

Preface

STARTED IN 1984 BY RALPH GREENSPAN, LILY JAN, YUH-NUNG JAN, AND PATRICK O'FARRELL, the Neurobiology of *Drosophila* course at Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory has now run every summer for the last 25 years. Those of us that have been fortunate enough to direct the course have been honored to inherit this rich tradition.

Admission to the Neurobiology of *Drosophila* course is very competitive with only 12 students selected each year. This small intimate group allows for a fantastic interactive and hands-on experience as well as for a more personal intellectual interaction between students and with the individual instructors of the course. However, the editors of this book, who themselves were unavoidably responsible for denying the entry of 100s of potential students, recognized that we could temper the guilt by making the course accessible to all through the production of this book, a course companion. Therefore, beyond being a valuable reference for those students lucky enough to have taken the course, the book allows others to “attend the course by proxy,” as the format directly follows that of the course. The content includes a brief introduction to the areas of *Drosophila* neurobiology research that are covered each year in addition to detailed protocols for the techniques that are taught in the laboratory.

The course is broken into three week-long blocks focusing on Development, Physiology, and Behavior, respectively. Most of the contributing authors were instructors of the course during the time that the three editors were Directors of the course. Each instructor teaches for one day with the usual format being lectures in the morning and real experiments in the laboratory in the afternoon/evening/night. It is often difficult to convey the complexity of experimental setup within a day (especially true for experiments that ordinarily take several days) and therefore part of the course unavoidably only provides a snapshot of the research. In this book the instructors, as contributing authors, face the additional difficulty of converting their snapshot into a coherent chapter that conveys the flavor of the research that they discussed—all within a fairly strict page limit. This book is not a comprehensive review of the course lectures or *Drosophila* neurogenetics. Each chapter has a short introduction to the relevant “subfield,” but the heart of each chapter provides detailed experimental protocols. We applaud and thank the contributors for their invaluable contributions both to the course and to this book. Neither project would have happened without their efforts and the efforts of numerous students and postdocs that accompany them as course aids.

The course exists for the good of the students and we are extremely proud of the achievements of the many students that have graduated. A remarkable number now have their own research programs in *Drosophila* neurobiology and many are very distinguished names in their respective area.

The course would not function without the generous input of a number of large scientific companies and a large number of people at Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory. Some investigators lug their sophisticated gear to Cold Spring Harbor for a day or two of experimentation, but the rest of the large high-tech equipment arrives on loan from a number of companies. Of particular note, Zeiss, Olympus, Nikon, and Leica provided various microscopes, and Axon Instruments (now called Molecular Devices) lent amplifiers and software for electrophysiology. All the loan agreements, ordering, delivery, and handling of participant travel and housing is the realm of the Cold Spring



Harbor Meetings and Courses people. We particularly wish to thank Barbara Zane, Andrea Stephenson, Andrea Newell, and David Stewart for their dedication and energy. David Stewart is also responsible for obtaining and maintaining external funding for the Cold Spring Harbor courses, and without that effort and the financial support generated, this course would not exist.

Lastly, we have been ably assisted in the production of this book by the enthusiastic and professional help of those at Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Press. We would never have finished the project without them. We are indebted to our Publisher, John Inglis; Acquisition Editor, David Crotty; Developmental Editors, Kaaren Janssen, Catriona Simpson, and Michael Zierler; Project Manager, Mary Cozza; Director of Development, Marketing, and Sales, Jan Argentine; Production Manager, Denise Weiss; Production Editor, Kathleen Bubbeo; and Desktop Editor, Susan Schaefer. We thank them for their enthusiasm, patience, and professionalism throughout the entire process.

— SCOTT WADDELL, BING ZHANG, AND MARC FREEMAN

Some Feedback from the Course

Taking this course had an absolutely enormous impact on my career. Because the course teaches the Latest and Greatest, and the people who take the course are typically in the top labs and the people who teach the course are among the top in the field, the course has a huge impact on research directions.

— NANCY BONINI (1988), now Professor, Howard Hughes Medical Institute and University of Pennsylvania

As a grad student from a relatively small university participating in this course had an enormously positive impact on my subsequent career in science.

— SHELAGH CAMPBELL (1989), now Associate Professor, University of Alberta, Canada

Eleven years after taking the course, I was a course instructor. I am still in the field and have had the pleasure of taking the course, sending my own students to the course, and teaching the course. I think it is an invaluable resource for our community.

— AARON DIANTONIO (1991), now Associate Professor, Washington University

The course was decisive to continue my research as a postdoc in Cambridge. It has inspired me enormously to hear the history of scientists teaching the course thanks to the time spent with each of them.

— ANDREAS PROKOP (1991), now Senior Lecturer, University of Manchester, United Kingdom

I still benefit from the experience in the course, both in terms of the useful contacts as well as with the breadth of techniques that I was exposed to and are still used in the lab.

— PAUL GARRITY (1992), now Associate Professor, Brandeis University



2

Molecular and Cellular Analyses of Larval Brain Neuroblasts in *Drosophila*Aric L. Daul,¹ Hideyuki Komori,¹ and Cheng-Yu Lee¹⁻³¹Center for Stem Cell Biology, Life Sciences Institute, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109;²Division of Molecular Medicine & Genetics, Department of Internal Medicine, University of Michigan Medical School, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109; ³Department of Cell and Developmental Biology, University of Michigan Medical School, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109

ABSTRACT

Polarized localization of proteins is an evolutionarily conserved mechanism for establishing asymmetry within a cell and producing daughter cells with distinct fates. Neuroblasts (neural stem cells) from *Drosophila melanogaster* are an established paradigm for examining cortical cell polarity and its effects on asymmetric cell divisions. The larval fly brain is ideally suited for studies of asymmetric stem cell division because the larval brain maintains a stable number of about 100 neuroblasts throughout larval development. This chapter describes procedures for the collection and processing of *Drosophila* larval brains for examination by immunolocalization of cell-fate and cell-polarity markers (Protocol 1), 5-ethynyl-2'-deoxyuridine (EdU) labeling of mitotic cells (Protocol 2), and RNA in situ localization (Protocol 3).

| |
|---|
| Overview, 5 |
| Molecular Markers of Neuroblasts and Their Progeny, 6 |
| Markers of Neuroblast Cell Polarity, 7 |
| Experimental Design Notes, 9 |
| Protocol 1: Immunofluorescent Antibody Staining of Larval Tissues, 11 |
| Protocol 2: EdU Labeling of Mitotic Neuroblasts, 14 |
| Protocol 3: Multicolor Fluorescence In Situ Hybridization, 16 |
| Recipes, 19 |
| References, 22 |

OVERVIEW

The *Drosophila* larval brain is a well-established model for investigating the role of stem cells in development. Neuroblasts must be competent to generate many thousands of differentiated neurons through asymmetric divisions during normal development. Given the wide array of genetic and molecular tools available for studying flies, the *Drosophila* larval brain provides a powerful in vivo model system for examining the regulation of neuroblast self-renewal versus differentiation (Wu et al. 2008). Studies in fly neuroblasts have been instrumental in identifying how the establishment and maintenance of cell polarity influence cell fate, and they have produced a wide array of molecular cell-polarity markers. Moreover, neuroblasts and their progeny can be positively identified using a variety of cell-fate markers, which will be discussed in a following section.

In this chapter, we focus on techniques for examining neuroblasts in the larval brain. The larval brain maintains a steady population of approximately 100 neuroblasts, making it possible easily to

identify mutants with atypical expansion or premature loss of neuroblast populations, both of which are indicative of disrupted asymmetric cell division (Rolls et al. 2003; Lee et al. 2006a,b,c). It was recently discovered that a small population of larval brain neuroblasts generate transit-amplifying daughter cells capable of limited rounds of asymmetric divisions. This is a particularly intriguing finding given that transit-amplifying cells are commonly seen during development of vertebrate nervous systems (Morrison and Kimble 2006; Nakagawa et al. 2007; Boone and Doe 2008; Bowman et al. 2008). Genes regulating neuroblast polarity and cell fate are evolutionarily conserved between flies and mammals, thus *Drosophila* provides a powerful model system for identifying molecular mechanisms of asymmetric cell division, potentially advancing therapeutic applications in neurology, stem cell biology, and even cancer biology (Rolls et al. 2003; Lee et al. 2006b; Wu et al. 2008).

MOLECULAR MARKERS OF NEUROBLASTS AND THEIR PROGENY

Neuroblasts in the larval brain can usually be identified by their rounded morphology and relatively large size, and can be unambiguously identified by molecular markers including Deadpan (Dpn), Worniu (Wor), and Miranda (Mira) (Lee et al. 2006b). Recent work has revealed that there are at least two classes of larval brain neuroblasts. More than 90% of larval brain neuroblasts are type I (by far the best-characterized class of fly neuroblasts), which divide asymmetrically to self-renew a daughter neuroblast and produce a ganglion mother cell (GMC) that will divide to generate two differentiated neurons. Type I neuroblasts can be unambiguously identified by coexpression of Dpn and Asense (Ase), and their GMCs can be positively identified by nuclear localization of Prospero (Pros) (Brand et al. 1993; Lee et al. 2006b; Bowman et al. 2008). Differentiating neurons can be detected by expression of the neuronal marker Elav (Embryonic lethal, abnormal vision), which is not detected in neuroblasts or GMCs (Fig. 1; Table 1) (Lee et al. 2006b).

The second class of neuroblasts in the larval brain (type II) have tremendous potential to generate many differentiated neurons via transit-amplifying cells (Boone and Doe 2008; Bowman et al. 2008). There are eight type II neuroblasts mostly located in the dorsomedial region of the larval brain lobe that divide asymmetrically to self-renew and generate. Immature intermediate neural progenitors (INPs) commit to the INP fate through maturation, a differentiation process necessary for specification of the INP identity. INPs express similar molecular markers as Type I neuroblasts,

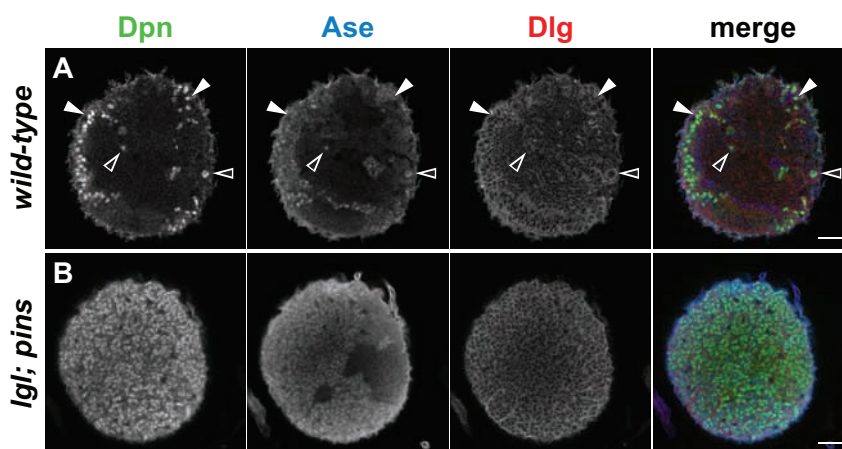


FIGURE 1. Cell-fate markers in larval brain neuroblasts. Third-instar larval brains stained with antibodies against the neuroblast markers Deadpan (Dpn; types I and II; green) and Asense (Ase; type I only; blue), and the cortical marker Discs large (Dlg; red). (A) Wild-type brain showing Dpn⁺ Ase⁺ type I neuroblasts (white arrowheads) and Dpn⁺ Ase⁻ type II neuroblasts (black arrowheads). (B) An *lgl; pins* double mutant brain showing overproliferation of both type I and type II neuroblasts as determined by coexpression of Dpn and Ase. Anterior is to the top in all images. Scale bars, 20 μ m. (Images courtesy of J. Haenfler, University of Michigan.)

TABLE 1. Cell-fate markers in neuroblast lineages

| | |
|---------------|---|
| Type I | |
| Neuroblasts | Dpn ⁺ Ase ⁺ Pros ^{cytoplasmic} |
| GMCs | Dpn ⁻ Ase ⁺ Pros ^{nuc} |
| Neurons | Dpn ⁻ Ase ⁻ Pros ^{nuc} |
| Type II | |
| Neuroblasts | Dpn ⁺ Ase ⁻ Pros |
| Immature INPs | Dpn ⁻ Ase ⁻ Pros ⁻ |
| INPs | Dpn ⁺ Ase ⁺ Pros ^{cytoplasmic} |
| GMCs | Dpn ⁻ Ase ⁺ Pros ^{nuc} |
| Neurons | Dpn ⁻ Ase ⁻ Pros ^{nuc} |

GMCs, ganglion mother cells; INPs, intermediate neural progenitors.

including Dpn, Ase, and cytoplasmic Pros, and divide asymmetrically to regenerate and to produce GMCs. Although expression of Dpn is readily detectable in both type II neuroblasts and INPs, these two cell types can be distinguished by size (>10 μm for neuroblasts vs. <6 μm for INPs). Furthermore, Dpn is expressed in all brain neuroblasts, whereas Ase is specific to type I lineages (Dpn⁺ Ase⁺) and thus provides a key reagent to discriminate type I from type II neuroblasts (Fig. 1; Table 1) (Bowman et al. 2008).

MARKERS OF NEUROBLAST CELL POLARITY

In larval brain neuroblasts, cell polarity is established by two protein complexes that localize to the apical cortex: the Par complex (Bazooka–Par6–atypical protein kinase C [aPKC]) and the Partner of Inscuteable (Pins)–G-protein subunit α (G α i) complex (Rolls et al. 2003; Lee et al. 2006b). Simply put, these protein complexes restrict localization of the neuronal determinants to the basal cortex where they will be inherited by the differentiating GMC. The complexes remain in the apical daughter (the self-renewing neuroblast) during mitosis and provide reliable apical markers of cell polarity (Fig. 2; Table 2). Aurora A kinase (AurA) provides a link between mitosis and asymmetric distribution of fate determinants, initiating cell polarity by phosphorylation of Par6 and activation of aPKC (Lee et al. 2006a; Wirtz-Peitz et al. 2008). The active form of aPKC phosphorylates Lethal giant larvae (Lgl), eliminating it from the apical complex and thereby allowing Bazooka to associate with aPKC and Par6 (Betschinger et al. 2003). The presence of Bazooka in the Par complex facilitates binding to Numb (Nb), promoting phosphorylation of Nb by aPKC and, subsequently, release of Nb from the apical cortex (Smith et al. 2007). Although Nb is required for differentiation of neurons and the end result of this kinase cascade appears to be restriction of Nb to the basal cortex and eventually the GMC, it is not known how Nb might be acting to specify neuronal fate. The most likely mechanism is through modulation of Notch (N) signaling, because Nb is a known repressor of the N receptor (Yoon and Gaiano 2005). Intriguingly, N signaling is active in larval neuroblasts but not GMCs, reinforcing the possibility of this mechanism.

The importance of aPKC in establishing neuroblast cell polarity is apparent when considering aPKC loss-of-function and gain-of-function phenotypes. When aPKC activity is compromised, neuroblasts lose the ability to self-renew and larval brains contain fewer neuroblasts. In contrast, abnormal uniform cortical localization of aPKC in *lgl; pins* double mutants results in the formation of large tumors as both type I and type II neuroblasts execute symmetric divisions to generate ectopic sister neuroblasts (Figs. 1B and 2C).

