Physics 562: Term paper style sheet

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My reasons to enforce a relatively uniform format are (1) to help keep the length from getting out of hand; (2) to make it fairer to compare papers when grading; and (3) to help clarify my expectations for the term papers.

I expect LaTeX. This year, for my first time, I distributed a template to use, slightly modified from Phys Rev. style. (Available on the web site.) This should resolve many questions about style (such as page numbers) that I spelled out in former years.

Reminder: any direct quotations must use quote marks (and be referenced); any paraphrases/summaries should be identified as such (and referenced). Note here, too, if you use material from other term papers you have written; in such a case, you should probably consult CLH. (Of course it is not permissible to recycle previous term papers!)

1. **Total Length** – From 2500–4000 “words”. (A length of 4000 words is about the same as a Phys. Rev. Letter, and represents about as much material as is covered in a 1.5–hour lecture.

   Exclude three figures/tables; exclude all references and appendices. To make things simple, we’ll just say 900 “words” = 1 page in the style of the template. (Our margins have a bit fewer words than in PRL because the margins are wider, to encourage comments during peer review.) So a paper ought to be 4 pages after excluding the references and 3 figures/footnotes (usually 5 pages including them).

   We will deduct marks for more than 1 page over length.

2. **Head material** – Include title, your name, date, course number, and an abstract (about six lines i.e. one paragraph).

3. **Sections** – Normally 3 to 6 sections in all. The **Introductory section** should contain (usually at its end) an outline (in sentences) of the path you are taking. Each section should have a mini-introduction (about a paragraph), to tell something about the route you are going.

4. **Figures** – 3 or so figures is good. **Always give the reference if you copy the figure.**
5. **Equations**: Not too many, please! Probably 8 to 12 displayed equations, all of which should (normally) be numbered, [see “What’s wrong with these equations” by N. D. Mermin, *Physics Today*, Oct. 1989, p. 9.]

6. **References** – There should typically be 10, up to 15 or so. Sources that you used for the content should be cited, whether published or not; sources that merely led you to the useful content do not need to be cited. If a paper is published, always cite the published version, not the ArXiV preprint. Whenever possible, reference a robust (permanent) URL. (ArXiV and thesis depositories are permanent, personal or department web pages are not.) The **basic references should include at least two independent points of view**.

7. **Acknowledgments** – put at the end of the text, before references. Please be careful to acknowledge anyone else who led you to central references you would otherwise have missed, who participated in conversations that were essential for your understanding the topics, who contributed an idea to your paper, or who made comments on it that induced significant revisions.

8. **Appendices** – OK, as long as the main text is readable without them. If you have material which is tangential to your story, but which cost you so much work that you can’t bear to cut it, sticking it in an appendix is a good compromise.

**DUE DATES**: (you already did the first two)

- **Pre-Draft**: M 3/24 (2 page document, for quick advance reading by 2 other students the night before you informally present to them)

- **Informal 15-min presentation to peers**: in class W 3/26

- **Draft**: M 4/14

- **Peer review reports**: due W 4/30, or 2 weeks after you get the paper to review.

- **Final paper**: Mon 5/12 (1st day of exams.) *(There *may* be a short final homework assignment but there is no final exam. I believe the ’510 lab 3rd deadline is 5/6 or 5/7)*

Each of these five items contributes to the term paper score. In the case of the first four the marking essentially refers to being on time and making a reasonable effort (for the draft it also includes proper length and format). In the case of the final version, besides the overall criteria for judgment, improvement and responsiveness to (all) reviewers will be taken into account. **Lateness will be measured in class days: you will have a grace period (by prior arrangement only) up to the next class day, after that it is 10% penalty for each class day late.**