

STYLE GUIDE FOR CONTRIBUTORS

Current Protocols in Bioinformatics

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Quick Guide to Unit Structure

The standard elements listed below are fully described in the “Organization of the Manuscript” section of this guide

- Title Page (item 1)
title, author, affiliation, phone/fax/e-mail contacts, key terms, abstract (in 150 words), disk information
- Abstract (item 2)
brief overview of the unit, do not include reference; maximum length 150 words
- Keywords (item 3)
three to seven keywords summarizing the principles of the unit
- Unit Title and Unit Introduction (item 4)
gives context in relation to chapter; short description of individual protocols in unit; a brief mention of any critical limitations and assumptions; a flowchart, when appropriate
- Strategic Planning (item 5; optional)
procedural options (e.g., protocol selection) for complex methods
- Basic Protocol(s)
 - Title (item 6)
parallel with other titles in unit; more specific than unit title
 - Introduction (item 6)
gives context of protocol with regard to unit as a whole; summary of procedure
 - Necessary Resources (item 7)
Hardware; software (including availability); files (include format of input file)
 - Steps and Annotations (item 8)
steps in active voice; details for novice investigators
 - Tables and/or Figures
e.g. screen shots to illustrate protocol steps
- Alternate and/or Support Protocols (item 9; optional)
same elements as for Basic Protocol
- Guidelines for Understanding Results (item 10)
general discussion goes here, specific discussion of worked-out example goes in the protocols; when possible, include examples of “Bad Results” here
- Commentary (item 11)
 - Background Information
theory (suitable for molecular biologists), limitations, other options for similar analyses etc..
 - Critical Parameters
points to consider before beginning
 - Troubleshooting
suggestions for commonly encountered problems
 - Advanced Parameters (optional)
 - Suggestions for Further Analysis (optional)
- Literature Cited (item 12)
follow Current Protocols style for journals/books in this guide
- Key References with Annotations (item 13; optional)
- Internet Resources with Annotations (item 14; optional)

Style Guide for Contributors

Product Information

Current Protocols manuals are regularly updated and are available in 8½ × 11 inch loose-leaf and electronic formats. The manuals are organized into **chapters**, each in turn containing a number of units. The **unit** is the major component of the manual and the focus of your contribution: basically, it consists of a series of steps—a protocol or several related protocols—plus supporting material such as flowcharts and commentary. Occasionally, a unit is all “discussion”—explanatory text with no protocol steps.

Objectives and Audience

Many purchasers of Current Protocols are trained in the subject covered, but many are neither trained nor experienced in a large proportion of the procedures described. Therefore, sufficient detail must be provided to permit duplication of the protocols in any laboratory, whatever the disciplinary background or level of sophistication. Thus, for the benefit of the novice experimenter, very specific information should be included where it is important to the success of the protocol. It is preferable that you provide too much detail that can be edited at the discretion of the editorial board, rather than not enough detail.

The primary audience for *Current Protocols in Bioinformatics* consists of molecular biologists who have an interest in applying bioinformatics tools to their own work, but who may have little to no computational experience.

Role of Contributors

The procedure that you provide should be reliable and efficient. It is also important that the technique be appropriate for mainstream laboratories, i.e., that the programs or other materials required for your protocol be widely used or available. Some procedures may nevertheless require specialized tools or files. (These are to be itemized in the necessary resources list of the protocol according to item 7 below.) Your name will be listed on the protocol, so that widespread adoption of the procedure will be associated directly with you.

As a contributor, you are responsible for submitting revisions or corrections to your protocol to maintain its accuracy and timeliness. Contact your chapter editor or the Developmental Editor, and your changes will be scheduled for a future supplement. Feedback will be solicited from users of the manual with regard to the utility of protocols. Suggestions will be screened and sent to you for your consideration toward revisions.

Organization of the Manuscript

Current Protocols uses two types of units, the “discussion-style” and the “protocol-style.” Sample units of each style are available at <http://www.currentprotocols.com>. Please refer to these samples for concrete examples. Most units in Current Protocols adhere to the protocol-style. If you are unsure which format you should follow, please contact the developmental editor.

