20.109(F07):Using OpenWetWare

What is OpenWetWare?

OpenWetWare is a wiki (an application designed to make it easy to create, edit and organize webpages) for biological science and engineering. It basically provides a common space for people to share information about protocols, materials, research projects, meetings or anything else that might be of interest to users.

Also see OpenWetWare:About.

Why are we using OpenWetWare in 20.109?

Since 20.109 is a lab class, we think the students, TAs and instructors would benefit from having a shared space in which to discuss experimental protocols and results. By putting all the course materials on the wiki, they can be updated and improved instantly by everyone (not just the instructors).

For instance, one problem often encountered when teaching people new lab techniques is that the "experts" who are writing up the instructions might forget to include certain steps or neglect to explain certain things because they think they are obvious or just don't think to include that information. Then often, the person learning a new technique might get tripped up by this lack of detail. We're hoping that by putting all the 20.109 material online and allowing everyone to edit it, the course material will grow to be more comprehensive and ultimately more useful.

Also see Why join OpenWetWare?.

How do I get an account?

Fill out the form at how to join to register for an account on OpenWetWare. You will be sent an email with your account information. Once you have an account, you can login from any webbrowser by clicking the login link at the top right corner of the browser window.

What should I contribute?

Feel free to contribute anything you want to OpenWetWare.

- Find a typo in one of the protocols? Fix it.
- Have a suggestion for clarifying a step in a protocol? Post it.
- Do you hate or love a particular experiment? Explain why on the talk page for that day.
- Have a question about a homework assignment? Ask it on the talk page for that assignment.
- Have some data or a gel image that you want to share? Upload it.

Basically use OpenWetWare however it might be useful to you. If you think OpenWetWare is a waste of time, you can write that too. (That's useful for us to know!)

How do I contribute?

Once you have an account, the best way to learn how to edit the wiki is to look at existing pages. Click the "edit" tab at the top of a page to view the "source code" for the page. If you want to play around to see how things appear, you can do that in the Sandbox or even on your own user page.

If you have a question about how encode something in wiki markup language, try googling. There are lots of reference sources out there since OpenWetWare is based on the same software as Wikipedia. Other reference pages include

- The help page which shows up in the sidebar of every page.
- In particular, see Simple wiki editing examples for a quick how-to on wiki editing.

Why should I contribute?

There are several reasons

1. You'll improve the course for others who come after you.
2. Editing OpenWetWare is like class participation, it usually can only help you to make a favorable impression on your instructors.
3. OpenWetWare is fast and easy way to share information, pictures, ideas etc. with others.