General instructions:

Before writing your lab report, carefully reread the handout associated with the lab to remind yourself of all the details of the lab. Then look through your lab notebook to find all the observations you made for the lab. When writing your report, imagine that the reader is a fellow student not taking this class. The reports should describe in detail both what you did and why you did it. The discussion section should explain how the results compare to what was anticipated or predicted. Pertinent calculations should be shown in detail, starting with the input values and showing intermediate steps so it can be understood the result was obtained (i.e., show your work, don’t just state results). Figures for the report should be xeroxed or scanned from your lab notebook. Figures should then be numbered (Figure 1, Figure 2, etc) so that you can refer to them in the text of the lab report. The figures themselves can either be embedded within the report or appended to the end. Do not redraw figures. Be sure to include an estimate (or a calculation) of your uncertainties. Please type your report. Any equations may be written in by hand.

Typical contents of a lab report:

(1) Abstract
A single paragraph summarizing succinctly the purpose of the lab and what your results were. The abstract does not need to include much, if anything, about your methods.

(2) Introduction/Background
A minimum of one page of background information that is pertinent to this lab. Possible elements include general information about the nature of the objects being studies or observed in the lab and technical background relevant to any computations and analysis you will be doing in the lab report. This section should draw on a combination of your notes from class lectures, readings from the textbook, and other research as relevant.

(3) Objectives
A paragraph or two summarizing the purpose of the lab. See your lab handout for guidelines, but do not simply copy the wording in the handout. Use your own words.

(4) Data
Describe the data you collected and how you collected it, in detail. If the lab involved making observations with a telescope, you should be referring to figures (sketches made at the time the observations were made) by number, explaining what the reader should see in each one. If the lab involved using pre-existing data, describe the data in detail, and provide information about the telescope and instrument used to collect it.

(5) Analysis and Results
If the lab involves data analysis, describe your methods here. Then present your analysis, using those methods, along with the results of that analysis. Show all the steps in your work.

(6) Discussion and conclusions
Comment in as much detail as you can on the results you obtained. Were the objectives achieved? What did you learn from the lab? How might you apply your results to help you with future observing or data analysis? What more could be done to pursue the topic further?

IMPORTANT: include footnotes to all texts, papers and url’s of any web pages used for your report.