Discussion-style:

This unit is presented as explanatory text with no protocol steps; it is a useful format for overviews of key topics. You have a great deal of leeway in designing such a unit.

Protocol-style:

The outline on the previous page illustrates the organization of the standard protocol unit. Listed below, corresponding to each element in the outline, are descriptive passages of these elements, *listed in the order in which they should appear in your manuscript*. It is important that you include all the elements described herein (except those listed as optional), even if your assigned material does not constitute a full unit (e.g., if you are adding a protocol to an existing unit, be sure to provide inserts reflecting this addition to the unit introduction, Data Interpretation, Commentary, and Literature Cited). Please feel free to contact the Developmental Editor with any questions regarding the format or style of your submission.

1. Title Page. Include name of procedure; author affiliation, phone and fax numbers, and e-mail address; five or more key terms (for indexing purposes); an abstract describing the unit and indicating what makes it valuable to readers (to be added as a prepublication announcement to the Current Protocols homepage); and information about accompanying floppy disk as described below.

This page is not technically part of the unit, but helps us identify your manuscript.

2. Abstract. Provide a brief (1 paragraph, less than 150 words) informal summary of your manuscript without references. The abstract will be freely available to the public and may be the only information a reader may have to determine whether to purchase an individual unit. Please try to explain the importance of the unit and its contents as well as possible. Also note that this title is indexed by PubMed, and this abstract will be available by this and other indexing services.

3. Keywords. Provide three to seven keywords which best summarize the principle topics of your manuscript. Do not repeat words in the unit title or use the word ‘protocol’.

4. Unit Title and Unit Introduction. The unit title succinctly describes the function of the protocol(s) in your unit and should be parallel in construction with the other unit titles of the chapter (refer to the outline of the manual and consult the chapter editor if necessary or see the Table of Contents for the book, available at <http://www.currentprotocols.com>).

The first few sentences of the unit introduction provide a context for the unit (why the protocol is performed and/or how it relates to other units in the chapter). Second, when only one protocol is contained in the unit, the unit introduction proceeds to summarize the actual steps of the basic protocol. When multiple protocols are presented in the unit, the second portion of the unit introduction indicates the general approach of the methodology involved and briefly names and compares the protocols that are included. Any important topic-specific terminology or abbreviations should be defined here. Critical assumptions should also be briefly identified.

The unit introduction should not be confused with “Background Information” (see item 11 below, “Commentary”), which appears toward the end of a unit; the purpose of the unit introduction is to briefly orient the reader to the protocol steps.

If both Web and Unix protocols exist, please present both – one as the Basic Protocol and the other as the Alternate Protocol.

5. Strategic Planning (optional). Occasionally a protocol is sufficiently complex that a Strategic Planning section is required, either at the end of the unit introduction (when pertinent to several protocols) or prior to the materials list and steps of an individual protocol. This describes in paragraph form various procedural options. The Developmental Editor can provide you with examples of Strategic Planning sections.

6. Basic Protocol Title and Introduction. These are included when the unit has more than one protocol. The basic protocol title is more specific than the unit title; it should describe the approach being used and differentiate the steps from other protocols (alternate and support) in the unit. Please note that the titles of all protocols in the unit should be parallel in construction.

The basic protocol introduction summarizes the specific approach of that protocol, mentioning important programs, data files, equipment, etc., that are employed. Occasionally a lead-in statement of context may also be appropriate, although this should not duplicate the contextual description in the unit introduction.

7. Basic Protocol Necessary Resources List. The necessary resources list should consist of the following segments:

- *hardware*
- *software* – Please include where users can access or purchase the software.

