

6.021J AUTHOR GUIDELINES

CONTENT: A lab report in *6.021J Quantitative Physiology* is a description and analysis of your research. The primary audience of your report is other 6.021J students. It is expected that your research was jointly conducted and authored. We do not expect you to reach grand theories or expect all your research to be successful. We do expect you to offer a rationale that explains why this research is relevant, provide a detailed and accurate methodology description, disclose your results, and discuss reasons why your experiment succeeded or failed by linking that discussion to your results and methods.

STYLE: We prefer an informal but not colloquial style of writing to a textbook style or jargon-laden prose. You may use occasional instances of personal pronouns in your report. Your readers, the students and faculty of this course, all have some background in this subject, but only a very small percentage are experts. A clear conceptual discussion is far better than a plethora of technical details that have no overarching meaning or organization.

MANUSCRIPT FORMATTING: All pages should be numbered, beginning with the first page of the report body. Please include a Cover Page that includes authors' names as well as title of your report and submission date. Please include your Abstract on this Cover Page. Do not number the Cover Page. Every report needs to include in the body the following major section headings: Introduction, Methods, Results, Discussion. Within each of these sections, you may use more descriptive subheadings. A Table of Contents is optional.

LENGTH: Please limit your reports to 3,500 words. We prefer single-spaced texts with clear page breaks. Appendices are not included in the word count limit. Avoid lengthy Appendices as most readers will not read them carefully.

FIGURES: We recognize that sometimes “a picture is worth a thousand words,” but avoid the gratuitous use of figures in your results. Five to 10 figures should be sufficient for your report. Use figures to synthesize results and show trends or comparisons across findings. Integrate your figures with your text to create a “story” between text and figure. Large figures should not run across pages. Each figure needs to be numbered and include a caption and label. Please “clean up” your figures from MatLab[®] by removing unnecessary grid lines and shading. In addition, please make figures legible by using a 10 or 12-point font size for captions and axis labels.

REFERENCES: You need at least one reference for your report. Most 6.021J students reference the Weiss text. Many reports also include references to research in the Introduction.

FURTHER RESOURCES: 6.021J has its own **Report and Proposal Guide** which is available online at the 6.021J course homepage. This guide is a supplement to the MIT style guide, **The Mayfield Handbook of Technical and Scientific Writing** (available at <http://web.mit.edu/course/21/21.guide/www/home.htm>)