In addition to regulating distribution of Nb, aPKC is also required for establishing basal localization of additional neuronal determinants Pros and Brain tumor (Brat) to restrict inheritance of these proteins to the GMC during mitosis. The transcription factor Pros is present in neuroblasts, but it remains in the cytoplasm. In GMCs, however, Pros localizes to the nucleus after mitosis where it pre-

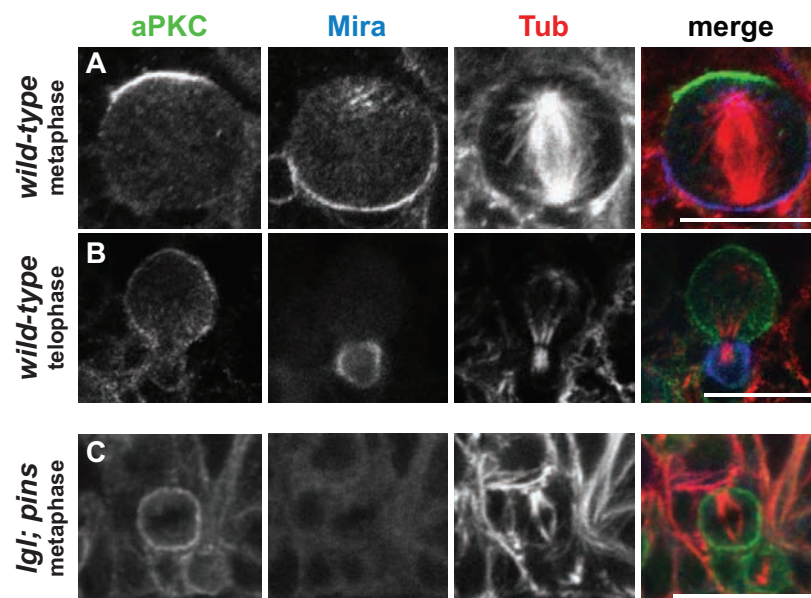


FIGURE 2. Cell-polarity markers in neuroblasts. (A) Metaphase wild-type neuroblasts display apical polar localization of aPKC (green) and basal polar localization of Miranda (Mira; blue). The mitotic spindle is visualized with anti- α -tubulin (red). (B) During telophase, apical proteins such as aPKC (green) are retained in the neuroblast (apical daughter) and basal proteins such as Mira (blue) are segregated into the ganglion mother cell (GMC; basal daughter). The mitotic spindle is visualized with anti- α -tubulin (red). (C) Cell polarity is disrupted in *lgl; pins* double mutants. aPKC (green) is localized uniformly around the cortex, displacing Mira to the cytoplasm (blue). Apical is oriented to the *top*, basal to the *bottom* in all images. Scale bars, 10 μ m. (A, Images courtesy of C. Gamble, University of Michigan; C, images courtesy of J. Haenfler, University of Michigan.)

sumably activates transcription of genes required for neuronal differentiation. Brat is a protein that contains NHL, coiled-coil, and B-box protein–protein interaction domains, and it is predicted to act as a posttranscriptional regulator that likely acts together with Pros to specify neuronal wild-type differentiation, although the exact molecular mechanisms are not known. The cargo-binding protein Mira plays a critical role in localizing Pros and Brat to the basal cortex. Molecular interactions between Mira, Pros, and Brat suggest that Mira acts as a scaffold to retain these neuronal determinants at the basal cortex of the mitotic neuroblast. Mira accumulates on the basal cortex in mitotic neuroblasts, and provides a key marker of basal cortical polarity (Fig. 2; Table 2). The basal localization of Mira is unaffected by loss of Pros or Brat, but loss of Mira causes uniform cytoplasmic localization of Pros and Brat.

Although aPKC is responsible for inactivation of Lgl in the apical cortex, Lgl inhibits aPKC activity at the basal cortex. This mutual inhibition ensures aPKC is restricted to the apical cortex where it will be inherited only by the neuroblast at telophase. Lgl, Scribble (Scrib), and Discs large (Dlg) are all potent tumor suppressors with well-conserved homologs in mammals. Lgl, Scrib, and Dlg are each required for the formation of septate junctions in the basal portion of the cell and for proper segregation of cell-polarity proteins (Albertson and Doe 2003; Humbert et al. 2008). Immunolocalization of Lgl, Scrib, or Dlg provides a useful marker for the cortex and will effectively outline cells in the lar-

TABLE 2. Neuroblast cell-polarity markers

| Apical | Basal | Cortical |
|--|--------------------|---------------------------|
| Atypical protein kinase C (aPKC) | Miranda (Mira) | Scribble (Scrib) |
| Par6 | Brain tumor (Brat) | Discs large (Dlg) |
| Bazooka (Baz) | Prospero (Pros) | Lethal giant larvae (Lgl) |
| Inscuteable (Insc) | Numb (Nb) | |
| Partner of Insc (Pins) | | |
| G-protein subunit α ($G\alpha_i$) | | |

val brain, allowing some cells to be identified solely on size or morphology in the absence of specific markers such as *Wor* or *Dpn*.

Regulation of symmetric versus asymmetric cell division requires more than proper apical–basal localization of fate determinants: it also requires that cytokinesis occurs in the appropriate plane. Not surprisingly, spindle position is closely tied to cell polarity as *Inscuteable* (*Insc*) physically links the *Pins*–*G α i* complex to the *Par* complex and also connects the mitotic spindle to the apical cortex (Kraut et al. 1996; Wu et al. 2008). Symmetric division of a polarized cell requires that each daughter receive equal amounts of both apical and basal determinants, thus it is easy to see the importance of spindle orientation relative to the apical–basal axis in regulating daughter cell fates. The mitotic spindle is easily visualized by immunolocalization of tubulin, which can be costained with cell polarity markers to assay spindle alignment. Mutations in the *G α i* complex cause misalignment of the spindle and ectopic symmetric division of neuroblasts, likely because of improper segregation of fate determinants (Izumi et al. 2004; Nipper et al. 2007). As such, it is easy to see how loss of proper spindle alignment can lead to inappropriate symmetrical division of stem cells and possible tumor formation.

When examining mutants affecting cell fate due to altered asymmetric division patterns, it is important to determine whether cells are mitotically active. Phosphohistone H3 provides a useful immunological M-phase marker for assaying mitotic defects (Lee et al. 2006c). Chemical labeling of newly synthesized DNA (S-phase marker) by incorporation of BrdU (5-bromo-2'-deoxyuridine) can be more informative because this thymidine analog can be used to pulse-label dividing cells and chased to identify the progeny of dividing cells (Lee et al. 2006c). Such pulse-chase experiments can provide additional insight by distinguishing actively dividing cells from those that might be arrested at a mitotic checkpoint. EdU provides a more sensitive and practical alternative to BrdU that can be visualized without the need for harsh DNA denaturation and additional rounds of antibody staining; methodology for EdU labeling is described in Protocol 2 (see also Fig. 3) (Kolb et al. 2001; Rostovtsev et al. 2002; Breinbauer and Köhn 2003; Agard et al. 2004).

EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN NOTES

Equipment and Reagents

Analysis of larval brains does not require much specialized equipment beyond what is needed for standard culturing of flies (Ashburner and Roote 2000). Standard fly food media, egg collection bottles with fruit juice agar caps, and a well-calibrated incubator will be needed in addition to the few specific items described in each protocol below. It is strongly recommended that researchers use a thermometer to monitor carefully the interior temperature of incubators containing samples, particularly when working with temperature-sensitive strains, because the air temperature can vary considerably throughout an incubator.

Genetic Considerations

When designing experiments, it is necessary to be able to distinguish the genotypes of interest during larval stages. It is therefore recommended that researchers use balancer chromosomes carrying GFP (green fluorescent protein) or larval morphological markers such as *tubby*. Also, keep in mind that neuroblasts play a critical role during embryogenesis, and therefore when working with transgenes it is important to avoid causing severe defects (e.g., lethality) too early in development.

Synchronization of Larval Populations

Synchronizing populations of larvae for analysis will ensure that larvae are at the appropriate stage of development for the experiment and that strains are examined at comparable time points. Collection periods as short as 1 h will yield the most tightly synchronized populations, but embryos laid over a span of ~8 h generally provide a good balance between synchronization and having a

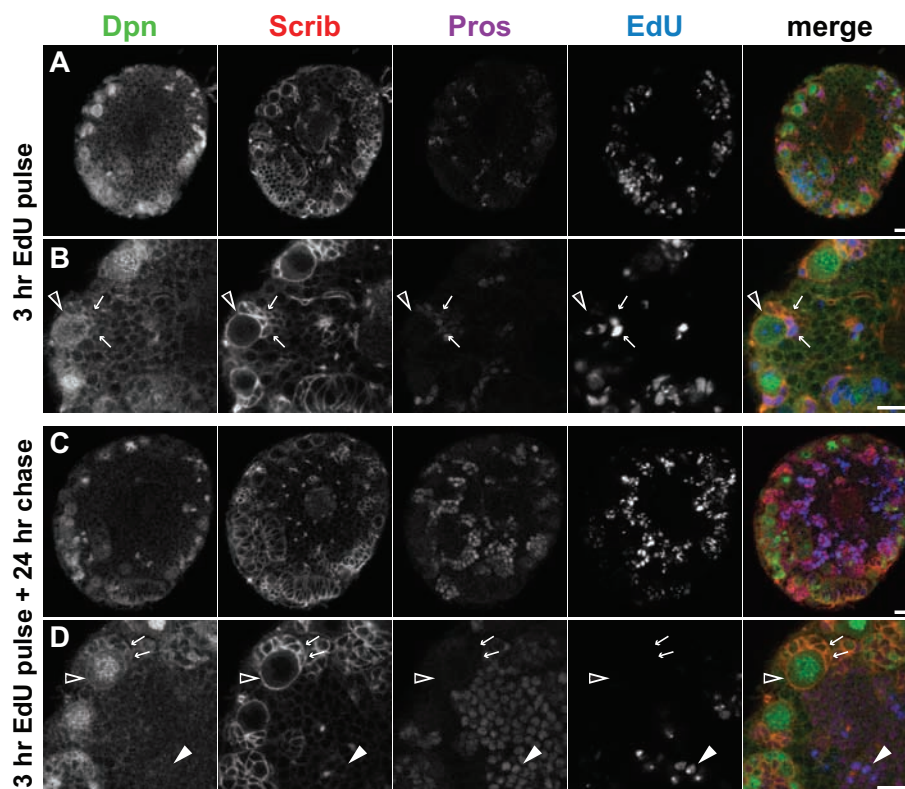


FIGURE 3. EdU pulse-chase in larval brains. (A) Wild-type larval brain 72 h after larval hatching (ALH) (25°C) after a 3 h pulse of EdU by feeding. (B) High-magnification image of wild-type brain after 3 h pulse. EdU is detected in mitotically active neuroblasts (black arrowheads; Dpn⁺; green) and GMCs (white arrows), but not differentiating neurons (Pros⁺; violet). Cells are outlined by the cortical marker Scrib (red). (C) Wild-type larval brain 96 h ALH (25°C) after a 3 h pulse of EdU by feeding and a 24 h EdU-free chase. (D) High-magnification image of wild-type brain after 3 h pulse and 24 h chase. EdU is no longer detected in neuroblasts (black arrowheads; Dpn⁺; green) and GMCs (white arrows), but it is now present in differentiating neurons (white arrowheads; Pros⁺; violet). Cells are outlined by the cortical marker Scrib (red). Scale bars, 10 μ m.

large enough population of embryos to work with. Incubate collection plates for ~24 h to allow larvae to hatch before transferring to standard fly food media (meal caps) stored in 60-mm dishes with a moistened tissue to prevent them from drying out. Larvae will generally be in the third-instar stage ~96 h after larval hatching (ALH) at 25°C or 72 h ALH at 30°C.

Protocol 1

Immunofluorescent Antibody Staining of Larval Tissues

This protocol can be used for dissecting, fixing, and staining brains from larvae at any developmental stage. The number of brains processed using this method is limited only by how many brains can be dissected in 20 min, which is the maximum amount of time dissected tissues should remain in buffer before fixation. This protocol can be used for simultaneous costaining of multiple proteins.

MATERIALS

CAUTION: See Appendix for proper handling of materials marked with <!.>. See the end of the chapter for recipes for reagents marked with <R>.

Reagents

Block solution <R>
Fix solution <R>
Glycerol (70%)
Phosphate-buffered saline (PBS) containing bovine serum albumin (BSA) and Triton X-100 (PBSBT) <R>
PBS containing Triton X-100 (PBST) <R>
PBS stock solution (10X) <R>
ProLong Gold antifade mounting medium (Invitrogen)
Schneider's insect medium (Sigma-Aldrich)
Triton X-100 <!> (10%)

Equipment

Coverslips (22 × 22-mm [#1 thickness] and 24 × 40-mm)
Dissection dishes
Fine-tipped forceps (two pairs)
Microfuge tubes (0.5-mL)
Microscope slides
Nutator mixer or rocker
Pipettes and sterile tips

METHOD

Dissection of Larvae

1. Fill the wells of dissection dishes with 200–400 μ L of cold Schneider's insect medium.
2. Dissect the larvae by rolling them onto their dorsal side so that the denticle belts are facing upward.
3. Using a pair of forceps, gently grasp the larva just posterior of the midpoint. With a second pair of forceps, grasp the anterior end of the larva at the base of the mouth hooks.

12 / Chapter 2

- Carefully tear the cuticle behind the mouth hooks using side-to-side motion while slowly drawing the mouthparts out away from the body. The brain will remain attached to the head and be clearly visible among the gut and salivary glands. Remove any excess tissue, but leave the brain attached to the mouth hooks.

Leaving the brains connected to the mouth hooks will help the brains sink to the bottom of the tube during washing steps below. Moreover, the mouth hooks are dark in color, which makes it easier to see the brains during experimental manipulations.

- After dissection, place the brains in a 0.5-mL tube containing cold Schneider's insect medium. Do not let the tissue sit in Schneider's insect medium for >20 min.

Fixation and Staining

- Remove the Schneider's insect medium from the samples.
- Add 500 μ L of fix solution and incubate with rocking for 23 min at room temperature.
- Quickly wash the brains twice in \sim 500 μ L of PBST at room temperature. Wash again in PBST twice for 20 min each at room temperature.

Once fixed, samples can be held in extended washes to synchronize them before proceeding with further processing.

- Incubate the samples in \sim 500 μ L of block solution for at least 30 min at room temperature.
- Incubate in primary antibody diluted in PBSBT for 4 h at room temperature or overnight at 4°C.

Conditions are dependent on the specific antibody being used. For example, Dpn staining is better when incubated for 3–4 h at room temperature rather than overnight at 4°C.

- Quickly wash the brains twice in PBSBT at room temperature. Wash again in PBSBT twice for 30 min each at room temperature.
- Incubate the samples in secondary antibody for 1.5 h at room temperature or overnight at 4°C. Protect the samples from light after this point.

Secondary antibodies are typically diluted in PBSBT.

- Quickly wash the brains twice in PBST at room temperature. Wash again in PBST twice for 30 min each at room temperature.
- Equilibrate the brains in ProLong Gold at room temperature. Samples can be stored in the dark at room temperature.

Mounting Samples

- Adhere two 22 \times 22-mm coverslips to a microscope slide using a small amount of 70% glycerol, leaving a \sim 5-mm space between them.

These coverslips act as spacers to prevent the brains from being deformed by the 24 \times 40-mm coverslip in Step 19.

- Transfer the brains to the slide using a pipette with the tip cut off.
- Using forceps, remove all excess tissue including the optic discs from each brain. Be sure to leave the ventral nerve cord intact, as it will aid in proper orientation of the brain on the slide.

See Troubleshooting.

- Orient the brains ventral side down.