- *files* – This should include the format of input files with references citing other protocols that generate such files. Please include a screen shot of the input file if it is **NOT** one of the following formats: FASTA, GENBANK, EMBL, PIR, PHYLIP, or PDB.
- where applicable, a third, single run-on entry, “*Additional hardware, software, and files for procedure (UNIT X.X);*” this entry is meant to avoid the listing of materials and steps for a procedure that can instead be cross-referenced to another unit by number. Especially for common procedures, please check whether portions of your protocols can be effectively covered by such cross-references; be sure to provide appropriate connecting information (e.g., necessary changes to the file formats). (In the initial core volume of each manual, contributors will generally not be able to provide this information, although you may refer to the outline and consult the chapter or Developmental Editor if necessary.)

All resources are to be listed *in order of use* in their respective categories. In addition, recommendations regarding specific suppliers may be noted here (especially if the supplier is critical or if the item is difficult to obtain). Please provide full address and phone/fax numbers for inclusion in the **Suppliers Appendix** (amended yearly).

Sample File. If you have sample data that will be used in the worked-out example (see 6. below) please provide an electronic version of the file. We will make the sample file available to our readers.

8. Basic Protocol Steps and Annotations. The protocol steps should describe the actions performed, employing the **active tense** versus the passive: e.g., “View the structure in RasMol.” rather than “The structure is viewed in RasMol.” Additionally, when there are more than 10 steps to a protocol, provide **subheadings** to clarify the sequence of steps at each major juncture in the experiment; these headings do not affect the consecutive numbering of the protocol steps, but help organize a long protocol. These, too, should be in the active tense, e.g., “Construct the dendrogram...”

In most cases, an example should be incorporated with the step-by-step procedure. Please use “stable” protein families for database searches (to improve reproducibility) and cite the database version and date of search. Include screen shot figures of sample output. The specific results from the sample can be described in the steps or annotations.

Useful auxiliary information can be included after some protocol steps (as needed) in the form of italicized **annotations**. These may cover special tips for performing a step successfully, descriptions of *why* a step is performed, emphasis regarding crucial parameters, descriptions of expected results (e.g., expected statistics), alternate ways to perform the step, cautions regarding necessary assumptions, time considerations, storage information, and theoretical asides.

9. Alternate and/or Support Protocols. **Alternate protocols** are included when the basic protocol you have chosen is inappropriate for certain important applications, or if different processes are widely used in other labs. If both Web and Unix versions of the method exist, present one as the Basic Protocol and the other as the Alternate Protocol. **Support protocols** should be provided to supplement the basic protocol where necessary; it is preferable to list a separate protocol for, e.g., preparatory techniques, than to combine everything into one extremely long protocol. (This strategy is also helpful for later cross-referencing of procedures in the manual.) If the procedure is very short, you may employ a textual rather than a step-by-step format for the alternate/support protocols, although it is preferable, for clarity, to itemize steps whenever possible.

a. Alternate/support protocol title and introductory text (statement of purpose). Each alternate/support protocol should have a distinguishing title (parallel in construction to the basic protocol) and an introduction describing why the particular protocol is being included in the unit (for *alternate protocol*: why it is performed instead of the basic protocol and how the steps differ; for *support protocol*: description of relation to protocol it is supporting).

b. Necessary Resources. Alternate and support protocols should each have their own necessary resources list of hardware, software, data files, and special equipment.

10. Guidelines for Understanding Results. A discussion of the anticipated results, including expected statistical values (e.g., E-value), indications that the analysis was done correctly, or flags indicating that perhaps the results

are not reliable. It should also mention what conclusions can reasonably be drawn from the analysis. General discussion should be included here; specific discussion of the worked-out example should be provided in the protocol steps or annotations. When possible, please include and discuss examples of “bad results” here.

