Read it, don't interpret it: a 10-minute report exercise · answer key

For health coaching students. Report D below is fictional (Fictional Community Laboratory, collected 09/02/2026 07:45, fasting). Report A is the fictional US report from 03/14/2026; its header reads *"Specimen: Serum; whole blood (EDTA) for A1c and Omega-3"*. Record what the reports say. Do not interpret any result.

Report D (excerpt)

Test	Result	Flag	Units	Reference Interval	Specimen
WBC	5.9		x10E3/uL	3.4-10.8	Whole blood (EDTA)
Hemoglobin	14.3		g/dL	13.0-17.7	Whole blood (EDTA)
Lymphocytes	32			14-46	Whole blood (EDTA)
Glucose	92		mg/dL	70-99	Plasma (fluoride)
Ferritin	31		ng/mL	30-400	Serum
TSH	2.10		uIU/mL	0.45-4.50	Serum
Hemoglobin A1c	5.5		%	4.8-5.6	Serum

1. Copy two lines exactly (2 min)

Test as printed	Result	Unit as printed	Lab interval	Specimen as printed
Hemoglobin A1c	5.5	%	4.8–5.6	Serum
Lymphocytes	32	(no unit printed)	14–46	Whole blood (EDTA)

2. Specimen (2 min)

One line on report D names a specimen that does not match how that test is collected. Compare it with report A's header. Which line is it, and what would you do?

Hemoglobin A1c. HbA1c is measured in red blood cells, so it is collected as whole blood (EDTA), as report A's header says. “Serum” on report D is most likely a labelling error. Copy it exactly as printed, add a note, and ask the lab to confirm the specimen. Do not correct it yourself.

3. A name with two meanings (3 min)

One test name on report D could mean two different results. Which line? What are the two possibilities? Does anything on the report settle it?

Lymphocytes. Labs print lymphocytes two ways: as a **percentage** of white cells (%) and as an **absolute count** (for example x10E3/uL). Both are often labelled just “Lymphocytes”. This line prints no unit. The interval 14–46 looks like a percentage interval, but the report does not say so. The correct record is the value with “no unit printed”, plus a question for the lab.

4. One question to pass on (2 min)

Write one question for the lab or the client's clinician. Ask about the report, not about what a result means.

1. Can the lab confirm the specimen used for the Hemoglobin A1c collected on 09/02/2026?
2. Is the lymphocyte result of 32 a percentage or an absolute count?

Instructor notes · 10 minutes

Timing

0:00–1:00	Hand out the sheet. Say the goal: record accurately, notice what is missing, refer. No interpretation.
1:00–3:00	Task 1, copying. Students work alone.
3:00–5:00	Task 2, specimen. Pairs.
5:00–8:00	Task 3, the lymphocyte line. Pairs, then two answers shared with the room.
8:00–10:00	Task 4, then the debrief point below.

Materials

- This sheet (blank version for students, this version for you).
- Optional: the two PDFs, `report-d-us-classroom-2026-09-02.pdf` and `report-a-us-2026-03-14.pdf`, to show the full pages.

Answers students often give

- **They change "Serum" to "Whole blood" on their copy.** Ask them to keep the printed text and add a note. The record should show what the lab printed.
- **They write "%" in the unit box for lymphocytes.** The report did not print it. "No unit printed" is the accurate record.
- **They comment on whether a result is good or bad.** Out of scope for this exercise. Bring them back to recording and referring.
- **They miss the specimen column.** Point out that specimen is part of the record, the same as unit and interval.

Debrief: what a software reader did with report D

We ran report D through the code of LifeFrom's free reader (2026-11-25, reader code a0a11781). It read all 7 lines and placed none in "not read". Two things to show students:

- **Lymphocytes:** the reader matched the line to *Lymphocytes (%)* with value 32, unit left empty and interval 14–46. It made the guess the students were asked not to make.
- **Hemoglobin A1c:** read as 5.5 %. The reader does not read the specimen column, so "Serum" raised no note.

The point for coaches: software does not catch these two problems either. A person still has to check the specimen and the unit before passing a report on. Students can repeat the test at home with the PDF at lifefrom.ai/read/blood-test (free, no account).