Lab Etiquette

Refers to the standard of work and cleanliness expected in the Laboratory. Individuals are responsible for leaving all areas clean and tidy after use; for the correct disposal of waste; and for working in a safe and cautious manner for their own protection and that of others.

Our laboratories should be and can be a productive discovery, development, designing, collaborating, and general learning place. It does require that we all help cooperate to maintain a respectful and supportive environment.

If you are not committed to being a part of the solution, you are likely part of the problem.

Here are a few lab etiquette principles to adhere to in our department:

1. Respect others' projects/property as you would expect others to respect yours.
2. When you leave, the lab should not look like you have been there. In fact, you should leave the lab in equal or better shape than you found it.
3. Clean after yourself immediately. **DO NOT** leave the surface benches, balances, fume hoods dirty or cluttered. Clean up your own lab bench and computer station at the end of each day.
4. Fume hoods are not storage cabinets.
5. **DO NOT** leave common equipment dirty in the sink or on a bench.
6. **Is your name on a lab cleaning schedule or waste disposal roster?** Perform your duties as is expected from you & on time.
7. Hand-washing sinks must only be used to wash hands. They must be kept clean and not be used for any other purpose.
8. Maintain a professional environment, professional techniques, and professional attitude toward others.
9. **DO** your lab duties with responsibility and consideration to other members. Provide collegial support for your colleagues.
10. Always ask first. **DO NOT** turn any timer, instrument or light "OFF" without asking first.
11. Space is limited. Have only what you need in your workspace. Coats, bags and other possessions should be placed where they cannot interfere with productivity.
12. Share your knowledge and understanding.
13. Use the proper attire to be in a laboratory (closed shoes, long pants, shirt with sleeves, minimal amount of jewellery, short or bound hair).
14. **NEVER** enter office or write up areas with a lab coat and/or gloves on, unless you need to collect chemicals from the General Store or any other Chemical Store, collect ice or liquid nitrogen or dispose of waste. Then so far as possible do not wear contaminated gloves and enter office environments.

15. **NEVER** wear a lab coat and gloves when using the bathroom/toilets.
16. Keep distracting noise to a minimum. Keep your voice down…
17. **NEVER** leave an empty container in the refrigerator or chemical shelf.
18. Report all reagents that you finished to the person in charge of placing purchase orders.
19. Respect and treat the experiment of others like yours…
20. Where you know to produce toxic, stinky or flammable fumes or vapours – work in a fume hood.
21. Warn persons in lab that you are going to work with or produce smelly vapours & fumes.
22. Where possible carry or place chemical bottles/containers & waste disposal containers in secondary containers e.g. a bucket for carrying chemicals or even in a polypropylene tray on a trolley to move between labs or chemical and waste stores.
23. Minimize the use of cell phones – use of cell phones in the lab is a NO NO.
24. Eating and drinking in the lab is a NO NO.
25. **DO NOT** put loud music in the lab… Preferably, do not put music at all.
26. Ear or Headphones are a NO NO since you may not be able to respond effectively in case of emergency.
27. TALK… It is always important to talk directly to the person that is affecting you in the lab than going to someone else.
28. Help maintain the supplies, equipment and facilities in working, accessible, usable order.
29. If there appears to be a problem(s) with the equipment, workstation, computer or any other facilities you want to or use, report it, supplying as much information as you can.
30. Leave a note at or on equipment or facilities so everyone will know it is OUT of ORDER and has been reported.
31. **DO NOT** make a mess getting supplies or chemicals; put them away in their correct place.
32. It is not appropriate to leave a project set up or samples on the bench or fume hood when finished.
33. Put away or dispose of (where appropriate) as much as possible and "sterilize" the area where you worked.
34. Communally & group equipment:
    a. Complete logbooks placed at equipment indicating from when until when you plan to use it
    b. Clean up all equipment and remove chemicals & samples when complete using it
35. When finished in a fume hood:
    a. Remove chemicals
    b. Remove any reaction set up glassware & equipment
    c. "Sterilize" all surfaces within & outside of fume hood
    d. Place the sash in the down (lowest) position
    e. Switch fume hood light off
    f. Switch damper off (where switch is available)

36. Always label your vessels (test tubes, glass vials, beakers, solvent bottles etc.) before putting anything in them – name, date prepared, solution/substance + concentration (where possible).
37. Read the entire experimental protocol and study the chemicals' MSDSs prior to attempting any of the steps. Ask questions about anything that seems unclear.
38. NEVER lay an "Eppendorf or Gilson" or similar pipette flat down on a bench, especially with fluid in it. Place or hook it on the stand specially made for it. If there is any liquid in tip or in shaft it can damage or destroy the inner seals and render the pipette useless.
39. Pipette tips **MUST NOT** lay around on bench or in fume hood.
40. **DO NOT** leave Pasteur pipettes lying around on benches or in a fume hood.
41. If you **DO NOT** know how to operate equipment please ask how before something several times your annual income is broken.
42. Ask permission from a group or lab manager/supervisor before using their equipment, even if it is communal used equipment n- especially when used after hours/weekends: fill in the logbook associated with it, remove your stuff and clean up when finished, do not disadvantage other users.
43. Glassware such as beakers, flasks must be washed ASAP after use. **Put glassware and equipment away** in their proper places when finished with them. Remove all grease, chemical or crystal residue by proper washing techniques. See SOP on Glassware Washing on Chemistry Health & Safety on Vula.
44. All glassware sent to the glassblower **MUST** be properly cleaned & dried before submitting.
45. Clean-up ALL spillages immediately. Dispose of broken glass & clean-up material appropriately.
46. **DO NOT** leave "**ON" or unattended**: hot plates, burners, stirrer, or oil or water baths.
47. When running a reaction overnight unattended:
    a. ensure the reaction has already reached the set temperature and is progressing smoothly
    b. that all tubing pressure points are well secured so it does not pop off when pressure for one or other reason increases
    c. that an "Overnight" safety card is stuck to the fume hood or instruments being used
    d. safety cards must contain: your name, your and/or supervisor's contact number, contents of the reaction flask and the hazards associated with the chemicals, shutdown procedure
48. When planning to work overnight or after hours ask permission from your group supervisor & inform him/her of dates & times you plan to be in the lab.
49. Dispose of all waste according to the SOP placed on Chemistry Health & Safety on Vula.
50. There is a reason why you have special access privileges. Only those who have a legitimate right to be in the lab should be in the lab. Private guests are welcome, but it is best to visit only you outside the secure lab areas where they will not disturb others as well.

The lab is our asset, and we must take the responsibility to maintain it and the safety of our colleagues. If you see some behaviour that is inappropriate, take responsibility and collegially provide leadership in correcting it. Provide support in ensuring the safety of colleagues coming to, using, and leaving the lab. Appropriately report irresponsible behaviour to the lab H&S Representative, Supervisor or the CEM OHSE Unit.