11. Commentary. A complete commentary section should include at least a few sentences of discussion for each of the categories listed below.

a. Background Information. A brief discussion of the theory and applications of your procedure. Some or all of the following elements could be included in this section:

- why the procedure is performed (historical development, where pertinent);
- the central advantages (and disadvantages) of the technique chosen (with brief description and references for alternative methods);
- comparison of basic and alternate protocols or comparison with other methods currently in use;
- applications of methods;
- citation of original or useful literature and brief discussion of primary references;

This section is not to be confused with the introduction at the beginning of a unit. The introduction is a practical organizational tool while Background Information helps the reader to develop an intuitive sense of the experimental design.

b. Critical Parameters. Information that is critical to the success of the experiment, supplementing or repeating comments in the protocols or annotations. This should include a description of the default parameters for any program used in the protocol(s).

c. Troubleshooting. Discussion of the problems that may be encountered at any point in the procedure including variations from anticipated results with potential solutions. Sometimes itemized in list or tabular form for easy access.

Optionally, the two preceding sections may be combined into one, titled “Critical Parameters and Troubleshooting.”

Critical Parameters and Troubleshooting are among the most popular features of Current Protocols. Remember, the commentary is being pitched to investigators who have never performed the technique.

d. Advanced Parameters (Optional.) An optional section describing parameters that more advanced users may opt to modify.

e. Suggestions for Further Analysis (Optional.) This section provides researchers with a sense of how the results fit into the larger framework of bioinformatics tools that are available. Based on the results from the unit, suggest subsequent analyses that researchers might want to consider. Include appropriate cross-references to other units.

12. Literature Cited. Full references to any literature cited in the unit. References in this section should be listed alphabetically according to the following style:

a. Journal article

Baker, R.H. Jr., Suebsaeng, L., Rooney, W., Alecrim, C.C., Dourado, H.V., and Wirth, D.F. 1986. Specific DNA probe for the diagnosis of *P. falciparum* malaria. *Science* 231:1434-1436.

b. Book

Sambrook, J., Fritsch, E.F., and Maniatis, T. 1989. *Molecular Cloning: A Laboratory Manual*, 2nd ed. Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, Cold Spring Harbor, N.Y.

c. Chapter in a book

Matthews, B. 1983. Liposome-mediated delivery of DNA to plant protoplast. *In Handbook of Plant Cell Culture*, Vol. 1: Techniques for propagation and breeding (D.A. Evans, W.R. Sharp, P.V. Ammirato, and Y. Yamada, eds.) pp. 520-540. Macmillan, New York.

All references listed in this section must be cited in the unit or they will be removed. Entries should include the names of all authors. Citations in the text are according to the style “(Smith, 1989; Jones, 1992)” or “as described by Ausubel et al. (1991),” where “et al.” is employed for references with more than two authors.

Government regulations and protocols should be cited as described above at first mention but may thereafter be referred to by number, if applicable: “EPA Method 8080 (EPA, 1992)” ; later, “EPA Method 8080.”

13. Key References with Annotation. One (or more) key reference should be supplied. (These may, but need not necessarily, be drawn from your literature cited list.) A key reference might be a seminal journal article, an elucidating review chapter or paper, or an important book. For each one, provide a one-sentence descriptive annotation, signaling to the reader why you consider this reference to be of particular value.

14. Internet Resources with Annotations. Optional listing of World Wide Web sites, FTP servers, and the like that are of particular interest or utility to the researcher. For each one, provide a one-sentence descriptive annotation signaling to the reader why you consider this resource to be of particular value.

www.bbri.harvard.edu/rasmb/rasmb.html

Web site for most recent programs and discussion group on analytical ultracentrifugation.

15. Appendix (Optional.) If a more detailed discussion of the technique’s theoretical foundations is warranted, please present it in the Appendix separate from the commentary. Readers without a strong computational background should be able to perform and understand the protocol without relying on the Appendix.

Figures

If appropriate, submit one or more diagrams to the Developmental Editor, illustrating some aspect of the protocol (screen shots of sample input, output, dialog boxes encountered when running programs, etc.) or a graph of the expected results. For protocol-style units please include a flow chart of the steps, which indicates how basic, alternate and support protocols relate to one another. Submit hard copy of all figures. Please also include the files on your diskette; *see the Guidelines for Current Protocols Illustrations and Photographs that follow for details of acceptable image file formats.* If your figures are sufficiently detailed, we may elect to use the original art but will rework the labels to match our type font and style. Of course, we will confer with you and you will see the final renderings. *Contact the Developmental Editor if you have questions.*

Photographs, which will print as halftones (glossy prints, not negatives), may be submitted. Be sure to include your name and the figure number on the reverse side of the print.

