

Hi!

Here's some general info you'll want to have to be ready for General Physics I Lab this semester. Please note that our first meeting is Thursday, January 29, 2026.

0. Books & Equipment

Although there are no books, you have to get a quad-ruled, string bound lab notebook. Quad ruled means "graph paper". You need to have a laptop (i.e., not a Chromebook) with Excel and Tracker actually installed. I'll regularly give you lab manual pages for the next week's labs. Once received, you are required to immediately place them into a dedicated three ring binder. Forgetting to bring the binder with you, or to not file the pages immediately, or to keep other items in the binder will have a negative impact on your grade.

Since you need the lab manual to complete Pre Lab/Quiz #1, I've placed electronic copies on the course homepage for you to use. You'll get paper copies during the first lab. The first link is general info and table of contents kind of stuff, the second link is our procedure for week 1. Both sections will be needed to complete the Pre Lab Assignment:

<https://tildesites.geneseo.edu/~pogo/GeneralILab/Manual-Front-2026.pdf>

<https://tildesites.geneseo.edu/~pogo/GeneralILab/Manual-2026-Lab1.pdf>

1. Other Web Stuff

We will not be using Brightspace for any purpose this semester, and I urge you to never go there for any reason. Course content will be posted on the course homepage rather than Brightspace... you'll find it faster and easier to use: <https://tildesites.geneseo.edu/~pogo/GeneralILab/Phys114Lab.htm>

Bookmark that page right now so you don't have to keep going back to this letter.

2. Surveys

Please visit this survey immediately and choose whether you want to see grade updates anonymously displayed on the course homepage. <https://forms.gle/7xuPFnGU3g9bQv5m6>

For now, you can see what that would look like (using last year's students) to help you decide.

3. Assignments (including stuff that's due when you arrive on the first day!)

On most weeks, you'll have three things due at the beginning of lab:

- 1) a paper worksheet from the previous week,
- 2) a copy of your Excel from the previous week, submitted electronically via Google, and
- 3) a paper take-home pre-lab Assignment/Quiz about the lab for that day.

You already have a paper take-home quiz due on January 29! As with all these quizzes, answers will require you to *read* and *use* some info from the lab manual about the current lab. For week 1, you can either print the quiz out from the homepage, or you can come to my office and grab one (ISC 228D). For other weeks, I will give you paper copies of the *next* quiz at each lab.

You will submit your Excel spreadsheets using a Google Form. You must be logged in to Google with your college account, not a personal account. This link is also available on the course homepage:

<https://forms.gle/puATfrPbQgdXCxHCA>

Also, three times during the semester, you'll also submit a paper (half page) report about the previous week's lab. Due dates are February 19, April 2, and April 23.

Also, three times during the semester, I'll meet with you *during the lab* to review and grade the status of your lab notebook, to make sure it's complete and up-to-date.

4. Excel & Tracker

You must install the program "Tracker" on your laptop before the first lab.

The link is on the course homepage: <https://www.physlets.org/tracker/>

You must watch the 5 minute tutorial before the first lab, also on the course home page:

<https://tildesites.geneseo.edu/~pogo/GeneralILab/UsingTracker.mp4>

You must install Excel/Office-365 on your laptop before the first lab. You may not use "Excel online" or any other off-brand spreadsheet program. The college already paid for you to install Microsoft Office-365 directly on your laptop, and Excel is part of that package:

<https://geneseo.atlassian.net/wiki/spaces/HELP/pages/76780164/Microsoft+Office+365>

There is a short video about using Excel on the course homepage as well.

You must watch the 12 minute tutorial before the first lab. Note that the tutorial has some specific assignments within in that you must complete before the first lab!

<https://tildesites.geneseo.edu/~pogo/GeneralILab/UsingExcel.mp4>

5. Office Hours/Discord

Office hours will use Discord; see the syllabus for when I'll be available. My discord "server" for office hours is: <https://discord.gg/GjkWREU>. Discord will allow you to speak, listen, post screen captures or other electronic images, and post text. Discord maintains a log of all the "written" stuff that we talk about (but not any audio content), so you can read through prior "discussions"... even discussions from past years!

You should *practice* using Discord before the semester begins, especially the audio capabilities. Audio doesn't work well when you merely run Discord in a web browser... install the actual app! You'll need to authorize Discord to access your microphone... that won't happen by default. Also, you might want to set up Discord to make sure you fully log out when you're done (as opposed to just minimizing Discord to the background). For Discord beginners, click on the gear (near the lower left), then go to App Settings/Windows Settings, and turn off all the options you see there.

Also, like a lot of software, Discord doesn't always work perfectly with many brands of headsets. Specifically, a lot of headsets mess up the volume settings. The best solution I've found is to just use your laptop speakers instead.

Office hours are "first come first served", but each student may only ask one question whenever other students are waiting patiently. After asking a question, you'll have to wait until your turn comes around again while others get a turn. Office hours are not course-specific; in any sessions, there will probably be students from various classes there at the same time.

6. Going to Medical School/Letters of Recommendation

Geneseo does an excellent job of preparing students to get accepted into medical school, and to complete medical school once you're there. To be accepted, you'll need multiple letters of recommendation. But if you're like most people, you have no clue what that means. For example, did you know that the best letters of recommendation don't mention grades? I've spoken with dozens of med school acceptance administrators and industrial hiring officers, and they all agree about that. The following document shows some of the things I would like to include in a letter for you someday... if they are true for you. Keep these items in mind as you struggle through each of your classes: <https://tildesites.geneseo.edu/~pogo/Recommendations.pdf>

Good luck this semester!

Dr. Pogo