If the ventral cord is intact, the brain will sit in the appropriate upright position. Without the ventral cord, it is difficult to keep the brain in the proper position and it will tend to end up resting on its anterior or posterior surface.

19. Place a 24 × 40-mm coverslip over the samples and backfill the space between the slide and the coverslip by pipetting a small amount of mounting medium along the edge of the coverslip. Backfilling will reduce the formation of air bubbles trapped in the slide.
See Troubleshooting.

TROUBLESHOOTING

Problem (Step 17): The ventral nerve cord breaks off during dissection.

Solution: Keeping the ventral nerve cord intact requires that you grasp the larva at the right place on its body. Holding the larva at a “sweet spot” near the 4th or 5th abdominal segment will typically allow clean dissection of the brain. Take care to gently break away attached tissues as you tear the head away from the body. The ventral cord is connected to the body by many axons and will likely break off if the head is carelessly pulled from the body.

Problem (Step 19): There is poor signal-to-noise ratio.

Solution: High levels of background staining can result from several steps in this protocol. Ensure that all solutions are at the correct pH because high or low pH levels can negatively affect antibody binding. It is critical to use both primary and secondary antibodies at the appropriate dilution specific for each antibody. The specificity of secondary antibodies should be tested by staining a sample with secondary antibody alone. Thorough washing of samples is also important for reducing background signals, particularly after incubation in primary antibodies. Placing a small, fine pipette tip over a larger 1000- μ L tip will help you to remove as much of the wash solutions as possible without losing or damaging the samples. However, note that excessive washing can also lead to weak signal strength. Antibodies can be sensitive to the duration and temperature of incubation. Anti-Dpn, for example, will typically yield cleaner staining when incubated for 3–4 h at room temperature than when incubated overnight at 4°C. Testing different incubation conditions might be necessary to determine the optimal conditions for a particular antibody.

Protocol 2

EdU Labeling of Mitotic Neuroblasts

Like BrdU, EdU is a thymidine analog that is incorporated into newly synthesized DNA during S-phase and it provides an efficient method for identifying mitotic cells. Incorporation of EdU is detected through its reaction with an azide dye that is small enough to penetrate tissues efficiently. This method is highly sensitive and does not require the harsh denaturation of DNA that is necessary for staining with antibodies (Kolb et al. 2001; Rostovtsev et al. 2002; Breinbauer and Köhn 2003; Agard et al. 2004). Visualization of EdU is rapid and does not interfere with subsequent antibody staining. EdU can be used to pulse-label mitotic cells and chased to identify their progeny, just like BrdU. This protocol was modified from BrdU-feeding procedures described by Truman and Bate (1988) and Ito and Hotta (1992). Methods for the detection of EdU are described in Invitrogen product manuals.

MATERIALS

CAUTION: See Appendix for proper handling of materials marked with <!.>.
See the end of the chapter for recipes for reagents marked with <R>.
Refer also to the Materials list for Protocol 1.

Reagents

Bromophenol blue <!.>
Click-iT EdU imaging kit (Invitrogen)
EdU (Invitrogen)
Kankel-White medium <R>

METHOD

Preparation of Medium

1. Prepare EdU and the detection reagents as instructed by the manufacturer (Invitrogen).
2. Prepare Kankel-White medium and heat to dissolve all components. Add a few granules of bromophenol blue to the medium.
3. Allow the medium to cool to 50°C–60°C. Add EdU to give a final concentration of 0.2 mM.
4. Pour the mixture into plates and allow it to solidify.

Feeding EdU to *Drosophila* Larvae

5. Allow the larvae to feed on EdU-containing medium for 3–4 h.
The presence of bromophenol blue in the medium will make food in the gut visible. If the larvae are eating, they should be taking up EdU.

6. If no EdU-free chase is required, proceed directly to Steps 7–16 below. If an EdU-free chase is required, transfer the larvae to standard fly food and allow them to recover for the desired amount of time under appropriate experimental conditions.

If using bromophenol blue in the medium, select larvae with blue food visible in their guts.

Dissection and Staining

7. Dissect the larvae in Schneider's insect medium and remove the brains following the procedure described in Protocol 1, Steps 1–6.
8. Add 500 μ L of fix solution to the brains and incubate with rocking for 23 min at room temperature.
9. Quickly wash the brains twice in \sim 500 μ L of PBST at room temperature. Wash again in PBST twice for 20 min each at room temperature.
10. Incubate the samples in \sim 500 μ L of block solution for at least 30 min at room temperature.
11. Quickly wash the brains in PBST at room temperature.
12. Prepare the Click-iT reaction mix as instructed by the manufacturer. To prevent photobleaching, protect the samples from light after this point.
13. Add 500 μ L of Click-iT reaction mix and incubate with rocking for 30 min at room temperature.
14. Quickly wash the brains twice in PBST at room temperature.
15. Quickly wash the brains in PBSBT at room temperature.
16. Mount a few brains and scan them to check the efficiency of EdU labeling. Process the remaining brains for antibody staining as described in Protocol 1.

See Troubleshooting.

TROUBLESHOOTING

Problem (Step 16): EdU signal is too bright, thereby saturating detection.

Solution: Detection of EdU is more sensitive than detecting BrdU. The concentration of EdU in the medium should be lower than is necessary in experiments with BrdU. Also, larvae can be fed for shorter periods of time to reduce the pulse of EdU labeling in cells.

Protocol 3

Multicolor Fluorescence In Situ Hybridization

RNA in situ hybridization is a useful method for determining the transcriptional expression pattern of a gene when antibodies are not available. Using this technique, it is possible to assay the expression of multiple RNA species using distinct labels on RNA probes, or simultaneously examine RNA and protein localization within larval tissues (Fig. 4). This protocol utilizes a fluorophore-conjugated tyramide that is easily made in the laboratory for a fraction of the cost of the commercially produced product. The method was adapted from B. Pearson (University of Utah; pers. comm.) with modifications by H. Komori and A. Daul (University of Michigan). Additional modifications were derived from D. Kosman (<http://superfly.ucsd.edu/~davek/>) (Kosman et al. 2004).

MATERIALS

CAUTION: See Appendix for proper handling of materials marked with <!>. See the end of the chapter for recipes for reagents marked with <R>. Refer also to the Materials list for Protocol 1.

Reagents

Anti-digoxigenin (DIG)-POD or other antibody for detection of riboprobe
 Carbonate buffer (2x) <R>
 DIG RNA-labeling kit (Roche)
 DNA template for riboprobe
 Ethanol <!> (70% and 100%)
 Horse serum (heat-inactivated)
 Hybridization buffer <R>
 Hydrogen peroxide <!> (30%, v/v)
 Hydrolysis stop buffer <R>
 Imidazole <!>
 LiCl <!> (4 M)
 MABT <R>
 PBST <R>
 RNase-free water
 SSC stock solution (20x) <R>
 Tyramide (fluorescently labeled) <R>

Equipment

Heat block (set at 90°C)
 Ice bucket
 Incubator (set at 37°C)
 Microfuge tubes (0.5-mL; RNase-free)
 Nutator mixer or rocker
 Pipettes and tips (RNase-free)
 Water bath (set at 55°C or 65°C)

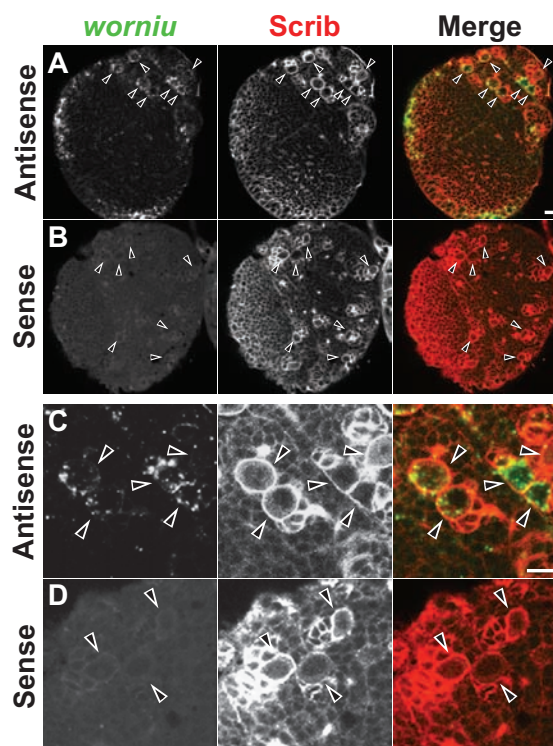


FIGURE 4. Fluorescent in situ localization in larval brains. Wild-type third-instar larval brains hybridized with anti-*worniu* riboprobe and costained with anti-Scrib antibodies. (A) *worniu* antisense probe (green) is detected in central brain neuroblasts (arrows). Neuroblasts can be identified by morphology as outlined by the cortical marker Scrib (red). (B) No signal is detected when using a *worniu* sense probe. (C,D) High-magnification images of A and B, respectively. (Images courtesy of H. Komori, University of Michigan.)

METHODS

Riboprobe Synthesis

Producing riboprobes requires template DNA flanked by distinct RNA polymerase promoter sites, typically T3, T7, or Sp6. Templates can be easily produced by inserting cDNA or a genomic subclone with minimal intronic sequence into pBluescript or other cloning vector with suitable promoter sites. Having distinct promoters on either end of the template allows the template to be used for transcription of sense and antisense probes. Use a restriction enzyme to cut the plasmid at the opposite end of the template so that transcription of the probe will stop at the cut and not proceed into the vector sequence. Alternatively, template DNA can be made by polymerase chain reaction (PCR) amplification. In this case, the amplified fragment must contain the desired RNA polymerase promoter site at each end in order to transcribe the probe. Regardless of the preparation method, template DNA should be cleaned up following the enzymatic reactions and resuspended in RNase-free water. Probes can be labeled with a variety of haptens, including digoxigenin (DIG), dinitrophenol (DNP), biotin (BIO), and fluorescein isothiocyanate (FITC). DIG, BIO, and FITC RNA-labeling kits are available from Roche. DNP-11-UTP is available from PerkinElmer and can be mixed with unlabeled ribonucleotides for use in a similar transcription reaction. Antibodies for the detection of hapten-labeled riboprobes are available from a variety of commercial sources.

1. Combine the following in an RNase-free microfuge tube:
 - ~1.5 mg of DNA template
 - 2 μ L of 10 \times dNTP labeling mix*
 - 2 μ L of 10 \times transcription buffer*
 - 1 μ L of RNase inhibitor*
 - 2 μ L of RNA polymerase*
 - RNase-free water to give a total volume of 20 μ L

* These components are included in the Roche DIG RNA-labeling kit. The amounts required could vary when not using this kit.
2. Incubate for 2 h at 37°C.

At this point, a small amount of probe can be run on an agarose gel to evaluate the efficiency of the transcription reaction.
3. Add 5 μ L of RNase-free water and 25 μ L of 2 \times carbonate buffer. Incubate for 45 min at 65°C.
4. Add 50 μ L of hydrolysis stop buffer.
5. Add 10 μ L of 4 M LiCl and 330 μ L of 100% ethanol. Precipitate at -70°C for at least 30 min. Spin at top speed for 15 min. Quickly wash the pellet in 70% ethanol. Resuspend the pellet in 100 μ L of hybridization buffer. Store at -80°C . Avoid repeated freezing and thawing.

RNA In Situ Hybridization with Antibody Costaining

6. Dissect the larvae in Schneider's insect medium and remove the brains following the procedure described in Protocol 1.
7. Add 500 μ L of fix solution and incubate with rocking for 23 min at room temperature.
8. Quickly wash the brains twice in ~500 μ L of PBST at room temperature. Wash again in PBST twice for 20 min each at room temperature.
9. Incubate in PBST containing 3% hydrogen peroxide for 1 h at room temperature. Seal the tubes tightly with parafilm to prevent the caps from blowing open during this reaction!

This step eliminates endogenous peroxidase activity.
10. Quickly wash the brains twice in ~500 μ L of PBST at room temperature. Wash again in PBST twice for 20 min each at room temperature.
11. Incubate the brains in 400 μ L of a 1:1 mixture of PBST and hybridization buffer for 30 min at room temperature.
12. Wash three times for 10 min each in hybridization buffer at room temperature.
13. Incubate the brains in 400 μ L of hybridization buffer for 2 h at 55°C. At 1.5 h after the start of this incubation, denature 400 ng (~4 μ L) of riboprobe in 400 μ L of hybridization buffer for 5 (step 14)min at 90°C. Cool on ice for 5 min, and then place at 55°C.
14. Incubate the brains in 150–200 μ L of the probe/hybridization buffer mixture for at least 16 h at 55°C.
15. Remove the probe/hybridization buffer mixture.

The mixture can be stored at -20°C and reused.
16. Wash the brains twice in a prewarmed 1:1 mixture of hybridization buffer and 2 \times SSC for 30 min at 55°C.
17. Wash twice in prewarmed 2 \times SSC for 30 min at 55°C.
18. Wash twice in prewarmed 0.2 \times SSC for 30 min at 55°C.
19. Quickly wash the brains twice in MABT at room temperature.

20. Block in MABT containing 10% heat-inactivated horse serum for 1 h at room temperature.
BSA has been reported to reduce the intensity of the tyramide reaction.
21. Incubate the brains in anti-DIG-POD (diluted 1:1000 in MABT containing 10% heat-inactivated horse serum) overnight at 4°C.
If performing in situ hybridization of multiple RNA species using tyramide reactions, each probe must be detected and developed in sequence to avoid cross-reactivity.
22. Wash the brains six times in MABT for 20 min at room temperature.
23. Incubate the brains in PBST containing 10 mM imidazole for 30 min at room temperature.
24. Incubate the brains in the dark in FITC-tyramide solution diluted 1:1000 in PBST containing 10 mM imidazole (1:500 for Cy3-tyramide) for 30 min at room temperature. Protect the samples from light after this point.
25. Develop the signal by adding hydrogen peroxide to a final concentration of 0.002%–0.01%. Incubate for 45 min at room temperature.
Signal strength can be enhanced by repeating Steps 24–25 up to twice with fresh fluorescently labeled tyramide solution.
26. Quickly wash the brains twice in ~500 μ L of PBST at room temperature. Wash again in PBST twice for 30–60 min each at room temperature.
27. If the samples are to be costained with antibodies for protein localization, proceed as described in Step 5 of Protocol 1.
If the samples are to be processed for the detection of a second riboprobe, quench the residual peroxidase activity by incubating in PBST containing 3% hydrogen peroxide for 1 h at room temperature. Quickly wash the brains twice in ~500 μ L of PBST at room temperature. Wash again in PBST twice for 20 min each at room temperature. Proceed by incubating with the second riboprobe and repeat Steps 11–25 above.

RECIPES

CAUTION: See Appendix for proper handling of materials marked with <I>. Recipes for reagents marked with <R> are included in this list.

Block Solution

| Reagent | Quantity (for 5 mL) | Final concentration |
|---|---------------------|---------------------|
| PBSBT <R> | 5 mL | 1X |
| Normal goat serum (NGS)* | 5 μ L | 0.1% (v/v) |
| Glycine (1 M in PBS containing 2% sodium azide <I>) | 50 μ L | 1% (w/v) |

Prepare fresh and keep cold. *Omit if using antigoat antibodies.

Carbonate Buffer (2x)

| Reagent | Quantity (for 100 mL) | Final concentration |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Na ₂ CO ₃ <I> | 0.636 g | 60 mM |
| NaHCO ₃ | 0.336 g | 40 mM |

Adjust the pH to 10.2. Store at room temperature.