Halftones should be referred to, e.g., as Figure 7.4.1, Figure 7.4.2, etc., where the first numeral (7) refers to the chapter number, the second numeral (4) refers to the unit number, and the third numeral (1, 2, 3, etc.) refers to the particular figure being cited. All figures must be cited in the unit. If previously published, cite the original source(s) and provide a copyright permission form (see below).

IMPORTANT: *Include corresponding figure legends at the end of your manuscript.*

Tables

Tables should be self-explanatory and prepared on separate pages. Include a table number (see numbering system for figures, above), table title, and explanatory footnotes. If previously published, cite the original source(s) and provide a copyright permission form (see below).

Videos/Movies

Current Protocols is now accepting videos/movies that enhance understanding of the procedures described in the protocols. Such a video would illustrate a process involved in carrying out a protocol, particularly if that process

requires special skills. For an example, see the videos available at <http://www.currentprotocols.com> on the Cell Biology Home Page.

Videos acceptable for inclusion in a unit must meet certain requirements.

- Created in QuickTime or Windows Media Player format
- No larger than 10 MB
- Run time less than 60 seconds
- Be of suitable quality for web publication

Videos will be used as submitted, if acceptable. We will do no editing. Video files should be submitted with the manuscript, but separate from it.

Each video should be cited within the manuscript at the step the video illustrates. And each video should be listed at the end of the submitted manuscript (after Figure Legends) with (1) an identifying file name, (2) a title for the video, and (3) a video legend describing the content. The title and legend will be used, with the video identification, on the website to help the reader find the appropriate video.

Photo Slideshows

Current Protocols now encourages authors to submit a series of sequential pictures or photographs that would depict a certain technique or method when a video is not feasible. Such a slideshow would illustrate a process involved in carrying out a protocol, particularly if that process requires special skills that cannot be demonstrated in one picture/photo alone.

Abbreviations, Measurements, and Mathematical Notation

Current Protocols manuals follow the guidelines of the *American Society for Microbiology Style Manual for Journals and Books* (ASM, Washington, D.C., 1991). Please define all standard abbreviations at their first usage and clearly indicate the accepted style (bold, italics, upper- or lower-case, super- or subscript) for names of organisms, genetic elements, commercial products, etc.

Submission of Manuscript

Manuscript should be double-spaced and submitted to the Developmental Editor no later than the date specified in your letter of agreement. The address and phone number of the Developmental Editor are listed on the cover page of this guide. Also listed are the addresses and phone numbers of the editorial board members, whom you should contact regarding questions of scientific content or approach.

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If your protocol or any submitted portions (figures, tables) have been published previously, permission for use in this publication must be obtained from the copyright owner (*usually* the publisher but occasionally the author). Use the form provided on the last page of this style guide; when you receive signed permission from the copyright owner, forward the form with the *original* signature to Current Protocols.

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The editorial board and John Wiley & Sons, Inc. maintain the right to rewrite, rearrange, or otherwise alter your contribution so that it will conform to the style of the manual. Should your editor desire to make changes of substance regarding content or approach, you will be consulted first or possibly asked to provide revisions. You will also be sent page proofs for approval.

Please do not hesitate to contact the Developmental Editor or our offices at any time. We would appreciate any suggestions you might offer.

