

Entering Methods in labElephant

Variability in methods used in Experiments can significantly impact experimental outcome. Research laboratories typically need some way of tracking how methods change over time through different Versions. labElephant therefore tracks Methods and Versions, and makes easy the association of method versions with Experiments (see Entering Experiments in labElephant). Methods are organized into Categories. Both Categories and Methods have a lab-wide definition. Version entry, however, is user-specific. Version entry is facilitated by creating links to documents that may already exist that describe your methods. While a record is kept of who enters each Version of a Method, the form allows all Versions of a Method to be shown.

1. From the Switchboard form, log in, and select the Methods button to open the Methods form.
2. Under the Categories tab, enter the Categories on the Categories subform that you wish to use for organizing Methods. For example, “Cell preparations”, “Surgical Procedures”, “Biochemical Assays”, etc.
3. To enter a new Method, select the Category you wish the Method to be under, either by selecting the Category on the Categories subform, or by selecting the Category from the Method Category drop-down box above the tabs. Then select the Methods tab, and enter the name of the new Method.
4. Next enter the details of your Version of this Method. Select the Method, either by selecting the Method on the Methods subform, or by selecting the Method from the Method drop-down box above the tabs. Then select the Versions tab, and enter the details of the Version:
 - a. In the Version field, enter a short identifier (can be a simple number with your initials, e.g. 1RH).
 - b. In the Comment field, enter a description of the version that identifies its uniqueness as a version of this Method (e.g. “Larry Smith’s version from his 2005 Circulation paper”).
 - c. To specify the Protocol hyperlink field, use the binoculars button  to point to the file containing the description of this version of the Method.
 - d. You can view other Versions for this Method that other lab personnel may have entered, by selecting the “Show Everyone’s” check box.
5. If your Method Version has other files associated with it, or additional information that is on a website, you can include that information. Select the Version, either by selecting the Version on the Versions subform, or by selecting the Version from the Version drop-down box above the tabs. Then select the “Additional links for Version” tab, and edit the hyperlink on the new record using the binoculars button  to point to the file or website. Or, you can simply copy and paste a URL from your web browser.
6. Entered Method Versions will then show in the drop-down box for Methods on the Experiments form, under the Materials and Methods tab. This facilitates the selection and accurate recording of not only Methods, but also which version of a Method, was used in each Experiment.
7. If you forget which Category a Method is listed under, Methods can be located quickly by using the Search form, accessible via the Search button on the Switchboard form.