SLW INSTITUTE
Building Extraordinary IP Assets

GUIDELINES FOR KEEPING A LABORATORY NOTEBOOK

The following is a general description of how to keep a proper laboratory notebook.

A well-kept notebook provides a reliable reference for writing up materials, methods, and results for an invention. It is a legally valid record that preserves a company's rights to your inventions. A comprehensive notebook permits one to reproduce any part of an invention completely and accurately.

CHOOSING A NOTEBOOK

For most purposes, a bound, quadrille-ruled notebook may be selected. A company may require a specific type notebook with pre-numbered pages and places for a date and an investigator's and supervisor's signatures on each page. Pads of tear-out graph paper or spiral bound notebooks without pre-numbered pages should not be used. It should be impossible to tear out a page without leaving evidence. It is safest to select something that is clearly labeled as a laboratory notebook.

PREPARING A NOTEBOOK

Use a ball point pen for all entries so that the marks will not smear nor will they be erasable.

Put name, telephone number and/or address, and project name or course number on the outside front cover of the record. Put that same information on the first page inside or on the inside front cover. If the notebook does not have pre-numbered pages, lower case Roman numerals may be used, as in a standard publication. Next, number the next several pages with Arabic numerals in sequence, and the notebook is ready for recording data.

WHEN TO ENTER

Above all, it is critical that all illustrations, notes, descriptions, procedures and data be entered directly into the notebook while the actual work is being conducted. Entries should be sufficiently detailed so that the author of the notebook or someone else could reproduce the invention or conduct any inventive method with only the notebook as a guide. The most logical organization of notebook entries is chronological.

If a proper chronological record is kept and co-signed by a coworker or supervisor, it is a legally valid record.

Such a record is necessary if a company is to have rights to inventions and discoveries.

MAKING ENTRIES

Someone else may need to consult the notebook sometime, so entries should be clear and legible.

When the first entries of the day are made, start by entering the date, writing out the month or abbreviation for the month (e.g., 5 Apr '16, or April 5, 2016, but not 4/5/16). The use of numerals only can cause confusion. For example, in Europe the day comes before the month. Thus April 5, 2016 would be written as 5/4/16. Each new page of a notebook should include the date next to the page number. Each page should be numbered and dated consistently. The upper right corner of each page is commonly used for date and page number.

Depending on how the notebook is designed, the backs of pages may be used. If the backs of pages are left blank, a corner-to-corner line should be added through them to void all blank spaces. Some people use the backs for rough calculations, then void the remaining blank space. Space (and trees) can be saved if both sides of each page are used. Obviously both sides cannot be used with notebooks that are designed to make duplicate copies. In situations where duplicate copies to a supervisor are required, each new set of entries should be started on a new page.

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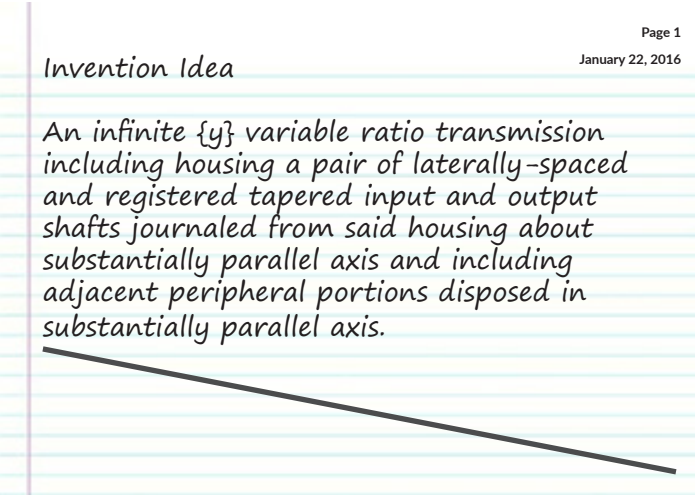
MAKING ENTRIES *(cont.)*

Write a title for each and every new set of entries. Distinct sets of entries should be separated by using informative headings and by leaving a single space or two between individual sets of entries. Specific information can be more readily located that way. Write down a very brief introduction for each new invention, line of thinking, or experiment.

If a mistake is made, put a line through the mistake and write the new information next to it. Never erase or obliterate an entry. When a page is finished, put a corner-to corner line through any blank parts that could still be used for data entry. Every bit of every page should be legible and filled, either with information or with a mark that voids the section.



LOOSE MATERIALS

Where do you put "loose materials" like printouts of charts, graphs, or other material that you do not directly put into the notebook? Loose data should be kept in a separate folder or notebook, with the location noted in the lab notebook. Alternatively, loose data/materials can be affixed within the notebook with a signature and date over the edge of the added item.