ART GUIDELINES FOR AUTHORS CURRENT PROTOCOLS/JOHN WILEY & SONS

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

- ❑ Line drawings (graphs, charts, etc.) should be submitted as high quality, camera-ready prints (either glossy or from a laser printer). Your artwork will not be redrawn.
- ❑ Halftones (photographs and gels) should be submitted as camera-ready, glossy prints.
- ❑ The FONT used for all labeling in figures should be HELVETICA medium type (or a similar sans serif font).
- ❑ LABELS are generally LOWERCASE, except the X and Y axis labels on graphs, where the first letter should be capitalized. All graphs should have axis labels.
- ❑ If the figure requires a KEY (e.g., "◆ morphine, □ dexamethasone, ● nimesulide"), the key should be part of the figure (not the figure caption).
- ❑ PANEL IDENTIFIERS should be HELVETICA medium type (not bold), capital letters (A, B, C, etc.) and should appear in the upper left-hand corner. They should be 4 POINTS LARGER than the labels.
- ❑ Please note, your FIGURE will be REDUCED TO less than FIVE INCHES wide in order to fit the page. At this size, labels should be approximately 9 points and panel identifiers should be approximately 13 points.

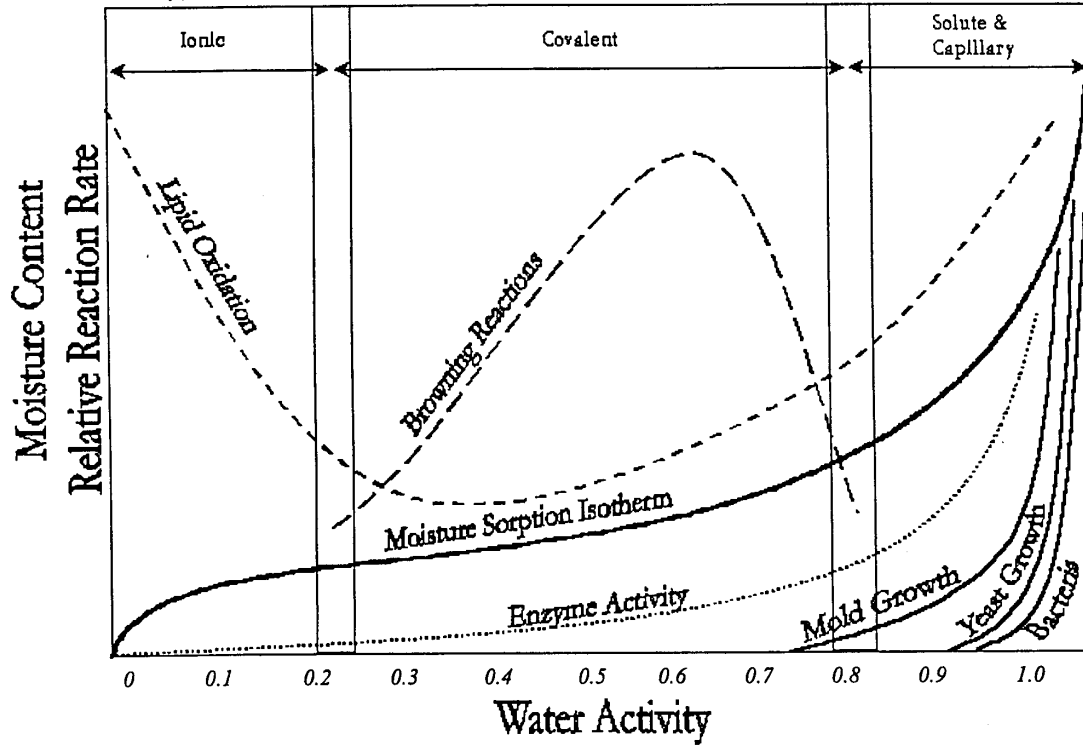
DIGITAL FILES

- ❑ **PREFERRED:** DIGITAL FILES for all figures should be in TIF or EPS format with resolutions of 266-300 dpi.
- ❑ **LESS DESIRABLE, BUT ACCEPTABLE:** We may be able to use files in these less desirable formats: JPG, GIF, and PostScript, and some native applications: PhotoShop, Illustrator, Canvas, and ChemDraw.
- ❑ **NOT ACCEPTABLE:** We cannot accept PowerPoint, BMP, or embedded figures (e.g., figures imported into word processors)! Do **NOT** just use the "save as" function to make this type of file into a TIF or EPS file...this process does not increase the resolution for these low-resolution files or improve the files in any way.
- ❑ **SCREENSHOTS** should have files saved at 72-96 dpi (i.e., the resolution of your screen).
- ❑ **PHOTO SLIDESHOW:** provide sequential photographs/pictures (5-15) to compile into a slideshow

