bedford Guide for Writing Tutors*, 3rd ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2002.