Fix Solution

| Reagent | Quantity (for 10 mL) | Final concentration |
|------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| Formaldehyde <!\> (37%, v/v) | 1.1 mL | 4% (v/v) |
| PIPES (1 M, pH 6.9) | 1.0 mL | 0.1 M |
| Triton X-100 <!\> (10%, v/v) | 0.3 mL | 0.3% (v/v) |
| EGTA (0.1 M, pH 8.0) | 0.2 mL | 20 mM |
| MgSO ₄ <!\> (1 M) | 10 μL | 1 mM |
| dH ₂ O | 7.4 mL | |

Prepare fresh every time.

Hybridization Buffer

| Reagent | Quantity (for 50 mL) | Final concentration |
|------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| Deionized formamide <!\> | 25 mL | 50% |
| SSC (20x) <R> | 10 mL | 4x |
| Tween-20 (10%, v/v) | 0.5 mL | 0.1% (v/v) |
| Heparin <!\> (50 mg/mL) | 50 μL | 0.05 mg/mL |
| RNase-free dH ₂ O | 14.5 mL | |

Hydrolysis Stop Buffer

| Reagent | Quantity (for 10 mL) | Final concentration |
|------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| Sodium acetate | 0.166 g | 200 mM |
| Acetic acid <!\> | 100 μL | 1% (v/v) |

Adjust the pH to 6.0 with acetic acid. Store at -20°C

Kankel-White Medium

| Reagent | Quantity (for 10 mL) |
|-------------------|----------------------|
| Agar | 80 mg |
| Sucrose | 500 mg |
| Yeast extract | 500 mg |
| Dried yeast | 200 mg |
| dH ₂ O | 10 mL |

Heat to dissolve. Do not boil excessively.

MABT

| Reagent | Quantity (for 1 L) | Final concentration |
|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Maleic acid <!\> | 11.6 g | 100 mM |
| NaCl | 8.8 g | 150 mM |
| Tween-20 (10%, v/v) | 1 mL | 0.1% (v/v) |

Dissolve the components and adjust the pH to 7.5 with concentrated NaOH <!\>. Adjust the volume to 1 L with dH₂O and sterilize. Store at room temperature.

PBS Stock Solution (10x)

| Reagent | Quantity (for 1 L) | Final concentration |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| NaCl | 80 g | 1.37 M |
| KCl | 2 g | 27 mM |
| Na ₂ HPO ₄ | 14.4 g | 100 mM |
| KH ₂ PO ₄ | 2.4 g | 20 mM |
| dH ₂ O | to 1 L | |

Dissolve the components in 400 mL of dH₂O and adjust the pH to 7.4 with concentrated HCl. Adjust the volume to 1 L with dH₂O and sterilize. Store at room temperature.

PBSBT

| Reagent | Quantity (for 25 mL) | Final concentration |
|----------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| PBST | 25 mL | 1x |
| Bovine serum albumin (BSA) | 0.25 g | 1% (w/v) |

Make fresh and keep cold. Can be stored short-term at 4°C.

PBST

| Reagent | Quantity (for 500 mL) | Final concentration |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| PBS stock solution (10x) | 50 mL | 1x |
| Triton X-100 (10%, v/v) | 15 mL | 0.3% (v/v) |
| dH ₂ O | 435 mL | |

Store at room temperature.

SSC Stock Solution (20x)

| Reagent | Quantity (for 1 L) | Final concentration |
|------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| NaCl | 175.3 g | 3.0 M |
| Sodium citrate | 88.2 g | 0.3 M |
| H ₂ O | 800 mL | |

Adjust the pH to 7.0 with a few drops of 14 N HCl. Adjust the volume to 1 L with H₂O.

Tyramide (Fluorescently Labeled)

Work should be performed in the hood. For best results, use fresh reagents. *N*-hydroxysuccinimide (NHS) esters are unstable and the coupling reaction should be kept anhydrous.

1. Dissolve 40 mg of fluorescently labeled NHS ester in 4 mL of dimethylformamide (DMF).
2. Add 10 μ L of triethylamine (TEA) to 1 mL of DMF.
3. Dissolve 10 mg of tyramide in 1 mL of TEA–DMF solution.
4. Mix 4 mL of fluorescently labeled NHS ester in DMF with 1.37 mL of tyramide solution. Incubate in the dark for 2 h at room temperature.
5. Add 4.6 mL of ethanol.

Keep protected from light. Store at 4°C or –20°C. The solution is stable for at least 8 mo at 4°C.

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13

Electrophysiological Recordings from the *Drosophila* Giant Fiber SystemMarcus J. Allen¹ and Tanja A. Godenschwege²¹University of Kent, School of Biosciences, Kent CT2 7NJ, United Kingdom; ²Florida Atlantic University, Biological Sciences, Boca Raton, Florida 33431

ABSTRACT

The giant fiber system (GFS) of *Drosophila* is a well-characterized neuronal circuit that mediates the escape response in the fly. It is one of the few adult neural circuits from which electrophysiological recordings can be made routinely. This chapter describes a simple procedure for stimulating the giant fiber neurons directly in the brain of the adult fly and obtaining recordings from the output muscles of the GFS.

Introduction, 215
 Protocol: Recording from TTM and DLM: The Outputs of the GFS, 218
 Discussion, 222
 Recipe, 223
 Acknowledgments, 223
 References, 223

INTRODUCTION

The GFS mediates a fast escape behavior in adult flies (Allen et al. 2006). Behaviorally, it is characterized by an initial extension of the mesothoracic leg, to propel the flies off the substrate, followed by a wing downbeat to initiate flight. The efferent (output) pathways of the GFS have been well defined (Fig. 1) for the most part by work from Wyman and others in the 1980s using a combination of dye injection, electron microscopy, and electrophysiological techniques (Ikeda et al. 1980; King and Wyman 1980; Koto et al. 1981). The two largest interneurons in the fly, the aptly named giant fibers (GFs), relay the signal from the brain to the mesothoracic neuromere where each makes two identified synapses. The first is to a large motoneuron (TTMn) that drives the tergotrochanteral “jump” muscle (TTM), which is also referred to in the literature as the tergal depressor of trochanter or TDT. This GF–TTMn synapse, which is the largest central synapse in the fly, is a mixed synapse with the electrical gap-junction component encoded by the *shaking-B* (*shakB*) gene and the chemical component using acetylcholine its neurotransmitter (Blagburn et al. 1999; Allen and Murphey 2007; Phelan et al. 2008). The second identified synapse of the GF is to another interneuron, the peripherally synapsing interneuron (PSI), which exits the ganglion via the posterior dorsal medial nerve (PDMN) and synapses with dorsal longitudinal motoneurons (DLMns) within the PDMN. The DLMns drive the large indirect flight muscles (DLMs). Electrophysiological recordings can be made from the GFS in a simple noninvasive manner to determine the function of the central synapses within the circuit. Using combinations of adult viable mutants and/or GAL4 lines that express in its neurons, the GFS has provided a useful model circuit to investigate the role of several molecules in the formation of

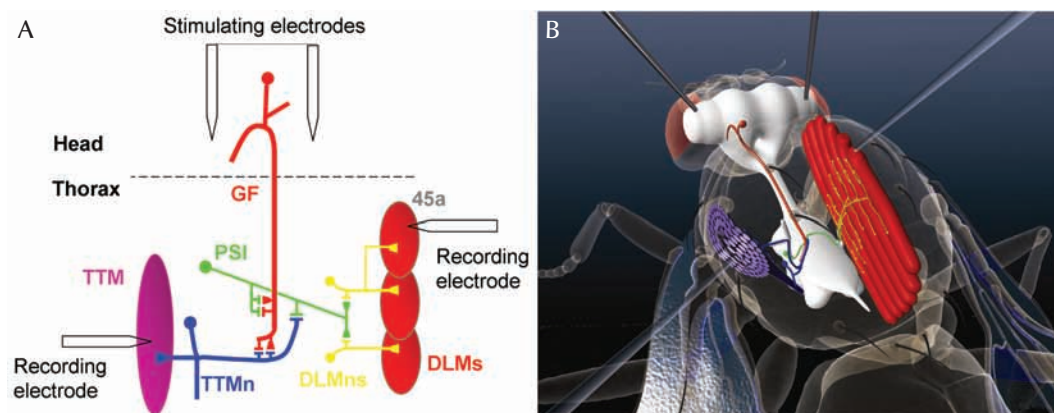


FIGURE 1. The giant fiber system (GFS): neurons and muscles. (A) Schematic indicating the neurons and connections of the GFS. For clarity, only one-half of the bilateral circuit is shown. The giant fiber (GF; red) relays information from the brain to the thoracic ganglia where it makes an electrochemical synapse to the tergotrochanteral motor neuron (TTMn; blue), which innervates the tergotrochanteral muscle (TTM). It also makes an electrochemical synapse to the peripherally synapsing interneuron (PSI; green), which, in turn, makes chemical synapses to the dorsal longitudinal motoneurons (DLMns; yellow) that innervate the dorsal longitudinal muscles (DLMs). The relative positions of the stimulating and recording electrodes are indicated. (Adapted, with permission of Elsevier, from Allen et al. 2006.) (B) Artist's impression of the GFS showing the central nervous system within the fly's body. The neurons and muscles of the GFS are shown in their approximate positions and the best positions for the stimulating and recording electrodes are indicated.

central synapses including Glued, Rac1, Robo, Semaphorin 1a, and Neuroglian (Allen et al. 1999, 2000; Godenschwege et al. 2002a,b, 2006). The GFS has also been used to investigate the effects of aging, sensitivity to anesthetics, the effects of neurodegeneration, and the molecular basis of habituation (Engel and Wu 1996, 1998; Lin and Nash 1996; Martinez et al. 2007; Watson et al. 2008).

Stimulating and Recording from the GFS

The GFs can be activated directly with brain stimulation, and the two output pathways can be monitored by recording simultaneously from the TTM and DLMs. The original rationale was that by placing the stimulating electrodes into the brain and slowly increasing the stimulation voltage, a point would be reached where only the GF interneurons would propagate an action potential because their large size would mean they have the least resistance and thus the lowest threshold. Although this may theoretically be true, in practice, accurate positioning of the electrodes is hard to achieve, so the stimulation voltage given is much above threshold. This ensures that the GFs are activated directly and not by upstream neurons (unless that is desired, see below). Although many neurons in the brain may be activated, the only route to the TTMn and DLMs from the brain activated by this procedure seems to be via the GFs. This is supported by findings that genetic ablation of the GFs, or abrogation of the electrochemical synapses between the GF and the TTMn and PSI, results in total loss of TTM and DLM responses on brain stimulation (Allen et al. 2000; Allen and Murphey 2007). However, both TTMn and the DLMns have other unidentified inputs, one of which is triggered by looming stimuli (Fotowat et al. 2009). Once direct activation of the GFs is achieved, recordings from TTM monitor the function of the GF–TTMn central synapse along with the neuromuscular junction (NMJ) and recordings from DLM monitor the function of the GF–PSI and PSI–DLMns synapses as well as the NMJ.

Standard Tests of Synaptic Function

The most commonly used tests for the GFS are response latency, the refractory period, and the ability to follow high-frequency stimulation. These will be described in turn.

Response Latency: This is the time taken for the output muscle to respond to a single stimulus activating the GFs. In the TTM of wild-type flies this is ~0.8 msec after GF activation and is via the monosynaptic pathway through the large electrochemical GF–TTMn synapse. The response in a DLM, through the disynaptic pathway, is seen ~1.2 msec after GF activation. These latencies correspond to the escape behavior in which the jump always occurs before the wing downbeat. This robust short-latency (SL) response is a good indicator of synaptic function, and any abnormalities in the synapses of the GFS will result in an increase in the latency or a loss of the response—for example, loss of gap junctions or structural malformations of the synapse that alter its shape or size (Thomas and Wyman 1984; Oh et al. 1994; Allen et al. 1999, 2000; Godenschwege et al. 2002a,b, 2006; Allen and Murphey 2007; Uthaman et al. 2008).

In addition to SL responses, intermediate-latency (IL) responses (TTM ~ 1.8 msec, DLM ~ 2.2 msec), and long-latency (LL) responses (TTM ~ 3.9 msec, DLM ~ 4.3 msec) can be elicited by simply reducing the voltage during brain stimulation or providing a light-off stimulus to a tethered fly. All these responses are still conducted through the GF; note the delay between the TTM and DLM response is always ~0.4 msec, indicating the disynaptic pathway from GF to DLM via the PSI and DLMn. The longer IL and LL responses, during low-voltage electrical stimulation or a light-off stimulus, are attributed to indirect activation of the GF by the afferent neurons in the brain. These neurons still remain unidentified but have interesting properties as they show both sensitivity to anesthetics and habituation to repeated stimuli (Engel and Wu 1996, 1998; Lin and Nash 1996).

Refractory Period: In this test, twin stimuli are given, initially 10 msec apart, and the responses from both TTM and DLM are recorded. The interval between the two stimuli is then gradually reduced until the second stimulus fails to elicit a response. The shortest time between two stimuli that still produces two responses is defined as the refractory period. For TTM this is ~3 msec and for DLM it is ~5 msec because of the greater time needed for the PSI–DLMn chemical synapses to replenish their synaptic vesicles. This test is less common than the other two as similar information can be gleaned if you observe the responses to the first two stimuli in the “following at high frequencies” test.

Following at High Frequencies: In this test a train of 10 stimuli are given to the preparation at high frequency and the number of responses is recorded. These trains of stimuli are usually given at 100, 200, and either 250 or 300 Hz. At 100 Hz (stimuli 10 msec apart) both TTM and DLM should respond 1:1 and give 10 responses. At the higher frequencies—for example, 250 Hz (stimuli 4 msec apart)—TTM will still respond 1:1 because of the robust GF–TTMn electrochemical synapse; however, DLM recordings will start to show failures as the time between stimuli is less than the refractory period of the PSI–DLMns synapses. An alternative way of performing the test is to gradually increase the frequency of the stimuli until the response rates fall below 50% (5 out of 10). This is described as the Following Frequency₅₀ (FF₅₀) (Gorczyca and Hall 1984). This test will often reveal an abnormality in synaptic function that does not cause an abnormal response latency (Allen et al. 1999), although it usually confirms an aberrant response latency.

Protocol

Recording from TTM and DLM: The Outputs of the GFS

This protocol is a standard method for recording from the GFS of *Drosophila*. It is a relatively non-invasive method that allows the investigator to stimulate the giant fibers in the brain and assay the function of several central synapses within this neural circuit by recording from the thoracic musculature.

MATERIALS

CAUTION: See Appendix for proper handling of materials marked with <I>. See the end of the chapter for recipes for reagents marked with <R>.

Reagents

CO₂ or ice (Step 1)
 Dental wax, soft (available from most dental product suppliers)
Drosophila melanogaster wild-type/control flies (e.g., Oregon-R, *w¹¹¹⁸*, *bendless/+*; *shakB²/+*) and mutant strains (e.g., *bendless*, *shakB²*)
 Forceps
 KCl <I>, 3 M, or GFS saline <R>
 Slide or mounting tray
 These can be made from a small Petri dish filled with tooth carding wax (shown in Fig. 2B), from a piece of Plexiglas or a coin, or from a small piece of wood.

