

# Physics Laboratory Guidelines

Everyone should have the lab notebook with quadrille (graph) pages available from the bookstore. This will be used to keep a record of each experiment that you do in the physics lab. (Other required materials are listed in the [course outline](#).) A description of each experiment to be performed will be available on the physics website and should be printed out by the student before coming to lab each week. Take the time to study this before coming to lab. Things will go smoother for you (and you will learn more!) if you have some idea of what is expected of you when you arrive at the lab.

A brief written lab report will be due from each person at the end of the lab period for each experiment performed. The report should include the following:

**Cover:** Name, section number, partners' names

**Heading:** Date and title of the experiment

**Purpose:** One or two sentences describing what you are trying to accomplish with the experiment

**Procedure:** Before any data or results are displayed, an explanation should be given as to how that data was obtained and what equipment was used to do the measurements. Include sketches or diagrams that help to explain how you carried out the experiment. If you like, you may cut out and paste into your notebook the written procedure from your lab writeup. However, you must make your own sketches and diagrams.

**Data:** Data taken during the experiment and data later calculated should be displayed in neat tables and graphs (see an examples on following pages). Please do not confuse the data with the calculations part of the lab. Your calculations will be explained in the next section of your report.

## Calculations and

**Questions:** Explain any calculations you use in obtaining final results by showing a sample calculation for each different formula used. Each sample calculation should contain three lines. Shown below is an example of a sample calculation:

$$\begin{aligned}A &= 4 \pi r^2 && \text{(formula used)} \\A &= 4 \pi (6.32 \text{ cm})^2 && \text{(substitute data from your experiment)} \\A &= 502 \text{ cm}^2 && \text{(final result of calculation)}\end{aligned}$$

Be sure to include units in your calculation and only include only the proper number of significant digits in your results. Also, please answer all the questions asked in your lab handout in this section.

## Conclusions:

Give a short discussion of what your results show. The following ideas should always be included:

- Did you accomplish the goals stated in the purpose (No. 2 above)?
- Discuss sources of error in your experiment (not human error!).
- Find the percent difference between your experimental results and the accepted values for those same quantities. To find the percent difference use the following equation:

$$\text{percent difference} = \frac{X_{\text{exp}} - X_{\text{acc}}}{X_{\text{acc}}} \times 100\%$$

where  $X_{\text{exp}}$  = the experimental result  
 $X_{\text{acc}}$  = the accepted value

### **Make-up Labs:**

There will be no make-up lab unless the student has given at least one day notice beforehand. Only one make-up lab for each student will be allowed. The only exception to this is if you are sick on the day of the lab. Please email or call your lab instructor immediately to discuss arrangements for making up the missed lab.

### **Late Labs:**

Occasionally, the lab might run longer than expected. If it does not appear that you will be able to complete your lab report by the end of the lab period, you must discuss this with your lab instructor before leaving the lab. Otherwise you will be penalized for a late lab report.

### **Grading Policy:**

The grade for each lab report will be S+, S, or S-. After finishing an experiment, your lab report will be reviewed and graded before you leave the laboratory (in most cases). Your lab instructor will discuss with you the particular criteria that determine the grade you receive on your lab reports. However, here are some general points to consider:

