Writing Center Workshop: Writing Lab Reports*

Basic format information:
At the top of the first page (right or left side):

- Title
- Name
- Professor's Name (Correct spelling is important because it shows attention to the accuracy of details.)

Basic Outline of Report along with some basic definitions:

- **Introduction**: This paragraph should articulate the important point that you are trying to convey.
- **Hypothesis**: In this section, directly state your hypothesis. (My hypothesis is….) You can separate this statement from your introduction or it can be incorporated into your introduction. In either case, the hypothesis statement is always direct.
- **Materials and Methods**: (An alternative subheading for this section could be **Procedures**.) The text in this section is brief. It presents or lists the materials you used to conduct the experiment.
- **Results**: This section reports just the facts. You show your data. Often the text is brief, but tables or graphs are used.
  - Graph shows relationship between data
  - Table lists information
  - Both are used to bolster your argument.
  - Both must be carefully labeled.
- **Discussion**: In this section, you explain what the data means. This section should be the "meat" of your report. It should show that you are thinking about the material and its significance.
- **Conclusion**: In this section, you should address your hypothesis. This section represents "the take home message."
- **Literature Cited (or References)**: This section presents your bibliography. If you used any outside materials, then they must be fully noted.

Some tips:

- You always should use headings in lab reports.
- Because you need to analyze data before you write, you should do your graphs or tables first. Use those

graphs or tables to help you with analyzing your information.

- Excel computer program can help with graphs; it allows you to manipulate information more easily.
- You may choose to use either the passive voice or the active voice.
- The report should be in the past tense. You are reporting what you did, not telling the instructor how to do something.
- Do not tell the instructor that you "enjoyed" the experiment. Your feelings are not the focus; your thinking is the focus.
- You may include in your conclusion ideas for how to conduct the experiment differently, but only if you have figured out something very profound. Don't assume the instructor wants your opinion, unless you have discovered something profound that the instructor would want to know.

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* The information in this summary comes from Dr. Diana Comuzzie's workshop on writing lab reports. The workshop was sponsored by the Writing Center (February 27, 2006).