



Purpose of a lab manual:

The purpose of a lab manual is to provide lab members with a set of written expectations on how to navigate life in your lab. By writing down general communication protocols and “how tos”, lab members will have a framework to reference about the proper actions and etiquette to be taken and used for matters concerning the lab both internally and externally.

For further reading please see Science [article](#) titled: **Why some professors welcome new lab members with clear expectations—in writing.**

Or Nature [article](#): **The key to a happy lab life is in the manual**

How to use this manual:

There are multiple ways to create a lab manual. The topics range from lab philosophy, to presenting data in lab meetings, and to professional and personal work expectations. Faculty are encouraged to modify and adapt the content inside the manual so that it best fits the needs of their lab.

Overall structure:

There are multiple ways to create a lab manual. It can be a physical copy that sits in your office space, the lab’s network drive, or a website. The following layout is a common format found in lab manuals already published:

- **Greetings and lab philosophy**
 - Big picture Motivations
 - Small picture
 - Lab Culture Expectations
- **Expectations and responsibilities**
 - Work hours
 - Vacation time
 - Courses requirements
 - Lab managers
 - Post-Doc expectations
 - Graduate student expectations
 - Undergraduate student expectations
- **Code of conduct**
 - Scientific integrity
 - Reproducible research
 - Authorship
 - Conflict resolution
- **Lab resources**
 - Network drive

- Access to facilities
- Protocol amendments
- Calendars
- Equipment Manuals
- Training information
- **General policies**
 - PI office hours
 - Meeting etiquette
 - Email
 - Deadlines
 - Presentations
 - Emergency Contact Information
- **Data management and sharing**
 - Lab notebook etiquette
 - Encryption
 - Publishing data
 - Sharing data with colleagues
- **Lab departure protocol**
- **Books and resources for success**

Examples and templates of other Lab manuals:

Inside the **“Lab manual Templates folder”** you will find lab manual examples from faculty members in different institutions and departments. Use these templates as an outline for creating and customizing your own lab manual.

If you’re looking for a good place to start thinking about “big picture and small picture” ideas, see:

Mariam Aly – Department of Psychology at Columbia University

Ideas for creating an online lab manual see:

Chethan Pandarinath - Systems Neural Engineering Lab at Emory University/Georgia Tech

If you’re interested in more nitty-gritty technicalities like timesheets, hours, calendars you can check out:

Jonathan Peelle - Department of Otolaryngology Washington University in Saint Louis

For lab resources ideas like slack, email, internal website, GitHub, google calendar:

Maureen Ritchey - Department of Psychology at Boston College

For a thorough lab departure checklist see:

Melissa Kemp – Department of Biomedical Engineering at Georgia Tech/Emory University