SETTING UP YOUR SPREADSHEETS

1) Organize the data so that the experimental units (i.e., people/animals) are listed as the rows.

2) Use a **column heading** in the first row of the worksheet. The naming conventions used by different analysis packages are not consistent. The following guidelines should allow your column headings to be read by any of them:
   a. Do not use any **symbols** other than letters or numbers
   
   → no $ , . ! ( ) > _ - + = ` " \`
   
   b. Do not include **spaces** in the names.
   
   c. **Start** the names with a letter of the alphabet.
   
   d. Be aware that some popular analysis tools pay attention to **capitalization** so you will have to remember the capitalization patterns.
   
   e. Remove unnecessary words like **prepositions**. “Datebirth” is as informative as “dateofbirth”.
   
   f. If you are tempted to use several words in the title, type in **“camel case”** instead of uppercase or lowercase. That is, the first letter of each word is capitalized (like the humps in the middle of a camel). For example type date of birth as dateBirth.
   
   g. Use short (easy to type) **meaningful** descriptors:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bad</th>
<th>Good</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“S “is not meaningful.</td>
<td>“Sex”, “gender” or “isMale”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3) Make a column for each distinct type of information.
   a. You typically want to have a **single column** in the spreadsheet corresponding to each answer on a questionnaire.
   
   b. However, if a question can take on multiple choice values, one of which is “other” and there is a fill in the blank for it (other), the spreadsheet should have **two columns**. One holds the multiple choice answer and the other holds the text for the other category.
   
   c. If you have a **compound answer** to a single question, like a systolic and a diastolic blood pressure, the two answers should be stored in two columns.

4) Put only **one type of unit** in each column. For example, if you have a column for children’s ages, do not type the ages in days for one child, weeks for another and years for yet another.
5) Do not include extra type in the body of the sheet. For example, do not add a prefix like “sys:” for the systolic blood pressure values.