COLOR FIGURES

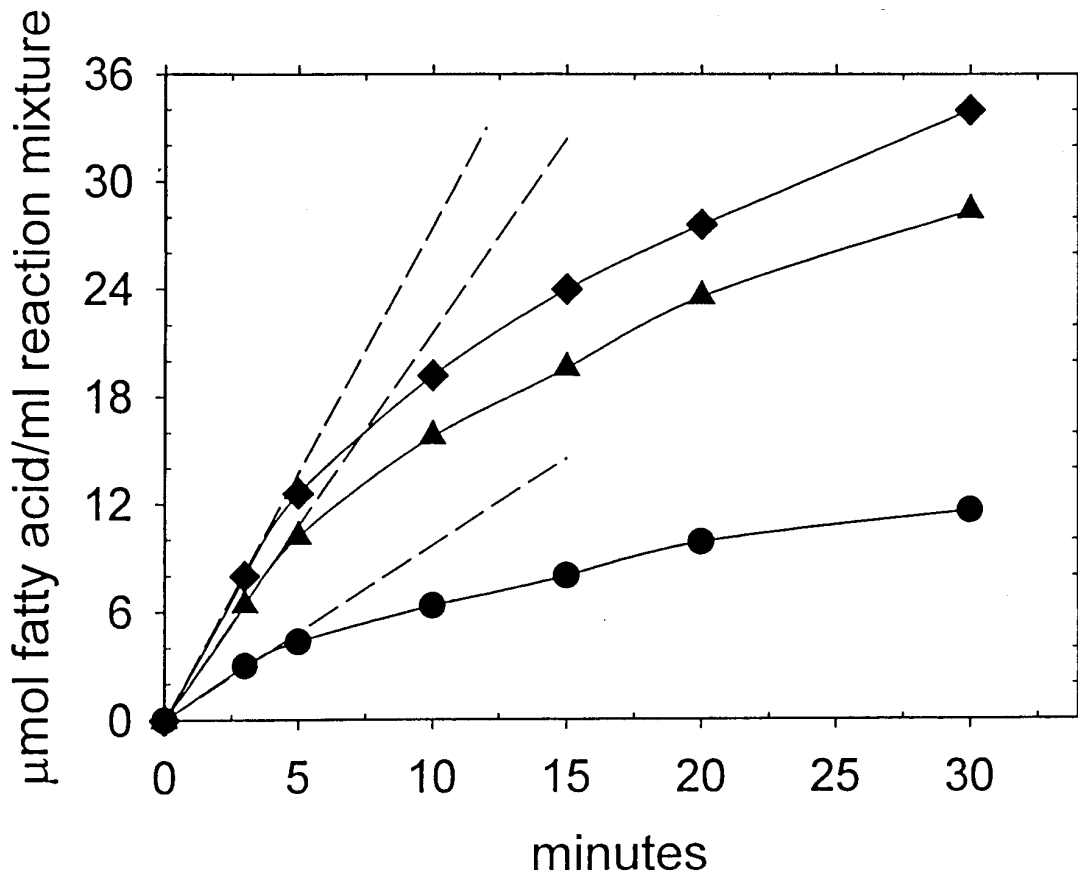
- ❑ Due to the great expense of color printing, most art with COLOR ORIGINALS WILL APPEAR in BLACK-AND-WHITE in the print version and in color on the ONLINE version.
- ❑ We cannot redraw color art in order to convert different colors into B&W patterns.
- ❑ Only figures which truly require color to be meaningful will be printed in color. Please check with your developmental editor if you believe your figure must be printed in color.
- ❑ Files for figures that will be printed in color must be TIF or EPS files saved as CMYK format (with a resolution of 266-300 dpi).
- ❑ **Questions?** Please contact your editor or Tom Cannon, Current Protocols Digital Production Manager, 201-748-6110, tcannon@wiley.com

