To receive an "A" grade in Physics 108, you must submit two high-quality written papers. The TA’s will grade them on a pass/fail basis as described in the syllabus. The papers must be submitted by the dates indicated in the course schedule. Like most college-level writing assignments, they should exhibit correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation. That said, we tend to care more about correct physics than fancy writing, and will grade accordingly.

As many students tend to be confused about the requirements of these papers, we will briefly describe the basic format that we are looking for here. The header should only consist of two lines, as seen in this document. We only need your class, section #, name, CID number, TA’s name, date and paper title listed in the header. The paper should approximately two pages long (no less than 1.5, no more than 2.5), single sided, double-spaced, 10 or 12-point Times New Roman font, with one-inch margins all the way around. One or two small figures are permitted. Excessive use of figures to take up space is not allowed. Because papers with some structure are easier to follow, we also expect to see your papers broken up into sections (e.g. introduction, main body and conclusion).

Each paper should describe the application of a physical principle that you studied in one of 108 labs (1-6 for the first paper and 7-11 for the second paper). The application will typically come from your personal experience, something you have observed, or something you may be especially interested in. It should not merely be an expansion of the conclusion section from one of your labs. We want you to better appreciate how physical principles operate in everyday situations and experiences. Keep your paper focused on one topic. We don’t want to see a chronology of your experience in the lab this semester/term. After rereading the relevant sections of the textbook and the lab manual, describe your example or application and explain how relevant physical principles
are involved.

You typically won’t need any other sources besides your textbook and the lab manual to write these papers. If you do include information from other sources, be sure to cite them at the end of the paper. If you include a small quote from an external source, be sure that you indicate whether or not it is a direct quote and where it came from. Most of the formulas used in the labs have names that you can refer to. So don’t worry about typing formulas into your paper. Feel free, however, to include rough estimates of quantities that you are discussing (such as distances traveled, forces applied, etc.), which will help to explain your ideas.

Please do not copy homework problems or examples from your textbook into your paper. Because you have already done most of the homework for Physics 106, we don’t feel that merely copying this information demonstrates a good understanding of the subject material. And please do not offer multiple descriptions of the physical laws that are relevant to your paper. While there is more than one way to say just about anything, one concise definition is adequate.

These papers are a learning tool and should be approached as such. They also help your TAs and instructor to judge whether you really understand the course content or merely rely on your lab partners for answers. If you have been working hard to understand your lab exercises, these papers should require no more than an hour or two of effort. You'll do great!