

Most companies require their engineers to keep notebooks of their work. In addition to helping engineers record and organize their work, lab notebooks serve as legal protection of the intellectual property created by the engineer. When patent disputes arise, lab notebooks often serve as evidence to the court of the act and time of creation of the ideas in question. As a result, engineers are expected to keep a chronological account of their work in a bound notebook. There are numerous cases in the history of electronics where the patent rights to lucrative ideas have been lost because the inventor failed to keep adequate documentation. There are even more cases of successfully dependent patents because the engineers took the time to adequately document their ideas.

To prepare Citadel students professional work, each ELEC 302 lab team must keep a notebook documenting its activities in the lab. Team members are expected to alternate each week in keeping the notebook. Although it can serve as a legal document, a lab notebook is not a formal document in the sense that it has to “publication quality.” However, there are a few rules that must be observed to qualify it as evidence.

- 1) The lab notebook must be in a bound volume. **Loose-leaf notebooks are not acceptable.**
- 2) All pages in the notebook must be sequentially numbered. Each side of every sheet is considered a page.
- 3) The first sheet should be reserved for a “Table of Contents.” Start numbering the pages beginning at the second sheet.
- 4) Label the first page used to record data for a particular experiment with the title of the experiment. Record the page number in the table of contents.
- 5) Make all entries in ink or indelible pencil. **Do not erase anything in the lab notebook. Do not remove any pages.** If changes need to be made, draw a line through the material that is to be deleted even if you have to cross out an entire page. The deleted material should still be legible.
- 6) The date that the entries were made must appear on every page with the exception of the table of contents.
- 7) Each page must be signed by the engineer taking the data.
- 8) No blank numbered pages are permitted. If a page needs to be left blank, write “Intentionally Blank” and draw a diagonal line across the page.
- 9) Any material added, such as a computer print out, must be permanently affixed (tape or glue) to the notebook page. The material itself must be signed and dated.