Equipment

Electrodes, recording (glass with a resistance of 40–60 MΩ; need two of these)
 These are fabricated using a good glass microelectrode puller (e.g., a Sutter P-95). Again preformed microelectrodes can be purchased if desired.
 Electrodes, tungsten and sharpened (one ground and two stimulation electrodes)
 These can be fabricated from 0.005-in-diameter tungsten wire sharpened electrolytically using 4 M NaOH. Alternatively, commercially available tungsten electrodes can be used. The electrophysiology rig is shown in Figure 2A,B (the figure legend contains equipment source information).
 Faraday cage (optional)

METHOD

Mounting Flies

1. Anesthetize the fly on ice or with CO₂.
 The fly should be left for 20–30 min after mounting if CO₂ is used, because occasionally it can affect recordings. This is not a problem when using ice; however, the fly must be secured in the wax more quickly as recovery from cooling can be quite rapid.
2. Using forceps, transfer the anesthetized fly to the wax by its legs, and mount it into soft wax on a slide or tray with the ventral side down, pushing the legs into the wax to secure.

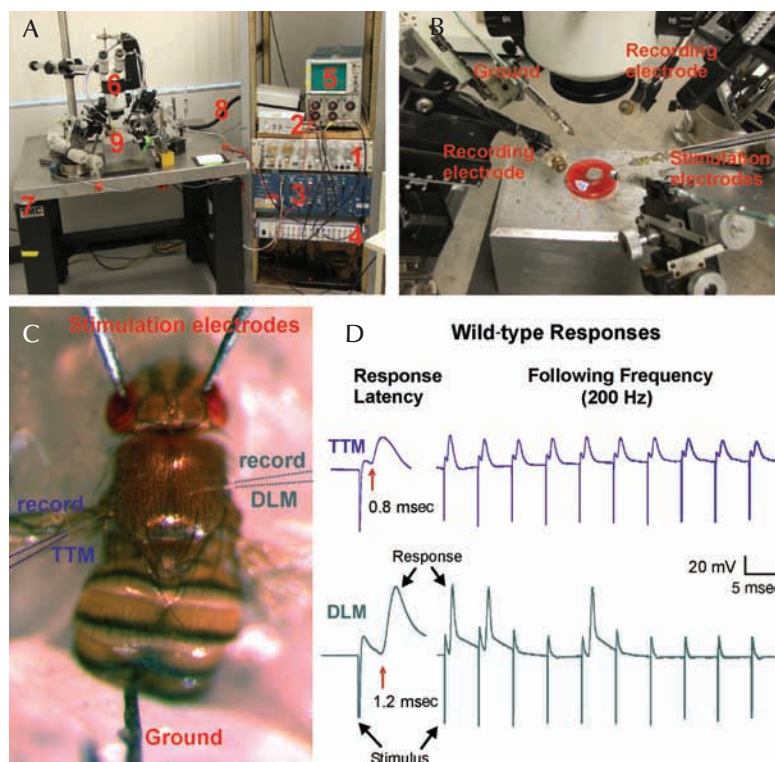


FIGURE 2. Electrophysiology of the GFS. (A) Components of the electrophysiological rig. 1: Stimulator (S48 Square Pulse Stimulator, Grass Instruments); 2: stimulation isolation unit (SIU5 RF Transformer Isolation Unit, Grass Instruments); 3: two-channel intracellular amplifier (Model 5A Microelectrode Amplifier, Getting Instruments); 4: data acquisition system (Digidata 1440A, Molecular Devices) and computer with software (not shown); 5: storage oscilloscope 5111A (Tektronix); 6: stereomicroscope (Wild M5) on a boom stand; 7: vibration isolation table (TMC); 8: light source (Fostec); 9: recording platform with five manual multi-axis micromanipulators (Narashigi, Sutter Instrument Company, and World Precision Instruments). (B) Magnification of the recording platform. Around the recording tray are arranged two stimulation electrodes (sharp tungsten electrodes), two recording electrodes (glass electrodes filled with saline), and one ground electrode (sharp tungsten electrodes). (C) *Drosophila melanogaster* impaled with stimulation electrodes through the eyes in the brain and a ground in the abdomen. Two glass electrodes are placed in the thorax for recording responses from the TTM and DLM. (D) Sample electrophysiological traces from recordings of the TTM and DLM on brain stimulation of a wild-type fly. The response latency of the GF-TTM pathway is 0.8 msec and it can follow stimuli 1:1 at 200 Hz. In contrast, the response latency of the GF-DLM pathway is 1.2 msec, and responses are not seen after every stimulus when given 10 stimuli at 200 Hz.

3. Pull the proboscis outward and push into the wax so that the head lies slightly forward and down on the surface.

This step is important because the head needs to be secure and not move when the stimulating electrodes are inserted (Step 6). Keeping the head slightly stretched in front of the thorax will also help prevent inadvertent stimulation of the ventral nerve cord.

4. Pull the wings outward, away from the thorax, and secure. Ensure that the fly cannot move its thorax and that the areas of the DLM and TTM (Fig. 3, dotted areas) are visible and accessible.

If the fly is mounted incorrectly or not securely, it becomes very difficult to obtain recordings, so it is advisable to practice these steps several times before proceeding with the protocol.

Placement of Electrodes

Successful recording from the GFS depends on being able to arrange the five micromanipulators so that the electrodes can be placed within several millimeters of each other. It is worth spending some time moving and adjusting these before a preparation is introduced so that minimal adjustment is required when recordings are needed.

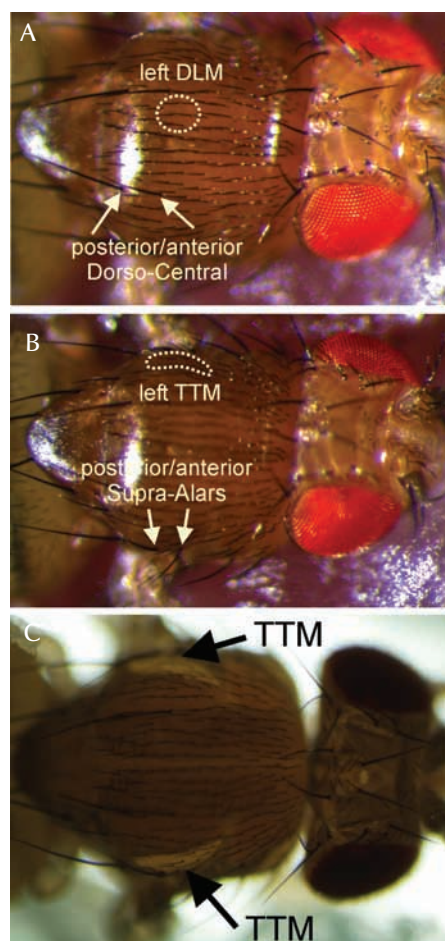


FIGURE 3. Localization of the TTM and DLM using bristles and illumination. (A) There are six pairs of indirect flight muscles, but only the dorsal longitudinal muscle pair 45a (also called the dorsal median muscle or muscle number 6) are innervated by the DLM motor neurons that receive input via the PSI from the contralateral GF (Demerec 1994). The attachment site of the DLM 45a muscles are under the cuticle between the anterior dorso-central setae (yellow arrows) and the midline of the animal (yellow circle indicates site of left DLM). (B) The TTM is underneath the cuticle, just dorsal of the anterior and posterior supra-alars setae (yellow arrows) as indicated by the area circled by a dotted line (Demerec 1994). (C) As the TTM fibers are running along the dorsoventral axis they can be nicely visualized when a light source is placed underneath the fly (black arrows).

5. Place the ground electrode into the posterior end of the abdomen (Fig. 2C).
6. Place the stimulating electrodes through the eyes into the brain (Fig. 2C).
The brain sits at the back of the head capsule, but electrodes pushed in too far may traverse the head capsule and enter the thorax where they may stimulate the ventral nerve cord directly.
7. Give single pulses of 30–60 V for 0.03 msec and check for successful activation of the GFS by looking for movement of the wings and/or TTM muscle on stimulation.
See Troubleshooting.
8. Place the GFS saline (or 3 M KCl)-filled glass electrode for intracellular recordings into the left (or right) DLM muscle fiber 45a, which is immediately below the cuticle (see Figs. 2C and 3A).
See Troubleshooting.

Stimulation and Recording

9. Give single stimuli as in Step 7 and modulate the stimulus strength by varying the voltage to determine the threshold for eliciting a response.
The response of a good DLM recording is ~50–70 mV and has a latency of ~1.2–1.4 msec (Fig. 2D). Set the voltage 5–10 V above the determined threshold for the remainder of the experiment.
See Troubleshooting.
10. Place the second intracellular recording electrode in the right (or left) TTM muscle on the contralateral side with respect to the recording electrode for the DLM (see Figs. 2C and 3B).

The TTM muscle fibers are much smaller than the DLM muscle fibers and hence it is more difficult to obtain and maintain a good recording. The response of a good recording from the TTM is ~30–50 mV and has a latency of ~0.8 msec (Fig. 2D). Protocols can be programmed in software such as pCLAMP to capture 10-msec sweeps to collect data.

See Troubleshooting.

11. Once good recordings have been obtained from the TTM and DLM, give 10 single stimuli with an interval of ~5 sec between the stimuli and determine the average response latency for both GF outputs.
For this step a separate software protocol that captures 120-msec sweeps can be used to collect the data.
12. Finally, determine the following frequency by giving 10 trains of 10 stimuli at 100 Hz, with an intermittence of ~2 sec between the trains. Calculate the percentage of the total responses. Perform the same assay for trains of stimuli given at 200 Hz and 300 Hz.
13. Compare the TTM and DLM response latencies as well as the following frequencies at 100, 200, and 300 Hz between wild-type and mutant flies.

TROUBLESHOOTING

Problem (Steps 8 and 10): The recording electrodes are sliding on the cuticle and are unable to pierce it to impale the correct muscle.

Solution: The more perpendicular the electrode is to the cuticle, the easier it is for the electrode to get through the cuticle. Possible changes to make the electrode more perpendicular to the cuticle are to move the electrode to a slightly different location within the target area, change the angle of the micromanipulator, try for the muscle on the contralateral side, or remount the fly in a differently angled position.

Problem (Steps 8 and 10): The recording electrodes are indenting the cuticle or the recording electrodes are bending without piercing the cuticle.

Solution: Confirm that the electrode is not broken and has the appropriate shape. The tip of your electrode should have the approximate shape and size similar to the posterior supra-alar setae (Fig. 3B). If the electrode is not broken and has the appropriate shape, try gently tapping on the back of the forward-moving knob of the micromanipulator (once there is slight indentation) to encourage penetration through the cuticle.

Problem (Steps 7, 9, and 10): There is no stimulation artifact and no response.

Solution: Check whether all equipment is turned on. Double-check whether the fly is responding on stimulation (Step 7). If it does not, there is something wrong with your stimulation (check stimulation electrodes, ground and stimulator settings, etc.). If the fly does respond, then there is something wrong with your recording (check recording electrodes and amplifier settings).

Problem: The muscle response has an unusual shape with multiple peaks.

Solution: The microelectrode is not recording from a single muscle cell. This can occur in recordings from either muscle but is more common in TTM recordings, because this muscle is composed of many small fibers and maintaining the position of the electrode after several muscle contractions is problematic. An unusual shaped or multi-peaked response trace does not affect the data, because response latencies and followings will still be preserved.

Problem: There is a very large stimulation artifact obscuring the muscle response and/or recordings of multiple stimuli are drifting on the recording monitor.

Solution: Consider the following.

1. Confirm that the ground electrode is properly in the fly.
2. Double-check the voltage and duration of the stimuli given.
3. Also, when the hemolymph dries up around the ground wire it results in a loss of conductance. This can be prevented and restored with a small drop of GFS saline on the fly where the ground electrode enters the abdomen.

Problem: There are long latencies or no responses in wild-type flies.

Solution: Consider the following.

1. Double-check whether the electrode is in the correct target area for the appropriate muscle.
2. The electrode might have pierced through the correct muscle. Both muscles are just underneath the cuticle. The cuticle is approximately no thicker than two to three times the thickness of a posterior supra-alar setae at its thickest visible point (Fig. 3B).
3. Stimulation is below threshold. Try increasing the voltage (duration).
4. If CO₂ was used to anesthetize the fly, either leave the fly to recover from CO₂ longer before testing or anesthetize flies using ice.
5. The wild-type fly may be a mutant.

Problem: Very short latencies are obtained for both TTM (<0.7 msec) and DLM (<1 msec).

Solution: This occurs if the ventral nerve cord, and thus the TTMn and DLMn motorneurons, are being activated directly. Check the position of the stimulating electrodes and replace them in the brain if necessary.

DISCUSSION

In wild-type flies average response latencies to a single stimulus are in the range $0.8 \text{ msec} \pm 0.1 \text{ msec}$ for the GF-TTM pathway and $1.4 \text{ msec} \pm 0.3 \text{ msec}$ for the GF-DLM pathway, depending on genotype and genetic background. Similarly, with respect to following frequencies the GF-TTM path is able to follow 10 stimuli 1:1 up to 300 Hz and the GF-DLM pathway is able to follow 10 stimuli up to 100 Hz, but variability between individual flies of different genotypes and genetic background has been observed. Hence, it is important to choose carefully the appropriate control flies when analyzing the electrophysiological phenotypes of mutants or targeted disruptions in the GFS. Two classic mutants that do affect the function of the GFS dramatically are *shakB*² and *bendless* (Thomas and Wyman 1984; Blagburn et al. 1999; Allen and Murphey 2007; Phelan et al. 2008; Uthaman et al. 2008). In *shakB*² flies, the GF-TTMn synapse lacks the gap junctions, but the chemical component is still present. The average response latency for the TTM in these flies is consistently increased to an average of 1.5 msec and it is not able to follow stimuli given at either 100, 200, or 300 Hz because of the weak labile nature of the resultant GF-TTMn synapse. In addition, no responses are obtained from the DLM when the GF is stimulated in the brain. Proof that the lack of responses is not due to a defect at the NMJ comes from the ability to record responses from the DLM muscle when the motorneurons are stimulated directly by stimulation electrodes placed in the thorax (Thomas and Wyman 1984).

In contrast, in *bendless* flies the GF-DLM pathway remains unaffected when compared to wild-type control flies. However, the GF-TTM connection is consistently increased to an average of >2 msec and is not able to follow stimuli given at either 100, 200, or 300 Hz.

The reason that these indirect electrophysiological tests of these central synapses of the GFS are successful is that the NMJs at both TTM and the DLMs are large and extensive with many synaptic boutons. They rarely fail; the motorneurons can be stimulated directly at frequencies up to 500 Hz and the muscles will still show 1:1 responses to stimuli (MJ Allen and TA Godenschwege, unpubl.). Thus any effects seen on transmission through the pathways from the GF can be attributed to cen-

tral synaptic defects. If defects are seen when testing it is always prudent to stimulate the motoneurons directly to confirm that the NMJs are functioning correctly in at least a few flies of the same genotype, because some mutants do affect the adult NMJ (Huang et al. 2006).

RECIPE

CAUTION: See Appendix for proper handling of materials marked with <!.>. Recipes for reagents marked with <R> are included in this list.

GFS Saline

| | |
|----------------------------------|---------|
| NaCl | 101 mM |
| CaCl ₂ <!.> | 1 mM |
| MgCl ₂ <!.> | 4 mM |
| KCl <!.> | 3 mM |
| Glucose | 5 mM |
| NaH ₂ PO ₄ | 1.25 mM |
| NaHCO ₃ | 20.7 mM |

Adjust the pH to 7.2. From Gu and O'Dowd 2006.