WATER ACTIVITY - STABILITY DIAGRAM



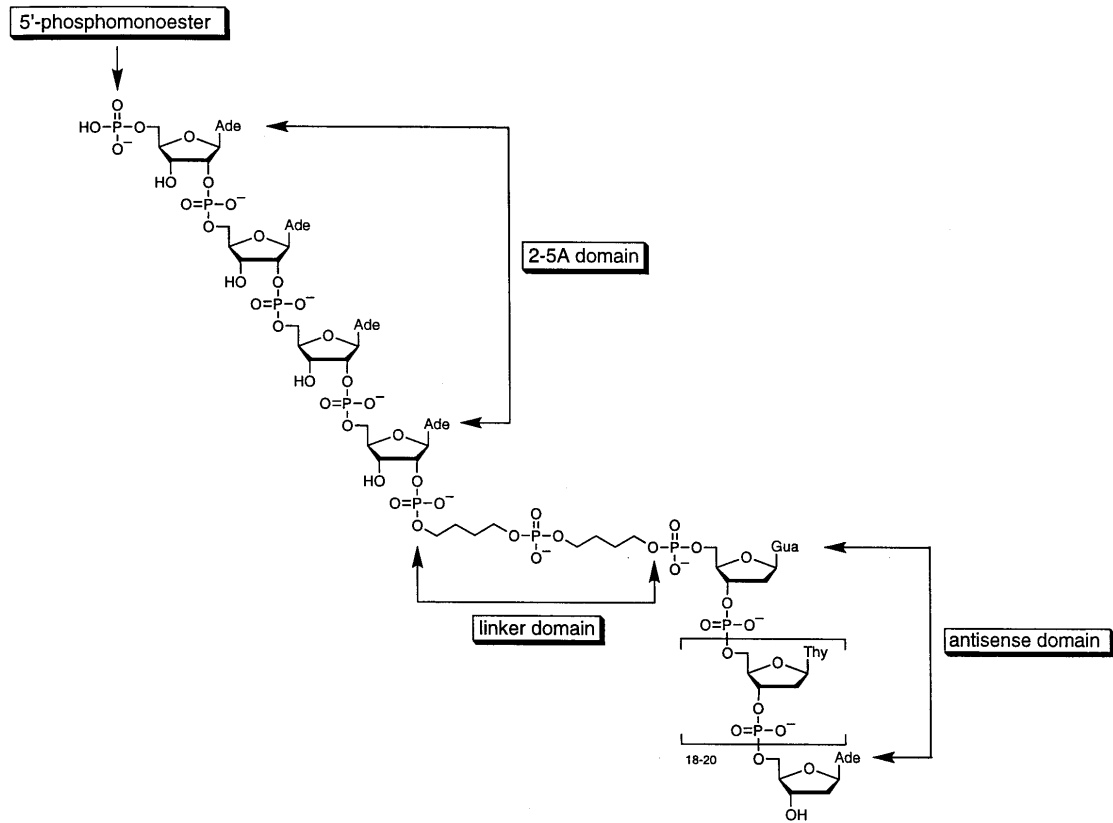
Bad Graph

This is a sample of a bad graph. Please note, the low quality resolution of the entire figure. Also the fonts are not Helvetica.



Good Graph

This is a sample of a good graph. Please note, the high quality the entire figure. Also the fonts are Helvetica. Such a figure can easily be reduced in order to fit the page.



Good Figure

This is a sample of a good figure. Please note, the high quality resolution of the entire figure. Also the fonts are Helvetica and legible.

PERMISSION REQUEST FORM

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Chapter, Unit, Figure/Table No. _____

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Figure No. _____ on page _____ Table No. _____ on page _____

(If necessary, attach continuation sheets)

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