Characteristics of a Design Notebook

1. It should be durable, hardbound (not loose-leaf), with each page numbered sequentially. Entries should be dated. Pages should not be torn out of the notebook.
2. The project number or project title should be recorded to readily identify the project.
3. It should record all original work pertaining to a design project. Thus it may contain a mixture of useful and not so useful information. All information must be recorded because the fixture is always uncertain. And in a new context information that appears useless today may be valuable tomorrow.
4. It should contain all of the plans, observations, experimental procedures, and data from experiments and prototype testing. In such detail that the work could be repeated later by someone else. All assumptions, mathematical models, decisions and evaluative thinking both good an bad should be recorded. This information should be signed dated and witnessed. The witness must be an individual who understands the technical aspects of your work. Also: Sketches of design ideas, comments on ideas, evolution of ideas, Solid Edge conceptual drawings.
5. It should be a diary of events, consequently important dates, meetings, and attendees should be recorded. Relevant telephone and fax numbers, email addresses, and other information should be recorded. Summaries of important tconversations. E.g. sponsors, sales engineers, professors, etc… and other communications should be written as they occur.
6. It should contain an index of important information as the project evolves. The index can be established at the beginning of the notebook so that it evolves with the project. The retrieval of important information can be simplified by organizational structure with headings and cross references throughout the notebook. Use pages liberally. Do not try to cover every square millimeter with writing, but cross out and initial blank spaces to prevent later insertion of information. Clarity is important if information is to be retrieved quickly.
7. Mistakes should be crossed out in ink, initialed, and dated. The corrected version should occur on subsequent pages.