

Biology Laboratory Dos and Don'ts

Introduction

Sometimes a list of dos and don'ts can be a helpful reminder of biology laboratory safety issues.

Do:

- Become familiar with experiments before coming to the laboratory.
- Follow all laboratory instructions carefully.
- Know the emergency and fire procedures.
- Ask for clarification on any laboratory procedures that are not understood.
- Wear safety glasses or goggles during exercises where glassware, heat, or chemicals are used. Glassware can always fall and shatter sending glass shards into eyes.
- Wear provided aprons or laboratory coats.
- Wear protective gloves when instructed to do so.
- Assume all chemicals are toxic and act accordingly.
- Read the labels on reagent containers for safety precautions and understand the chemicals being used. Have Material Safety Data Sheets available for all chemicals.
- Stopper or cap all reagent bottles when not in use.
- Wash any chemical contact areas immediately with water and inform your instructor.
- Keep your work area neat, clean, organized, and clear of clutter.
- Know the location of emergency equipment (first aid kit, eyewash, fire extinguisher, fire blanket, spill containers, emergency exits, and nearest telephone).
- Exercise great caution whenever using heat.
- Keep hair and loose clothing restricted and well away from flames.
- Turn off the gas source when a Bunsen burner is not in use.
- Use proper ventilation and hoods when instructed to do so.
- Handle hot glassware with appropriate clamps or tongs.
- Use extra caution when working with scalpels, knives, glass tubing or other sharp objects.
- Ask for instructor assistance in cleaning up broken glass or chemical spills.
- Discard needles, razor blades, scalpel blades, and other sharp items in a "sharps container."
- Discard cracked or broken glass in a "broken glass container."
- Report all accidents to your instructor immediately.
- Report to your instructor any condition that seems unsafe.
- Keep all laboratory exits clear of debris.
- Put away all items no longer in use.

- Use special care when carrying heavy and expensive equipment such as microscopes.
- Seek first aid assistance for all cuts or other minor injuries.
- Always add acid slowly to water. Never add water to acid.
- Notify your instructor of any symptoms of illness or allergic reactions during laboratory work.
- Place culture materials in biohazard bags as directed by your instructor.
- Clean your lab table and return all cleaned equipment to its proper place.
- Turn off all gas nozzles and water faucets when leaving the laboratory.
- Clean your work area and wash hands before leaving the laboratory.

Do NOT:

- Begin laboratory work until instructed to do so.
- Do anything in the laboratory that is not understood or that you feel is dangerous.
- Engage in any horseplay in the laboratory.
- Perform unauthorized experiments.
- Operate any equipment until you have been instructed in its proper use.
- Work in isolation—a second person should always be nearby.
- Remove any materials from the laboratory unless instructed to do so.
- Touch your face when working with cultures.
- Let potential hazards make you afraid to participate in laboratory activities.
- Leave a Bunsen burner or other flame source unattended.
- Light a flame source near flammable materials.
- Move a lit Bunsen burner.
- Taste or ingest any chemicals or plant material.
- Handle or consume food or drink in the laboratory.
- Pipet anything by mouth.
- Put chemicals in a sink or in the trash unless instructed to do so.
- Pour chemicals back into dispensing containers.
- Leave a test tube stopper in place when heating test tubes.
- Drink from laboratory glassware.