

Practise Good Lab Book Practices

Good Lab Book Practice for Researchers

Where can I get more information?

IP Australia is the Federal Government Agency responsible for the registration of patents, trade marks and designs. IP Australia has specifically developed an online resource, *IP Professor*, for the tertiary sector. *IP Professor* features online lecture notes, request-a-lecturer, an IP news clipping service and case studies for use by the tertiary sector. For further information, visit our website www.ipaustralia.gov.au and select the IP Professor logo or phone 02 6283 2999.

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Why is a Laboratory Notebook so important?

A laboratory notebook is a complete legal document recording your work in the laboratory. Laboratory notebooks are vital in proving that you conducted the research. A properly kept laboratory notebook is invaluable in proving the right to own a related patent in Australia, or obtain one in the United States (where patent rights are assigned on a 'first to invent' basis, rather than the 'first to file' system that applies in Australia). One of the most effective methods to prove you were the 'first to invent' something is via a well-kept laboratory notebook. This short guide is designed to help you practice good laboratory notebook practices.

Electronic laboratory notebooks are becoming more widely used, but electronic records are not currently as effective as evidence of invention. At present, paper-based records are preferred as they cannot be easily altered, this is likely to change in the future however. Any electronic records should be printed out and affixed in your laboratory notebook.

If you are unsure, or need further guidance, seek legal advice or contact your university or employer's IP officer or Research Office.

See over for a checklist of items
your laboratory notebook should include →

Your Laboratory Notebook Should Have:

- 1 Pages that are permanently sewn or otherwise bound to the book. There should be no loose pages of paper - all data should be entered directly into your laboratory book (see point 9);
- 2 Pages that are numbered consecutively;
- 3 Legible entries in ink (preferably black). Large white spaces should not be left in the text. Such spaces should be lined through to avoid misinterpretation;
- 4 Any errors remaining legible, for example, lined out (sleep) rather than erased or covered. If necessary (ie the reason for the alteration is not obvious), a reason for the alteration should be given. This is to avoid suspicion of concealment;
- 5 Any changes and additions signed and dated by you;
- 6 Details recorded of any pre-experimental work concluded in relation to the project, including details of any ideas generated during thinking/discussion sessions with co-workers;
- 7 Entries in chronological order, without blank pages. To start an entry on a new page, draw a line through any unused portion of the previous page. Never tear out or destroy pages;
- 8 Results obtained at a later stage recorded in date order and cross referenced to earlier entry;
- 9 Additional information, including electronic records, such as result print outs, diagrams and photographs dated and attached via stapling or adhesive. These should be signed and dated by you across the document and the underlying page;
- 10 All non-standard terms, processes and abbreviations defined;
- 11 A record of equipment details including manufacturer, model and serial number and indicate the purpose if not clear;
- 12 A sketch of the equipment set-up used, noting any variations to the procedure;
- 13 No value judgements regarding your perception of the protectability of the research;
- 14 The conclusion of each work period or experiment signed and dated by you, and signed off by a witness. The witness should be knowledgeable in your area of research but not directly participating in your project; and
- 15 Duplicate copies made and kept secure at a separate location. Ensure that no unauthorised persons have access to your notebooks to preserve their confidentiality.

Do not be frightened to write too much! Your laboratory notebook should be a complete record of what has been done. Any methods used must be clearly described, noting any unusual delays or occurrences. Any person knowledgeable in your area of study should understand the procedures used to arrive at the result. Remember, the more details you include, the better chance you will have of successfully proving you were the 'first to invent' if someone else tries to patent your invention in the United States.