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Index

A

- 7-AAD (7-aminoactinomycin-D), 62
 Abrupt, 77
 Acetoxymethyl ester (AM) forms of Ca²⁺ indicators, 318, 320
actin5C promoter, 64, 65f
 Action potential
 as all-or-none event, 279
 ion channels and, 279–281
 variation between neurons, 279
 Activator protein 1 (AP-1: Fos/Jun), 382–383, 383t
 AD/DA interface board, 185
 Agar plates for embryo collection cages, 154
 Aggression, 457–465
 costs of, 459
 fight arena design, 458–459
 history of study, 457–458
 observing and analyzing behavior, 459–460
 overview, 457–458
 protocol: scoring and analyzing aggression, 461–464
 sex-specific aggressive patterns, 458
Alrm-Gal4, 58
 7-aminoactinomycin-D (7-AAD), 62
 4-aminopyridine, 281
 Amira, 80
 Amplifier, in electrophysiology rig, 184–185
 Andrews, Larry, 426
 Anesthetization device, 363, 363f
 AnfGFP, 346, 349f, 350f, 359
 ANP (atrial natriuretic peptide), 358t
 Antennal lobe, 141, 142
 Antennal lobe projection neuron, recordings from, 298f
 Antennal mechanosensory and motor center (AMMC), 238, 239
 Antennal nerve, recording sound-evoked potentials from, 239–243
 Antibody detection
 fluorescent staining, 68–69
 histochemical staining, 69
 in whole-mount embryos, 68–69
 Antibody staining of embryos
 protocol, 43–45
 surface proteins, 47–48
 Anti-connectin, 41
 Antidigoxigenin antibody, 29–32
 Antifade mounting medium, 70
 Anti-FasII, 39, 41, 42
 Anti-Prospero antibody, 58
 Anti-Repo antibody, 57, 58f
 in larvae versus adult flies, 408
 mutant screen, 408
 in natural versus artificial environment, 407–408
 courtship, 467–473, 475–481
 driving forces of, 407
 feeding behavior of larvae, 505–515
 odor–taste learning in larvae, 443–453
 olfactory conditioning, aversive and appetitive, 429–440
 sleep and circadian behavior monitoring, 483–504
 visual learning and perception, 411–426
bendless mutant, 222
 Benzer, Seymour, 407, 429
 Bernstein, Julius, 175
 Binning, 349, 349f
 Biocytin, 309
 Biorad Writer, 152–153
 Bipolar dendrite (bd) neurons, 76
 Birth order of cells, MARCM study of, 144
 Block solution recipe, 19
 Blood–brain barrier (BBB), formation by subperineurial glia, 61–62
 Bloomington *Drosophila* Stock Center, MARCM flies available from, 131t
 BMP family of proteins, 382
 Body-wall muscles
 anatomy and innervation, 94–95
 dissection of the larval, 97–100, 97f, 98f
 immunocytochemical staining of larval, 101–102
 use for studying synaptic transmission, 183–184, 193–199
 Bouin's fixative, nonalcoholic, 119
 Boutons
 budding and outgrowth, 96
 classes of, 95–96, 356
 focal recording of synaptic currents from single boutons at the larval NMJ, 204–205
 ghost boutons, 96, 113
 number, changes in, 356
 type I
 type I big (Ib), 95
 type I small (Is), 95
 type II, 95, 96
 type III, 95, 96
 BP102, 39, 40, 40f
 Brain
 blood–brain barrier (BBB), formation by subperineurial glia, 61–62
 dissection of larval, 162
- Anti-Wrapper, 39
 AP-1 (activator protein 1), 382–383, 383t
 AP2, 181, 183
 AP180, 183
 Appetitive larval visual memory, 414–415
 Appetitive olfactory conditioning, 436–440
 Apterous-Gal4, 39, 40f, 41
 Arrestin, 228
 Asense (*Ase*), 6–7, 6f, 7t
 Associative learning, courtship conditioning as form of, 475
 Astrocyte-like glia, 60f, 61
 Astrocytes
 in vivo versus in vitro morphology and function, 54
 Asymmetric cell division, molecular markers and, 6
 Atrial natriuretic peptide (ANP), 358t
 Atypical protein kinase C (aPKC) gene/protein, 7–8, 8f, 8t, 380t, 381
 Aurora A kinase (*AurA*), 7
 Aversive olfactory conditioning, 430–435
 Aversive phototaxis suppression (APS), 416–417, 417f
awd, 183
 Axoclamp 2B, 186
 Axon guidance in embryonic CNS
 commissure selection, 39–40
 lateral position selection, 40–41
 midline crossing, 38–39
 motor axon guidance, 41–42
 overview, 37–38, 38f
 protocol
 antibody staining of embryos, 43–45
 live dissection and surface labeling of proteins in *Drosophila* embryos, 46–49
 Axon pathfinding, glial cells and, 62
- ## B
- Bacterial artificial chromosome (BAC), 396
 Bath solution, 234
Bazooka (*baz*) gene/protein, 7, 8t, 380t, 381
 BBB (blood–brain barrier), formation by subperineurial glia, 61–62
 Beadle-Ephrussi ringer solution, 272
 Behavior
 aggression, 457–465
 behavioral studies, overview of, 407–409
 end points, quantification of, 408
 ethogram use, 408
 genetic background issues, 408
 index, scoring behavior as, 408
 in larger insects, 407

526 / Index

- Brain (*continued*)
 multicolor fluorescence in situ hybridization
 in larval, 16–21
 number of neurons in, 297
 whole-cell patch-clamp recording of in vivo
 brain, 297–314
- Brain tumor (Brat), 7–8, 8t
- BrdU (5-bromo-2'-deoxyuridine), 9
- Bridge balance, 188, 190–191, 190f, 192,
 194–195, 195f
- Bruchpilot, 152, 358–359, 358t
- BTV Pro software, 440
- C**
- Ca²⁺. *See* Calcium (Ca²⁺)
- Ca²⁺-ATPase, 316, 317f
- cacophony* gene, 281, 380t, 381
- [Ca²⁺]-dependent short-term synaptic plasticity,
 197, 198f
- Caffeine, effect on sleep duration, 486
- Ca²⁺-free saline, 117
- Calcium (Ca²⁺)
 flow through motor nerve terminal, 317f
 signal transduction, 380–381, 380t
- Calcium channel cacophony, 358t
- Calcium crimson, 318
- Calcium (Ca²⁺) current, 281–282
- Calcium imaging, 315–341
 experimental design, 318–322
 amplitude, 319–320
 location, 320–321
 time course, 322
 history of, 318, 318f
 imaging equipment options, 338–339
 protocols
 direct injection of Ca²⁺ indicators,
 330–332, 331f
 forward-filling of dextran-conjugated
 Ca²⁺ indicators, 326–329, 328f
 imaging and analysis of nonratiometric
 Ca²⁺ indicators, 333–337, 335f
 topical application of Ca²⁺ indicators,
 323–325, 324f
 troubleshooting, 337–338
 anoxia, 337–338
 electrocution, 337
 fixatives, 337
 photodestruction, 337
- Calcium (Ca²⁺) indicators, 316
 acetoxymethyl ester forms of, 318
 changes in fluorescence in response to action
 potentials, 320f
 genetically encoded (GRCIs), 316, 318–321
 protocols
 direct injection of Ca²⁺ indicators,
 330–332, 331f
 forward-filling of dextran-conjugated
 Ca²⁺ indicators, 326–329, 328f
 imaging and analysis of nonratiometric
 Ca²⁺ indicators, 333–337, 335f
 topical application of Ca²⁺ indicators,
 323–325, 324f
 selection considerations
 amplitude, 319–320
 location, 320–321
 time course, 322
- Calcium (Ca²⁺) ion channel
 anatomy of, 278–279, 278f
 blocker, 282
 description of, 281–282
 voltage-gated, 178, 316
- Calcium (Ca²⁺) signaling, 315–316
- Calcium/sodium (Ca²⁺/Na⁺) exchanger, 316,
 317f
- CALI (chromophore-assisted light
 inactivation), 394
- Camera
 back-thinned, 345
 charge-coupled device (CCD), 345, 352
 EMCCD (electron-multiplying charge-
 coupled device), 339, 345
 for fluorescence microscopy, 345
- Camgaroo-2 Ca²⁺ indicator, 321
- CaMKII, 380t, 381
- cAMP (cyclic AMP), 380, 380t
- cAMP response element binding (CREB)
 protein, 383–384, 383t
- CAMs (cell adhesion molecules), 381–382, 382t
- Capacitance
 description of, 172
 in electronic circuit, 174
 equation for, 173
- Capacitance compensation, 188, 189, 189f
- Capacitor
 cell membrane as, 172
 in electronic circuit, 172, 173–174
- Carbamazepine, for sleep deprivation, 488
- Carbonate buffer recipe, 19
- Castor (Cas), sequential activation of, 24
- CBo (osmotically adjusted cacodylate buffer)
 0.1 M, 117
 0.2 M, 118
- Ceiling effect, 179
- Cell adhesion molecules (CAMs), 381–382, 382t
- Cell-fate determination in the embryonic
 central nervous system, 23–33
 molecular markers, 26t–27t
 overview, 23
 protocol: whole-mount embryo fluorescence
 in situ hybridization and antibody
 staining, 29–32
 ventral nerve cord, organization and
 development of embryonic, 23–28
- Cell-fate markers in larval brain neuroblasts,
 6–7, 6f, 7t
- Cell-fate specification, of glial cells in the
 embryonic nervous system, 57–59
- Cell membrane
 resting membrane potential, 175–180
 selective permeability of, 175
 separation of charge across, 177
- Cell migration, of glial cells in the embryonic
 nervous system, 59
- Cell polarity, markers of larval brain
 neuroblasts, 7–9, 8f, 8t
- Channelrhodopsin-2 (ChR2), 378
- Charge, 172
- Charge-coupled device (CCD) camera, 345, 352
- Charybdotoxin, 281
- Chemosensation, 247–276
 coding principles, 253–254
 gustatory system, 253–254
 olfactory system, 253
 electrophysiological recordings from sensilla,
 251–252
 gustatory system, 252
 olfactory system, 251–252
 molecular biology of, 250–251
 gustatory system, 251
 olfactory system, 250–251
 organ anatomy, 248–250, 249f
 gustatory system, 249–250
 olfactory system, 248
 overview, 247–248
 protocols
- recording from olfactory sensilla,
 255–264, 257f, 259f, 260f, 264f
 recording from taste sensilla, 265–272,
 267f, 268f, 271f
- Chromophore-assisted light inactivation
 (CALI), 394
- Circadian rhythms
 light entrainment, 483–484
 locomotor activity assay, 485–486
 locomotor activity profiles, 484f, 485–486
 overview, 483–485
 protocols
 activity monitoring with the DAM system,
 489–491
 processing data, 492–498
- Circuit, resistor-capacitor (RC), 172, 173–174
- cis*-vaccenyl acetate (cVA), 476
- Ck/MyoVIA motor protein, 238
- Clampex program, 185
- Clampfit, 191, 198
- Clathrin, 181
- Clathrin heavy chain (chc), 394–395, 403
- Clathrin light chain (clc), 394–395, 396, 403
- ClockLab, 485, 492–494
- CO₂ for anesthesia, 469
- Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory (CSHL), 167,
 184
- Colors, conditioning to, 418–420, 418f
- comatose*, 183
- Comm, 39
- commis sureless* (*comm*) gene, 39
- Commissure selection, 39–40
- Complexin, 183
- Compound eye, 225–226
- Conditioning
 to colors, 418–420, 418f
 courtship
 assay for courtship suppression, 477–481
 description of, 475–476
 olfactory, 429–440
 appetitive conditioning, 436–440
 aversive conditioning, 430–435
- Conductance, 172
- Conductor, extracellular and intracellular fluids
 as, 172
- Confocal laser-scanning microscope (CLSM)
 for calcium imaging experiments, 339
 photobleaching, 352
- Confocal microscopy
 image registration, 152–154
 imaging of dissected whole brains, 150
 in vivo imaging of *Drosophila* larvae,
 364–368
- Cortex-associated glia, 58f, 60f, 61
- Counting Macro, 485
 processing circadian data with, 494–498
 processing sleep data with, 499–504
 troubleshooting, 498
- Courtship, 467–473, 475–481
 controls for study of, 468
 courtship defects, analysis of, 470–471
 courtship index, 471
 mating frequency estimation, 470
 as measure of general fitness, 467–468
 protocol: mating deficiency analysis, 469–471
 statistical analysis of data, 471
- Courtship conditioning
 assay for courtship suppression, 477–481
 analysis, 480
 preparation of adult flies, 477–478
 preparation of mated female trainers, 478
 training and test process, 479–480, 479f
 description of, 475–476

