

Table 1. Clarification of gray areas in report writing in this course.

Language

Active voice or passive voice?	Active voice in most cases, but not natural in every sentence (p. 104*)
Define abbreviations?	Yes, the first time that they are used (p. 114)
Depth—how much?	See sample report
First person (<i>I</i> or <i>we</i>) allowed?	Yes, as long as emphasis remains on work (p. 108)
Paragraph length?	Average length 6-10 lines—avoid stacking short paragraphs (1-5 lines) and avoid paragraphs of more than 15 lines (p. 136)
Placement of equations?	Separate from paragraph with white space, but treat as grammatical part of the sentence (p. 141)
Specify the unclear <i>this</i> ?	Do not have <i>this</i> stand alone as a pronoun; insert the noun that follows— <i>this pressure</i> , <i>this result</i> , and so forth (p. 94)

Illustrations

Figure captions	10 points, below figure, left justified when more than one line (p. 163)
Placement of figures and tables?	After the completed paragraph that introduces them. If not enough room exists, continue the text and place toward top of next page. (p. 166)
Table headings	Left justified above table (see example heading on this page)

Format

Layout of report?	See http://www.craftofscientificwriting.com/report-format.html
Line spacing?	Single spaced: see sample report
Page numbers?	Bottom centered
Paragraphs indented?	Yes
Reference citations?	See http://www.craftofscientificwriting.com/report-format.html
Type face and size of text?	Serif font, 12 points (p. 222)
Type face and size of headings	Bold: See http://www.craftofscientificwriting.com/report-format.html

Grammar, Punctuation, and Usage

Starting sentence with <i>and</i> or <i>but</i> ?	Too informal for formal reports
Contractions (<i>can't</i>)?	Too informal for formal reports
Numbers—numerals or written out?	Numerals for measurements; numbers written out for simple counting, when two words or fewer (p. 140)
Past tense or present tense?	Write about lab work in the past tense—some sentences, though, are in present tense: <i>This report presents</i> (p. 261)

* Page number in *The Craft of Scientific Writing*, 3rd ed.