

Life as a Lab TA In-session Handout

Karli Holman, Chemistry, G2

Rebekah Silva, Chemistry, G6

Exercise 1: Reflect on the best lab classes you've ever had. What made it so great?

Exercise 2: Consider the following questions about lab classes and the students taking them:

What skills did you learn in your first lab class?

What kinds of students will take the lab classes that you might TA?

What do you think your students will know coming into your class?

Exercise 3: Read the following directions and try to answer the questions about the words in bold.

Collect a **Minion**. Use a **fluffy unicorn** to **shrink** the **Minion** into thin **purple Minions**. Place the **purple Minions** on a **Jelly Gun** and place the **Jelly Gun** in the **fortress** for one hour. Remove from the **fortress** and place the **purple Minions** into a **Grumobile**. Mix until **yellow**.

- What is a **Minion**?
- What does a **fluffy unicorn** do?
- How do **purple Minions** and the **Jelly Gun** fit into the **fortress**?
- What do you think is happening inside the **fortress** for 1 hour?
- How can you tell if something is mixed until **yellow**?

Exercise 4:

Consider the following scenarios. How would you handle the situation?

- A. The lab seems to be going well for a group, but when it comes time to analyze their final results, the expected outcome is nowhere to be found. How can you handle such a situation, both in lab and in grading?
- B. A student emails you and asks a series of very specific questions about how to do the lab report write up. In addition, they attach a pdf of their current work and ask you if they are performing the analysis correctly. How should you respond?
- C. A lab group is stuck on a part of the lab and isn't sure how to progress. They seem acquainted with the material but are frustrated by their progress. How can you help them through the experiment and make sure they are still learning?
- D. A student comes to lab and has clearly only read enough of the lab manual to answer the prelab questions in the most basic form. How can you make sure that this student still gets something out of the lab and does not take all of your time?

Resources

A detailed outline of the "Life as a Lab TA" session, including resources, is available online at: <http://teachlearn.caltech.edu/tas/conferences>