

**ECE/OPTI 531**  
**Lab Writing Tips**  
**8/29/02**

- Formatting

It is often much easier to assemble all graphs and figures at the end of the text report. This is recommended, as long as you provide text “pointers” (references) to each figure with unambiguous labels such as Fig. 1, Fig. 2, etc.

A screen capture utility can sometimes be the best way to “cut and paste” images and Session Log clips to your word processor document.

- Content

Session logs are valuable because they help me understand what you did, and to find any errors that may have occurred. I won't count the session log towards the text page limit. However, it helps greatly to insert some text that describes **in words** each step you made along the way. Even hand writing on the session log is better than nothing.

You don't need to include **everything** you do; use your judgement to select the important items.

To avoid point loss, you should do **at least** everything asked for in the Lab assignment and describe the results in the report.

Any additional work you do, if it is **relevant and correct**, will generally boost your score.

One thing I generally look for in reports are indications that you **understand, or at least, tried to understand**, what you were doing and the results that you got. If you do a process and then present it without explanation or interpretation, it appears that you gave no real thought to what you were doing. So, if you add relevant comments that convey your understanding, it usually helps.

- Error checking

It is advisable to look over your session log for error messages and to try to figure out why they occurred.

It is also advisable to double-check your report, especially figure numbers and references. A practice that I find valuable is to write the report a day or two before it's due, put it away for at least overnight, and then go over and revise it as necessary before turning it in.