General Biology: Full Lab Write Up Guidelines and Checklist

This is meant only to give an outline to follow when writing a biology lab report. You may need to include more than what is included as suggestions in each of the sections below. Follow your instructor's directions carefully.

Title: It may be easier to come up with an idea for a title after writing most of the report.
□ Does your title briefly describe the main theme of the experiment?
□ Did you capitalize all words except…and, or, etc.?

Introduction: This section should be two paragraphs. The first paragraph will cover the background and introduce the topic and the lab. Keep this section more general. The second paragraph will address the purpose of the lab and get into the specific details of how this purpose was achieved.
□ Did you start by introducing general information on the topic, tools, and materials of the lab? Provide information regarding the knowledge that already exists about this topic.
□ Did you relate this background information to your lab?
□ Did you explain why this lab was performed? (Purpose)
□ Did you explain how the purpose of the lab was achieved? Give a very brief summary of the method of the lab (mention the variables involved in the lab).

Method: Paraphrase the steps from your lab procedure. Combining steps helps create a more active voice.
□ Did you use full sentences?
□ Did you explain the materials and methods used?

Results: Include a written section along with graphs and tables. Write a short paragraph giving a basic overview of your results. Graphs and tables can be made in Excel and copied into Word.
Written:
□ Is your overview brief? Give ranges or general descriptions rather than giving the result of each variable.
□ Did you stick to the facts? (You will give meaning to the results in your conclusion).
□ Did you refer to your tables and graphs?
Graphs and Tables:
□ Are your graphs and tables formatted correctly? (Bar, line, or pie, etc.)
□ Did you give your graphs/tables a title?
□ Did you properly label each axis of your graph?

Conclusion: Summarize the findings of your lab (show that you understood the lab). This is where you want to give your results some meaning.
□ Did you explain why your observations happened?
□ Did you link what you observed in the lab with why it matters? (Refer back to the purpose of the lab.)
□ Did you highlight some of the things you included in your background (introduction) and relate them to what you observed in the lab?

References: In alphabetical order, reference anything you used as a resource. In the sections above try to paraphrase the information you find rather than using quotes.

Before you turn in your report…
□ Is your report in the correct format? (Full lab write up versus scientific method, etc.)
□ Did you include a title and all the relevant sections needed?
□ Is the report in 12 pt font?
□ Have you read your report out loud? Does each sentence make sense the first time you read it?
□ Is the information concise? If it is overly wordy or repetitive, consider revising. Don't give personal opinions.
□ Is each sentence complete? Are the spelling, grammar, and punctuation correct? Don't use contractions or abbreviations.
□ Is your paper in third person, past tense, active voice? Do not use pronouns. Combining several steps into one sentence helps limit the use of the words "was" and "were" (it gives a more active voice).
□ Have you had someone else proofread your paper?
□ Did you understand the lab? This is really what you need to convey to your instructor in the report.