Suggestions for Writing Your Notebook Procedure

When writing the procedure in your notebook it should be in your own words, as much as possible, in an outline form (using reasonably understandable abbreviations when possible). You should be able to follow your own procedure without looking at the lab manual (you should not have to use your manual during lab, although you can, particularly for the pictures of the lab setup). Also, someone with a basic understanding of chemistry should be able to do the experiment by following your procedure without the manual and understand what's been recorded during lab.

The following is a partial example of a good procedure (based on exp 6, IHT):

Part A:

1a. Obtain Styrofoam cup (w. lid) from TA.
1b. Check out flip thermometer from storeroom window (student ID req.).
1c. Open thermometer and check if working properly (~ 20 °C).
1d. Choose one metal from Table 6.1 in the lab manual (Sn, Zn, Cu).

2a. Weigh clean, dry Styrofoam cup nearest 0.0001 g (done once, no need to weigh lid).
2b. Add 40 mL of distilled water to cup.
2c. Reweigh cup and water to nearest 0.0001g.
2d. Place cup in 400-mL beaker (for stability).

3. Weigh two metal cylinders to the nearest 0.0001 g.

Note this looks like a "cookbook" using short concise individual steps. This is much easier to read and follow in lab when you're busy, rather than the paragraph form in the lab manual. Plus, doing this helps you to learn the procedure a better than just copying it word-for-word from the manual. While in lab you can check off each step as you do them to make sure you don't skip a step or do a step twice.

After preparing your notebook, do the pre-lab (which may include on-line data-entry, depending on the experiment). You should be able to answer the pre-lab questions if you've understood the Discussion, Procedure and Data Analysis sections. The on-line pre-lab data entry programs use randomly generated data similar to what you will collect in lab. These will be easier to do if you've read the manual and written the procedure first.