

## **A checklist for good laboratory notebook practice: INS 2007-2008**

### **Basic set-up:**

**One notebook for biology, one for chemistry. No neater duplicate books, just the ones you bring to lab!**

**Sewn-in binding.** Not spiral. No pages removed. No loose papers enclosed.

**Owner's name and contact information:** could it be returned to you if lost?

**Up to date table of contents.** Reserve a few pages for expansion of this at the beginning. Titles of labs should be descriptive and specific, and the dates of the lab are very useful here.

**In ink.** Mistakes crossed out by single horizontal line. No white out.

**Pages numbered and dated.**

There are two common patterns of organization-choose the one that works for you.

- A. All notes on right-hand page only, left hand page used for calculations.
- B. Both pages used sequentially. If you choose this style, make sure your ink doesn't show through the page.

### **For every lab:**

**Specific title**

**Names of co-workers**

**Use internal headings** to help separate the following sections or indicating changes of type of work.

**Introduction:** What are you trying to do or discover? What methods will you use and what kind of data will you collect?

**Experimental procedures and methods:** How did you do the lab? Enough detail should be provided that you could repeat the work using these notes as the only reference. Try to use flow charts, bulleted or numbered lists, tables, and sketches as much as possible. You can include glued or taped sections of lab handouts or references, but these do not take the place of writing your actual actions. **Write in your notebook, not the handout or on scratch paper!**

**Clearly labeled results section.** Again, tables or sketches may be informative. For numerical work, always include units to correct significant digits.

If instrument data or computer files are generated, make sure hard copies are securely fastened in the notes. Include the specific names and locations of any computer files generated. Make the files names useful-group names, experiment, dates all help sort out files.

For sketches: draw large and include some indication of scale

**Clearly labeled discussion:** This should reflect back on the original purpose or goal stated in the introduction. How did you work help answer the questions posed? Refer to specific data collected to support this discussion. How could this work be improved or extended? How does it fit with other program work or theories presented?