- Courtship defect, 469, 470–471
 Courtship index, 471
 Courtship-inhibitory pheromone, 476
 Courtship learning assays, 476t
 Courtship songs, 237–238
 Courtship suppression, 476, 477–480
 Crab (conditioning chamber), 418, 418f
 CREB (cAMP response element binding) protein, 383–384, 383t
 Cre recombinase, 399
 Current
 Ca²⁺, 281–282
 description of, 172
 K⁺, 281, 386–390, 387f
 Na⁺, 279–280, 280f
 in resistor-capacitor (RC) circuit, 173–174
 two-electrode voltage clamp (TEVC) studies, 386–390, 387f
 Current clamp, description of, 282, 282f, 283
 Current subtraction, 389
 Cut, 77
 Cyclic AMP (cAMP), 380, 380t
 Cytochrome c oxidase, 358t
- D**
- DAB (diaminobenzidine) histochemical method of antibody detection, 68–69
daughters against dpp (*Dad*), 383t
 Deadpan (Dpn), 6–7, 6f, 7t, 9
 Delamination of neuroblasts, 23–24
 Dendrite morphogenesis, 75–90
 methods of study, 78–79
 molecular control of, 77–78
 dendrite branching diversity, 77
 dendrite remodeling, 78
 self-avoidance, 78
 specifying dendritic targeting, 77–78
 tiling, 78
 overview, 75–76
 protocol
 analysis of dendrite development in embryos, 81–84
 generation and immunostaining of MARCM clones, 85–89
 quantification of, 79–80, 79t, 80f
 system studied, 76–77
 motor neurons, 77
 multidendritic neurons of larval peripheral nervous system, 76
 olfactory projection neurons, 76
 Dendritic arborization (da) neurons, 76
 Dendritic targeting, specification of, 77–78
 Depolarization, 279
derailed (*drl*) gene, 39
 Dextran-conjugated Ca²⁺ indicators, 321, 326–329, 328f
 DGRC (*Drosophila* Genetic Resource Center), 136
 Diaminobenzidine (DAB) histochemical method of antibody detection, 68–69
 Dicer, 63
 Dickinson, Michael, 423
 Digidata data acquisition system, 186
 Digoxigenin-labeled antisense RNA probe, preparation of, 30–31
 Discs large (Dlg), 8, 8t, 358t, 359–360
 Dissection
 for electrophysiological recordings from neurons
 first- and second-instar larvae, 284–287, 286f
 third-instar larvae, 288–290
 of head cuticle and sheath of living flies for whole-cell patch-clamp recording, 300–304, 301f, 303f
 for immunochemistry and imaging of whole brains, 148–149
 larval body-wall muscles, 97–100, 97f, 98f
 of larval brains, 162
 of live embryos, 46–47
 DLiprin- α , 358, 358t
Dmca1A gene, 281
Dmca1D gene, 281
 Dopamine, effect on courtship, 472
 Dorsal longitudinal motoneurons (DLMs), 215–217, 216f, 222
 Dorsal longitudinal muscle (DLM), 215–222, 216f, 219f, 220f
 Driving force, 179–180
 Drl, 39
Drosophila Activity Monitoring (DAM) system (TriKinetics), 483–504, 485f
Drosophila external calcium saline, 293
Drosophila external potassium saline, 294
Drosophila external saline, 293
Drosophila external sodium saline, 294
Drosophila Genetic Resource Center (DGRC), 136
Drosophila insulin-like peptides (dILPs), 506
Drosophila internal cesium patch solution, 294
Drosophila internal potassium patch solution, 294
Drosophila Neurobiology Summer Course, 167
Drosophila ringer's solution, 234
 Dscam (Down syndrome cell adhesion molecule) transmembrane receptors, 78
 dsRNAi-mediated knock-down, 64
dunce gene, 380, 380t
 Dynactin, 382
 Dynamin, 181, 183
- E**
- eag*, 167, 376t, 377, 378
eag, Sh double mutant, 184
 Eagle, 57
 Eagle-Gal4, 39, 40, 40f
Eagle-Kinesin-LacZ reporter, 57
 Ecdysone, dendrite remodeling and, 78
 EdU
 detection of, 15
 labeling of mitotic neuroblasts, 9, 10f, 14–15
 EGFR (epidermal growth factor receptor), 159
 EJP (excitatory junction potential), 179, 184
 EKO (Electrical Knockout), 377, 386, 389
 Elav (Embryonic lethal, abnormal vision), 6
 Electrodes
 fabrication of, 206–210
 focal electrodes, 208–209, 209f
 microelectrodes, 206–207
 suction electrode, 207–208, 207f
 troubleshooting, 209–210
 tungsten electrode sharpener, 256–257, 257f
 Electromotive force, ionic (EMF_{ion}), 179–180
 Electronic circuit, 172, 173–174
 Electron microscopy of larval NMJs, 115–117
 Electron-multiplying charge-coupled device (EMCCD) camera, 345
 Electrophysiological recordings
 electroretinograms (ERGs), 225–229, 229f
 from neurons in embryos and larvae, 277–295
 protocol: dissection of first- and second-instar larvae, 284–287, 286f
 protocol: dissection of third-instar larvae, 288–290
 protocol: whole-cell patch recording, 291–293
 from olfactory sensilla, 251–252, 255–264, 257f, 259f, 260f, 264f
 from taste sensilla, 252, 265–272, 267f, 268f, 271f
 Electrophysiological rig
 for recording from olfactory sensilla, 258–259, 259f
 for recording from taste sensilla, 267–268, 267f
 for whole-cell in vivo patch-clamp recordings, 307f, 308
 Electrophysiology
 definition of, 172
 electrophysiological recording from olfactory sensilla, 251–252, 255–264, 257f, 259f, 260f, 264f
 electrophysiological recording from taste sensilla, 252, 265–272, 267f, 268f, 271f
 electrophysiological recordings from neurons in embryos and larvae, 277–295
 electrophysiological recordings from the *Drosophila* giant fiber system, 215–224
 history of study in *Drosophila*, 167–168
 issue of concern, 283
 overview, 171–175
 electrical terminology, 172
 resistor-capacitor (RC) circuit, 172, 173–174
 resting membrane potential, 175–180
 synaptic electrophysiology of the *Drosophila* neuromuscular junction, 171–214
 tethered flight experiments, 423–426, 424f, 426f
 visual physiology in adult eye, 225–235
 Electroretinograms (ERGs), 225–229, 229f
 Embryonic fillets
 preparation of early (before cuticle deposition), 103–106, 104f, 105f
 preparation of late, 107–109, 108f, 109f
 Embryos
 axon guidance in embryonic CNS, 37–49
 cell-fate determination in central nervous system, 23–33
 collection of, 30, 44, 47, 81–82, 85–86
 dissection, 86–87, 87f
 dissection of live, 46–47
 fixation of, 30, 44
 glial cell development and function in CNS, 55–63
 heat shock of, 86, 88
 processing for live imaging, 82
 protocol
 analysis of dendrite development, 81–84
 whole-mount embryo fluorescent and histochemical antibody staining, 68–69
 Embryo wash (10x stock solution), 89
 EMCCD (electron-multiplying charge-coupled device) camera, 339, 345
 Endophilin, 183
 Engulfment of neuronal cell corpses, by glia, 62
 Ensheathing glia, 59, 60f, 61
 EphA4, 41–42
 Epidermal growth factor receptor (EGFR), 159
 Epifluorescence microscope, wide-field, 343–344
 Equilibrium potential, 177–178
 ERGs (electroretinograms), 225–229, 229f

528 / Index

ether-a-gogo (*eag*) gene, 167, 376t, 377, 378
 Ethogram, 408
 Even-skipped (*Eve*), 25
 Excitatory junction potential (EJP), 179, 184, 199, 200
 Excitatory postsynaptic potential (EPSP), 180, 180f
 External saline, 312
 Extracellular fluid, ions in, 175
 Extracellular recordings
 description, 167–168
 electroretinograms (ERGs), 225–229, 229f
 Eyes
 anatomy, 225
 compound, 225–226
 retina, 157–158
 visual learning and perception studies, 411–426
 visual physiology in adult eye, 225–235

F

FALI. *See* Fluorescein-assisted light inactivation (FALI)
 Fasciclin II (*Fas2*), 358t, 381–382, 382t
 Fasciclin III (*FasIII*), 41–42
 FLAsH (4',5'-bis(1,3,2-dithioarsolan-2-yl)fluorescein), 393, 402–403. *See also* FLAsH-FALI
 FLAsH-FALI
 future applications, 403
 inactivation of proteins using, 393–406
 overview, 393–395
 protocols
 construction and expression of tetracycline-tagged proteins, 396–399, 398f
 FLAsH-FALI at third-instar neuromuscular junction, 400–402
 reactive oxygen species (ROS), 394, 403
 Feeding behavior in larvae, 505–515
 overview, 505–506
 protocols
 analysis of feeding on liquid food, 509–510, 509f
 analysis of feeding on solid food, 511–512
 analysis of feeding response to quinine-adulterated food, 513–515
 preparing larvae for feeding assays, 507–508
 quantification of feeding rate, 506
 response to soft and hard sugar media, 506, 506f
 Fight arena, 458–459, 461–464
 Fiji, 79, 80
 Fix solution recipe, 20
 “Flip-out” techniques
 flip-out *Gal80* constructs, 65–66
 flip-out *Gal4* drivers, 64, 65f
 hs-flp use, 65, 66, 67
 UAS Flip-out constructs, 64, 65f
 Flippase (FLP), 64
 cell type-specific, 144
 heat shock (hs-FLP), 65, 66, 128, 130–133, 144
 in MARCM analysis, 126–128, 127f, 130–135, 143–144
 Flippase recognition target (FRT) sites, 64, 126, 127f, 143–144
 Fluo-4 Ca²⁺ indicator, 318
 Fluo-4 dextran Ca²⁺ indicators, 319, 322
 Fluorescein-assisted light inactivation (FALI)
 description of, 394
 FLAsH-FALI, 393–406

Fluorescence microscopy
 FLAsH-FALI at third-instar neuromuscular junction, 400–402
 imaging neuropeptide release and signaling in neuromuscular junction with green fluorescent protein, 343–354
 principles and equipment, 343–347
 digital camera, 345
 FRET experiments, 345, 346f
 GFP indicators in flies, 346–347
 high-numerical-aperture objective, 344, 344f, 345f
 wide-field epifluorescence microscope, 343–344
 protocol: adjusting imaging setup, 348–352
 Fluorescence recovery after photobleaching (FRAP), 352, 360
 Fluorescence resonance energy transfer (FRET), 345, 346f, 347
 Fluorescent antibody staining, of whole mounted embryos, 68–69
 FlyTrap, 360
 FM1-43 labeling of larval NMJs, 110
 Focal electrodes, manufacture of, 208–209, 209f
 Food media, 472, 481
 Fos, 382–383
 FRAP (fluorescence recovery after photobleaching), 352, 360
 Frazzled (*Fra*), 39
 FRET (fluorescence resonance energy transfer), 345, 346f, 347
 FRT (flippase recognition target), 64, 126, 127f, 143–144
 Fura-2 Ca²⁺ indicator, 316, 318, 319, 322
 Fura-FF Ca²⁺ indicator, 322
 Furry (*Fry*), 78

G

Gain of function gene, 128
Gal80
 flip-out constructs, 65, 65f
 in MARCM analysis, 126–128, 127f, 130–135, 143–144
Gal4 driver
 for dendrite morphogenesis study, 83–84, 84t
 FLAsH-FALI, 394, 395f
 Flip-out constructs, 64, 65f
 GeneSwitch, 377, 379
 in glial cell studies, 55–57, 63–66
 in MARCM analysis, 126–128, 127f, 130–135, 143–144
Gal4-UAS, 143–144
 Ganglion mother cells (GMCs)
 generation of from neuroblasts, 24
 molecular markers of, 6–7, 7t
Gcm, 55
 GeneSwitch *Gal4* drivers, 377, 379
 GFP. *See* Green fluorescent protein (GFP)
 GFP protein trap database (FlyTrap), 360
 GFS saline, 223
 Ghost buttons, 96, 113
 Giant fiber system (GFS)
 description of, 215–216, 216f
 stimulating and recording from
 overview, 216
 protocol, 218–223
 tests of synaptic function
 following at high frequencies, 217
 refractory period, 217
 response latency, 217, 222
glass bottom boat (*gbb*), 382, 383t
 Glial cells
 classes of
 astrocyte-like, 60f, 61
 cortex-associated, 58f, 60f, 61
 ensheathing, 59, 60f, 61
 longitudinal, 58, 58f
 neuropil-associated, 61
 perineurial, 60–61, 60f
 peripheral, 58–59, 58f
 subperineurial, 59, 60f, 61–62
 surface-associated, 58f, 60–61
 wrapping, 59, 60f, 61
 embryonic CNS, glial development and function, 55–63
 cell-fate-specification, 57–59
 longitudinal glia, 58, 58f
 NGB6-4A glia, 57
 NGB6-4T glia, 57
 peripheral glia, 58–59, 58f
 cell migration, 59
 cell morphogenesis and functions, visualizing, 59–63
 axon pathfinding, 62
 blood–brain barrier formation by subperineurial glial, 61–62
 glial engulfment of neuronal cell corpses, 62
 trophic support of neurons, 62–63
 markers, 55–59
 mosaic analysis, 56–57
 functions of, 53–54
 generation of from neuroblasts, 24
 larvae and adults, glial development and function in, 63–67
 cell type-specific dsRNAi for gene function and analysis, 63–64
 genetic mosaic approaches, 64–67
 “flip-out” techniques, 64–66, 65f
 MARCM analysis, 66–67
 molecular markers, 63
 mammalian compared to *Drosophila*, 54
 markers for
 midline, 39
 table of, 27t
 overview of, 53–55
 protocol: whole-mount embryo fluorescent and histochemical antibody staining, 68–69
 tools in *Drosophila* glial research, 56t
 in vitro versus in vivo morphology and function, 54
glial cells missing (*gcm*), 55
 Glomeruli, 141
 Glutamate, 94–95, 472
 Glutamate receptors, 96, 178, 179, 320, 358t, 359
 Glutamine synthetase 2 (*GS2*), 58
 Goat serum, normal, 165
 Goldman–Hodgkin–Katz (GHK) equation, 177–178
 G-protein subunit α , 7, 8t, 9
 Grain, 25
 Grape juice agar, 89
 Green fluorescent protein (GFP)
 for glial cell studies, 59, 62
 imaging neuropeptide release and signaling in neuromuscular junction, 343–354
 Growth factors, 382, 383t
 Gustatory pathways, 444, 445f, 446
 Gustatory receptor, 250–251, 272
 Gustatory system
 chemosensation overview, 247–248
 coding principles, 253–254
 electrophysiological recording from taste sensilla, 252, 265–272, 267f, 268f, 271f

- side-wall-recording, 252
tip-recording method, 252
molecular biology of, 251
organ anatomy, 249–250
- ## H
- Habituation, 421, 476, 480
hamlet (ham) gene, 77
Harris, William A., 429
Hb9, 25
Heat shock flippase (hs-FLP), 65, 66, 67, 128, 130–133, 144
Heat shock of embryos, 86, 88
Heat shock of larvae to induce mitotic recombination, 146
Heat-shock promoter, 144
Hedgehog, 159
HFM1-43 dye solution, 118
High-potassium HL-3 saline, 118
Histochemical antibody staining, using diaminobenzidine (DAB), 69
HL-3 saline, 118, 210
 high-potassium, 118
HL3 supplemented with glutamate, 353
hs-flp (heat shock flippase), 65, 66, 67, 128, 130–133, 144
Hugin, 506
Hunchback (Hb), sequential activation of, 24
Hybridization buffer, 20
RNase-free, 32
Hydrolysis stop buffer recipe, 20
Hydroxyzine, effect on sleep duration, 486
hyperkinetic gene, 376t
Hyperpolarization, 279, 280
- ## I
- IFT (intraflagellar transport) proteins, 238
Image analysis software, 79–80
ImageJ, 79
 Biorad Writer plug-in, 152–153
 fluorescence microscopy and, 352–353
 image registration, 152–154
 Nrrd Reader plug-in, 152–153
 quantitative analysis of NMJ morphology, 369–370
Imaging
 image registration, 152–154
 linear transformation, 152
 nonlinear (warping) transformation, 152
 parameter choice for confocal microscopy, 150
 template brain, construction of, 152
Imaging chamber, building for in vivo imaging, 361–363, 361f
Imaris, 369
Immunochemistry
 staining of larval body-wall muscles, 101–102
 whole brain dissection and imaging, 148–150
Immunocytochemical staining of larval body-wall muscles, 101–102
Immunofluorescent antibody staining of larval tissues, 11–13
Innate behavior, 457
Inscuteable (Insc), 9
In situ hybridization protocols
 multicolor fluorescence in situ hybridization in larval brains, 16–21
 whole-mount embryo fluorescence in situ hybridization and antibody staining, 29–32
Intermediate neural progenitors (INPs), molecular markers of, 6–7, 7t
- Internal saline, 313
Interneurons
 generation of from neuroblasts, 24
 markers, 26t–27t, 28
Intersegmental nerve, 25
Intracellular fluid, ions in, 175
Intracellular recording
 synaptic electrophysiology studies, 184, 188–199
Intracellular solution, 234
Intraflagellar transport (IFT) proteins, 238
In vivo imaging
 building imaging chamber for, 361–363, 361f
 of larval NMJ to study synapse assembly, 355–373
Ion channels
 anatomy of, 278–279, 278f
 Ca²⁺ ion channel, 278–279, 278f, 281–282, 316
 K⁺ ion channel, 278–279, 278f, 280–281
 leakage channels, 175
 ligand-gated, 178, 251
 membrane permeability and, 178
 methods for manipulating membrane excitability, 376–378, 376t
 mutations, 376–377, 376t
 Na⁺ ion channel, 278–280, 278f
 TRP superfamily of, 226
 voltage-gated, 178, 179, 278–282, 278f
Ionic electromotive force (EMF_{ion}), 179–180
Ionotropic receptor, 250–251, 253
Ions
 equilibrium potentials of individual, 177
 unequal distribution of between inside and outside of cells, 175
Islet, 25
- ## J
- JAK-STAT signaling, in optic lobe development, 159
James Franck Institute (JFI) Electronics, 425, 426
Jans' saline, 119
Jefferis Laboratory wiki, 153
JMP, 80
Johnston's organ
 fine structure of, 238
 mechanotransduction, 238
 overview, 237–238
 protocol: recording sound-evoked potentials from the *Drosophila* antennal nerve, 239–243
 acoustic stimulation, 241–242
 data acquisition and analysis, 242
 electrode preparation and insertion, 240, 241f
 fly preparation, 240
 troubleshooting, 242–243
Juice plates, 48–49
Jun, 382–383
Juvenile hormone (JH), dendrite remodeling and, 78
Juvenile hormone esterase, 472
- ## K
- K⁺. See Potassium (K⁺)
KaleidaGraph (Synergy Software), 440
Kankel–White medium recipe, 20
Katz, Bernard, 181
K⁺ current, 281, 386–390, 387f
Kenyon cells, whole-cell patch-clamp recordings from, 208, 298f, 299
- K⁺ ion channels
 anatomy of, 278–279, 278f
 blocker, 281
 description of, 280–281
 voltage-gated, 178, 179
Knot, 77
Krüppel (Kr), sequential activation of, 24
- ## L
- LabVIEW, 425
Larvae
 body parts of, 445f
 calcium imaging at neuromuscular junction, 315–341
 chemosensory pathways of, 444, 445f, 446
 dissection of, 11–12
 electrophysiological recordings from neurons in embryos and larvae, 277–295
 feeding behavior of, 505–515
 fixation and staining, 12
 glial cell development and function in, 63
 heat shock of, 146
 mounting samples, 12–13
 neuromuscular junction (NMJ), 93–120
 odor–taste learning in, 443–453
 simplicity of neuroanatomy in, 446
 synchronization of larval populations, 9–10
 visual learning in, 414–415, 415f
 in vivo imaging of NMJ to study synapse assembly, 355–373
Larval body-wall muscles
 anatomy and innervation, 94–95
 dissection of the larval, 97–100, 97f, 98f
 immunocytochemical staining of larval, 101–102
 use for studying synaptic transmission, 183–184, 193–199
Larval brain neuroblasts
 cell-fate markers, 6–7, 6f, 7t
 cell-polarity markers, 7–9, 8f, 8t
 protocols
 EdU labeling of mitotic neuroblasts, 14–15
 immunofluorescent antibody staining of larval tissues, 11–13
 multicolor fluorescence in situ hybridization, 16–21
Larval dissection
 body-wall muscles, 97–100, 97f, 98f
 brains, 162
 for electrophysiological recordings from neurons
 first- and second-instar larvae, 284–287, 286f
 third-instar larvae, 288–290
Lateral position selection, 40–41
Lead citrate solution, 119
Leakage channels, 175
Learning, associative odor–taste, 443–453
Learning mutant, 451
Lethal giant larvae (Lgl), 7, 8f, 8t
Lethal of scute, 159
LexA/LexAOp system, 144
Ligand-gated channels, 178
Ligand-gated currents, 282–283
Light entrainment, 483
Lim1, 25, 41–42
Lim3, 25, 25f
Live yeast paste, 119
Local field potential (LFP) responses to visual stimuli, 425
Locomotor activity assay
 circadian rhythm studies, 484–486

