

PREPARING FOR PRACS AND LABS

What is a practical or lab?

Practicals (pracs): 'Hands on' classes where you are expected to participate as part of your assessment in a physical and practical manner. These could be in laboratories or in clinical settings.

Laboratories (labs): A practical class that takes place in a laboratory. Labs can involve experiments, investigation, construction, observation or testing.

Pracs or labs are usually designed to complement the material that has been presented in lectures.



By attending pracs or labs you can:

- Apply and investigate theoretical and conceptual knowledge.
- Develop a range of experimental techniques and approaches.
- Improve skills in collecting, analysing, interpreting and presenting findings and data.
- Practise a wide range of personal and transferable skills such as problem solving, team work, observing and following protocols.
- Learn how to manage resources (including time).
- Work more effectively and safely in a laboratory.

TIP

Make sure you're up to date with course content before attending the prac or lab.

Before

- Read through the experiment before going to class. Make sure you understand each step.
- Complete any preparatory work.
- Wear the right kind of clothing to class (closed-in shoes, tie up long hair, remove loose clothing e.g. scarves, and remove dangling jewellery).
- Bring all necessary equipment (safety glasses, lab coat, pen/pencil, calculator)

TIP

You can prepare your lab book ahead of time and simply fill in with observations during class.

During

- Listen and take notes to any briefings at the start of class.
- Take notes as you go so you don't have to remember everything later.
- Make sure you record all observations.
- Plan ahead so you know what is required next and you can be ready with equipment and materials.



After

- Write up your report as soon as possible, while it is fresh in your mind.
- Summarise your notes, ready for exam preparation.

Important lab rules:

- Know the location of the safety equipment
- Follow instructions
- Do not eat or drink in the lab
- Dress appropriately
- Dispose of waste properly
- Avoid skin and eye contact with all chemicals
- Walk, never run, in the lab
- Handle equipment with care
- Always wash your hands before leaving the lab



TIP

Make sure you read your unit outline and laboratory procedures for all rules and guidelines.

Preparing for practical exams.

- Know the type and structure of your exam.
- Practise essential scientific skills (identifying types of variables, drawing graphs, interpreting data, calculations)
- Attend practice sessions and study previous exams, if they are offered.
- Make sure you arrive prepared on the day (all equipment, pen/pencil, eraser, calculator)

TIP

Students can prepare for practical assessments- just like any other assessment.

During the practical exam.

- Read the questions carefully.
- Highlight key words and instructions.
- Divide your time according to the weighting of the tasks.
- Make sure your writing is legible.
- Clearly label your work.
- If you can't think of the answer, write yourself a note before you change station- the name might come to you later!

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