1. Scientific reports should be written in third person, past tense. No "I", "we" or "they". The only exception is when referring to facts or properties which do not change with time. (Example: The voltage WAS increased. Ohm's Law STATES. He SAID the capital of New York IS Albany.)

For this reason, you cannot simply copy the instructions from the lab manual for the Procedures section. It is written in second person, present tense. If you use the instructions as a guideline, you must recast them into third person, past tense. The object is to report WHAT WAS DONE during the lab.

FIRST PERSON: I adjusted the voltage.
SECOND PERSON: Adjust the voltage (the "you" is understood.)
THIRD PERSON, PAST TENSE: The voltage WAS adjusted. (Because there are no "people" in third person, the passive voice is required.)

2. Each sentence must contain a subject (noun) and a verb to be a complete sentence.


4. Run-on sentence. Complete thoughts (i.e., containing a subject and verb) should be separate sentences punctuated with a period.

5. Misspelled word

6. Missing article: "a", "an", "the"

7. Use apostrophes ONLY for contractions: don't, isn't, etc., or possessive: the generator's power, NEVER, NEVER, NEVER for plural. French fire's is WRONG! The only exception to this rule is "its". The possessive form does not use an apostrophe. The only time to use an apostrophe with "its" is when it is a contraction for "it is".

8. Dangling participle; not correctly or adequately connected to the rest of the sentence. Example: Waving good-bye, the plane taxied down the runway.
9. Misplaced modifier. Example: Mary said she ONLY loved me or Mary said she loved ONLY me. Placement of the modifier can change the meaning of the sentence.

10. Participial phrase at the beginning of a sentence must refer to the SUBJECT of the sentence. Example: A soldier of proved valor, they entrusted him with a key to the city.

11. Put statements in direct, positive form. Example: He usually came late. Not: He is not very often on time.

12. **ELIMINATE UNNECESSARY WORDS** and avoid qualifiers, which weaken the statement, such as "appears to be" or "would seem to indicate that". Every word in a sentence must serve a NECESSARY purpose. If it doesn't, cut it.

13. Avoid beginning sentences with parenthetical expressions, except occasionally, to vary the rhythm of sentences.

14. Scrambled syntax (word order in sentence) Sentence is structured so that meaning is unclear or indecipherable.

15. Split infinitive: to inquire diligently, not to diligently inquire.

16. Do not use abbreviations or ampersand (&) in the body of the narrative (unless it's part of a proper name, such as Johnson & Johnson)

17. Use capitals only for proper names, at the beginnings of sentences or for acronyms (USA). Be consistent with capitalization throughout the report.

18. (Generally) spell out numbers lower than 10, in narrative. (Except for measurements: 2 MHz, etc.)

19. Don't begin sentences with "also" or "and".

20. Spell out percent in narrative, but retain figures: 99 percent.