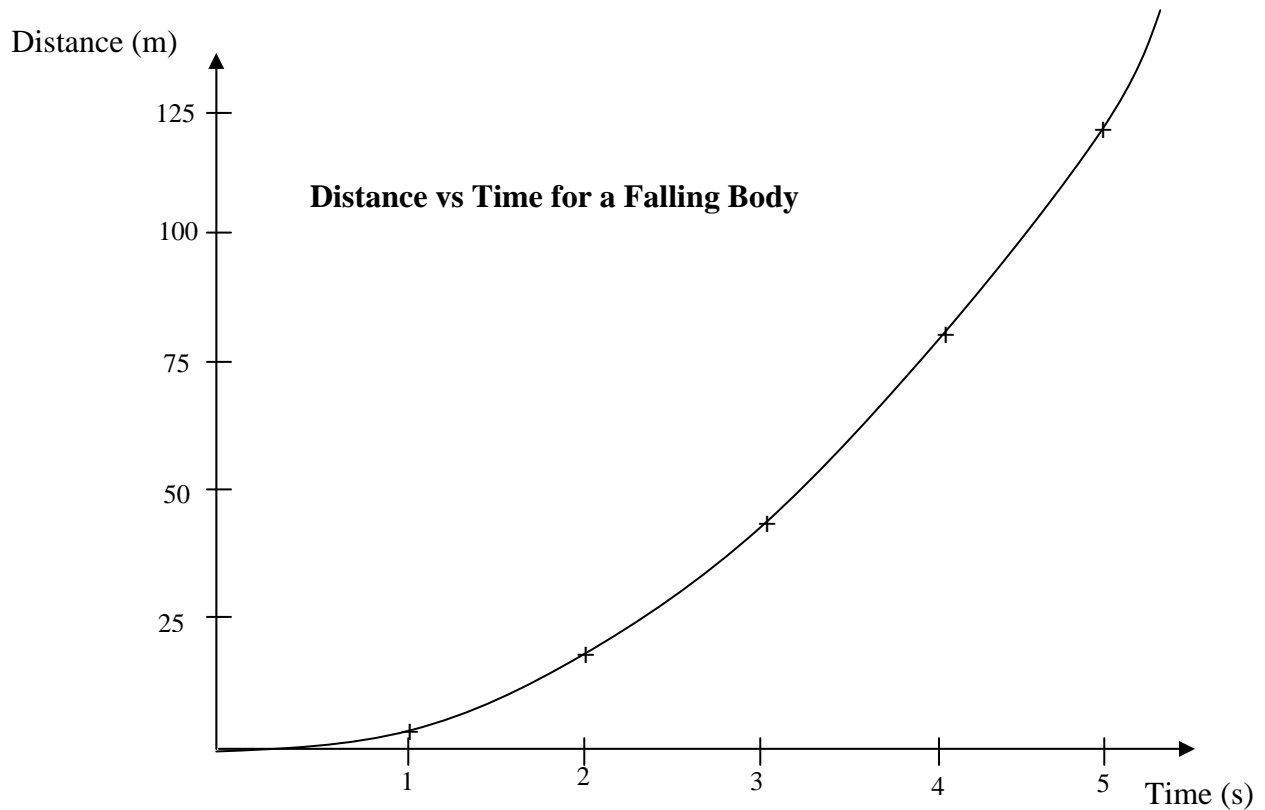
- a. Have you satisfactorily completed the items listed on the previous page?
- b. Neatness and general readability.
- c. An indication that you really understand what you did.

For point (b) and (c) you should aim to write your reports so that another student at your level (not necessarily taking this course) could read your report and understand what you did and why.

**Important: No one will be given a passing grade in the course unless at least  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the required lab reports are satisfactorily completed by the end of the semester.**

Below is shown a typical graph that might appear in your lab report

- NOTE:** 1. The graph has a title.  
2. Both axes are labeled and include units.  
3. Data points are shown clearly marked  
4. A smooth curve is drawn which best represents all of the data points.



Below is shown a typical data table that might appear in your lab report

- NOTE:** 1. The Table has a title.  
2. Each column of data is labeled and the units used are clearly shown.

**DATA FOR FREE FALL EXPERIMENT**

Trial	Distance (m)	Time (s)	Time <sup>2</sup> (s <sup>2</sup> )	Experimental Acceleration (m/s <sup>2</sup> )	Accepted Value for Acceleration (m/s <sup>2</sup> )	Percent Difference %
1	4.92	1.02	1.04	9.46	9.80	-3.47
2	19.8	1.96	3.84	10.3	9.80	5.10
3	43.8	2.92	8.53	10.3	9.80	5.10
4	79.6	4.11	16.9	9.42	9.80	-3.88
5	124	5.03	25.3	9.80	9.80	0