This course has a laboratory, which provides an excellent opportunity to sharpen your writing skills. Technical communication is key to any professional or academic practice so we will try to develop a consistent approach to writing laboratory reports and other documents. But in essence, it's simply a form of communication and in the end your goal is to tell a formal, accurate and informative story.

While different professors, supervisors, bosses, etc. may have different styles and expectations for your writing, you should be able to adapt to their particular expectations in completing your goal. In this course, we will hold to a standard which expects formal technical lab reports to be written in a style using past-tense, passive voice writing in which the focus is on the experiment/device/material as the subject of the sentence. You should not use the pronouns "I or we" in your writing.

A good guide for writing your lab reports can be found courtesy of North Carolina State University's LabWrite website. It contains excellent information which guides you through the PreLab, InLab, and PostLab procedures in which you prepare for the experiment, conduct and take notes during the experiment, and finally take all of your collected information and put it into a well-written document. It's actually quite good at doing all of this and getting you ready to write.

You should peruse this website focusing particularly on the "self-guide for writing your lab report". Do not forget that you should reference any outside sources of information that you use, such as looking up constants. Please use this document for formatting references within your document. Please use a numbered format. Note, You should never use footnotes.

Finally, for each lab I will provide more guidance and expectations relevant to that particular laboratory assignment. While the above covers much of the material, there may be specific expectations for an assignment that you need to fulfill. You should read over these prior to completing the lab so that you might take effective notes in your laboratory notebook and subsequently prepare for writing most efficiently. A sample writing piece is provided on the course website. This is a journal article where the focus is on mechanical testing.

If you've read this far I applaud and thank you. So, let's get to the laboratory experience!