530 / Index

- Locomotor activity assay (*continued*)
Drosophila Activity Monitoring (DAM)
 system, 483–504, 485f
 protocols
 activity monitoring with DAM
 (*Drosophila* Activity Monitoring)
 system, 489–491
 processing circadian data, 492–498
 processing sleep data, 499–504
 usefulness of, 483
 Longitudinal glia, 58, 58f
 Loss-of-function studies, 393–394
- M**
- Mab BP102, 39, 40, 40f
 MABT recipe, 20
 Mag-fluo-4 AM Ca²⁺ indicator, 320–321
 Magnesium green Ca²⁺ indicator, 318, 322
 Magnetic chambers, 97–100, 97f, 98f
 Malachite green, 394
maleless gene, 376–377, 376t, 378
 MARCM. *See* Mosaic analysis with a repressible cell marker
- Markers
 axon, 39
 for CNS neuron subsets, 26t–27t
 commissure selection, 40
 glial
 embryonic, 55–59
 postembryonic, 63
 motor neurons, 25, 26t–27t, 28, 41–42
 Mating cage for MARCM, 145–147
 Mating chamber, 468, 470
 Mating frequency, analysis of, 469, 470
 MATLAB, 425
 ClockLab program, 492–494
 Maze
 optomotor, 421–422, 422f
 T-maze, 431–433, 431f, 433f
 mEJC (miniature excitatory junction current),
 202, 202f
- Membrane excitability
 methods for manipulating, 376–378, 376t
 expression of ion channels, 376t, 377–378
 ion channel mutations, 376–377, 376t
 protocol: manipulation of membrane
 excitability by expression of modified
 Shaker constructs, 386–390, 387f
- Membrane potential. *See also* Resting
 membrane potential
 ion channels and, 279–280
 recording larval body wall muscle, 194–195
- Memory
 consolidated, 436
 courtship, 475–476, 480
 odor, 444
 olfactory, 429–440
 appetitive conditioning, 436–440
 aversive conditioning, 430–435
- MetaMorph, 80
 4-methylcyclohexanol, as odorant in olfactory
 conditioning experiments, 430–435,
 437–438
 Mettix Technology, 425, 426
 Mibefadil, 282
 Microelectrode puller, 186
 Microelectrodes, manufacture of, 206–207
 Micromanipulator, in electrophysiology rig,
 186
- Microscope
 for calcium imaging experiments, 338–339
 electron microscopy of larval NMJs, 115–117
 in electrophysiology rig, 184
 high-numerical-aperature objective, 344,
 344f
 wide-field epifluorescence, 343–344
- Midline crossing, 38–39
 Mini Analysis Program (Synaptosoft Inc.), 185
 Miranda (Mira), 6, 8, 8f, 8t
 Mito-GFP, 359
 Mitotic neuroblasts, EdU labeling of, 9, 10f,
 14–15
 Mitotic spindle, cell polarity and, 9
 Modafinil, effect on sleep, 488
 Modified Trump's universal fixative, 119
 Molecular markers. *See* Markers
moody, 61
 Mosaic, definition of, 143
 Mosaic analysis with a repressible cell marker
 (MARCM)
 applications of, 126–129
 dendrite morphogenesis study, 76, 85–89
 description of, 143–144
 fly genotypes available from Bloomington
Drosophila Stock Center, 131t
 genetic mosaic analysis by, 125–138
 glial cells, analysis in, 65f, 66–67
hs-flp use, 66
 importance of, 2–3
 mating cage for, 145–147
 mechanism of, 126, 127f
 optic lobe studies, 160
 overview, 125–126
 protocol
 generation and immunostaining of
 MARCM clones, 85–89
 generation of standard wild-type
 MARCM clones, 130–133
 genetic mosaic screens in the mushroom
 bodies, 136–138, 137f
 reverse genetics by loss-of-function
 mosaic analysis, 134–135
 reverse, 134–135
 use in embryonic CNS studies, 57
- Motor neurons
 activation by cholinergic interneurons, 28
 body-wall muscle innervation, 94–95
 bouton classes, 356
 bouton number, changes in, 356
 dendrite morphogenesis in, 77
 differentiation, 25
 electrophysiological recordings from neurons
 in embryos and larvae, 277–295
 generation of from neuroblasts, 24
 guidance of axons, 41–42
 identity regulation by temporal gene cascade,
 24
 intersegmental nerve, 25
 markers, 25, 26t–27t, 28, 41–42
 partitioning in the neuropil, 28
 segmental nerve, 25
 transcription factors, 25
 Mounting optic lobes, bridge method of, 164
 Mouth aspirator, 478f
 Multicolor fluorescence in situ hybridization in
 larval brains, 16–21
 Multidendritic neurons, dendrite
 morphogenesis in, 76
- Muscles. *See* Larval body-wall muscles
- Mushroom bodies
 MARCM analysis of lineage, 128–129,
 136–138
 odor–taste learning and, 446
 whole-cell patch-clamp recordings from
 Kenyon cells, 208, 298f, 299
- N**
- Na⁺, membrane potential and, 175, 178–180,
 180f
 Na⁺ current, 279–280, 280f
 Na⁺ ion channel
 anatomy of, 278–279, 278f
 blocker, 280
 description of, 279–280
 voltage-gated, 178
 Na⁺/K⁺ ATPase, 178
 Na⁺/K⁺ exchanger, 279
n-amylacetate, 447–453
 nc82, 152, 358
 Nernst equation, 177
 N-ethylmaleimide-sensitive factor (NSF), 181,
 182
 Netrin, 39, 78
 Neuroblasts. *See* Larval brain neuroblasts
 Neurolocida, 79, 80f
 Neuromedin U, 506
 Neuromuscular junction (NMJ), 93–120
 calcium imaging, 315–341
 electrophysiological recordings from the
Drosophila giant fiber system,
 215–224
 experimental methods for examining
 synaptic plasticity, 375–392
 glutamate receptors, 178, 179
 imaging neuropeptide release and signaling
 with green fluorescent protein,
 343–354
 intravital imaging of, 357f
 as model system, 171
 overview of studies on, 93–94
 protocols
 activity paradigm to induce NMJ growth,
 113–114
 dissection of the larval body-wall muscles,
 97–100, 97f, 98f
 electron microscopy of larval NMJs,
 115–117
 FLAsH-FALI at third-instar NMJ, 400–402
 FM1-43 labeling of larval NMJs, 110
 immunocytochemical staining of larval
 body-wall muscles, 101–102
 internalization and trafficking assay,
 111–112
 manipulation of membrane excitability by
 expression of modified Shaker
 constructs, 386–390, 387f
 preparation of early embryonic fillets
 (before cuticle deposition), 103–106,
 104f, 105f
 preparation of late embryonic fillets,
 107–109, 108f, 109f
 quantitative analysis of NMJ morphology,
 369–371
 recipes, 117–120
 in vivo imaging of *Drosophila* larvae,
 364–368
 synaptic boutons
 type I, 94–96
 type II, 95, 96
 type III, 95, 96
 synaptic electrophysiology, 171–214
 synaptic growth, examination of, 96
 ultrastructure of, 95–96
 in vivo imaging of larval NMJ to study
 synapse assembly, 355–373
- NeuronJ, 79
 Neurons. *See also* Motor neurons
 as component of electrical circuit, 277

- dendrite morphogenesis, 75–90
 glial engulfment of neuronal cell corpses, 62
 number in brain, 297
 olfactory, 76, 141–143, 248, 250–253, 263–264, 298–299
- Neuropeptide F, 458, 506
- Neuropil
 inaccessibility of, 283
 neuropil-associated glia, 61
- Neurotransmitter, synaptic transmission and, 181–186, 182f
- NGB6-4A glia, 57
- NGB6-4 glial, 57
- Nifedipine, 282
- Nkx6, 25, 25f, 41–42
- NMJ. *See* Neuromuscular junction (NMJ)
- NompA, 238
- Nonalcoholic Bouin's fixative, 119
- Normal goat serum, 165
- Notch signaling, 7
- Nrrd Reader, 152–153
- Numb (Nb), 7, 8t
- Numerical aperture, objective, 344, 344f
- O**
- Objective, high-numerical-aperture
 1-octanol, 447–453
 3-octanol, as odorant in olfactory conditioning experiments, 430–435, 437–438
- Octopamine, 95, 458
- Odorant binding protein, 250
- Odorant receptor, 250–251, 253
- Odor–taste learning, 443–453
 chemosensory pathways, 444, 445f, 446
 data analysis, 452–453, 452f
 overview, 443–446
 protocol-learning assays in larvae, 447–450
- Ohm's law, 173, 277
- Olfactory conditioning, 429–440
 appetitive conditioning, 436–440
 feeding after training, 439
 performance index, calculation of, 439
 protocol, 436–439
 reciprocal training, 438
 sucrose reward, 436
 sugar acuity (sucrose preference index), 440
- aversive conditioning, 430–435
 electric shock punishment, 430, 433–434
 odorant choice, 430
 performance index, calculation of, 435
 protocol, 430–435
 reciprocal training, 434–435
 T-maze apparatus, 431–433, 431f, 433f
 olfactory acuity, testing of, 439–440
 shock acuity assay, 440
 statistical analysis, 440
- Olfactory pathways, larval, 444, 445f
- Olfactory projection neurons, dendrite morphogenesis in, 76
- Olfactory receptor neurons, 141–143, 298–299
- Olfactory sensory neurons, 248, 250–253, 263–264
- Olfactory system
 anatomy, 141–142, 142f
 chemosensation overview, 247–248
 coding principles, 253
 development of, 142–143, 142f
 electrophysiological recording from olfactory sensilla, 251–252, 255–264, 257f, 259f, 260f, 264f
- MARCM
 overview of, 143–144, 143f
- for studying development and birth order of neurons, 144
- molecular biology of, 250–251
- organ anatomy, 248
- protocols
 generation of files with mosaic labeling, 145–147
 image registration, 152–154
 immunochemistry and imaging, 148–151
 recording from olfactory sensilla, 255–264, 257f, 259f, 260f, 264f
 in vivo recordings, 298–299
- ω -aga iva, 282
- ω -conotoxin, 282
- Ommatidia, 157–158
 anatomy of, 225
 mechanical dissociation of, 230–231
- Optic lobes
 development of, 158, 159f
 lamina, 159
 layering of, 159, 160f
 lobula, 160
 medulla, 159–160, 160f
 organization of, 158, 158f
 protocol for dissection and staining, 161–165
 dissection of adult brains, 163
 dissection of larval brains, 162
 dissection of pupal brains, 163
 fixation, 163
 mounting, 164
 recipes, 165
 staining, 163–164
- Optomotor maze, 421–422, 422f
- Optophysiology, 168
- Oregon green BAPTA-1 (OGB-1) Ca^{2+} indicators, 316, 318, 319, 320f, 328f, 330
- P**
- P(acman), 396
- PAK-kinase, 358t
- Par6, 8t, 7
- Paraformaldehyde (PFA), 90
- Paraformaldehyde (4%) fixative, 119–120
- Paraformaldehyde (4% in PB) fixative, 154
- paralytic gene, 279, 376–377, 376t
- paralytic sodium channels, 167
- Par complex, 7, 9
- par-1 gene, 380t, 381
- par-6 gene, 380t, 381
- Partner of Inscuteable (Pins), 7, 8f, 8t
- Patch-clamp recording, whole-cell
 description of, 297–299
 from larval neurons, 291–293
 photoreceptors, 232–235, 233f
 of in vivo brain, 297–314
 amplifier electronics, 311
 assessing recording quality, 310f, 311
 limitations of technique, 311–312
 overview, 297–299
 patching, 310–311
 protocol: dissection of the head cuticle and sheath of living flies, 300–304, 301f, 303f
 protocol: fabrication of pipettes, 305–306, 305f
 protocol: whole-cell in vivo patch-clamp recordings, 307–310, 307f
 value of, 298
- Patch pipette dye, 295
- PB (phosphate buffer), 154
 0.1 M phosphate buffer, 120
- PBS (phosphate-buffered saline), 21, 70, 120, 165
 10x, 33, 49, 90
- PBSBT recipe, 21
- PBST, 21, 165
- PBS-TX, 90
- PBT
 0.1 M phosphate buffer with 0.1% Triton X-100, 155
 0.1 M phosphate buffer with 0.2% Triton X-100, 120
 pH 7.4, 70
- pClamp 10.0, 185
- PDA (prolonged depolarizing afterpotential), 228, 229
- Pdma/Pdm2 (Pdm), sequential activation of, 24
- PDMN (posterior dorsal medial nerve), 215
- PEMFA, 70–71
- Perineurial glia, 58–59, 58f
- Peripheral glia, 58–59, 58f
- Peripherally synapsing interneuron (PSI), 215–217, 216f
- Pheromone, courtship and, 475–476, 480
- Phosphate-buffered saline (PBS), 120, 165
- Phosphohistone (H3), 9
- Phospholipid bilayer membrane, as capacitor in cellular circuit, 172
- Photobleaching
 description, 352
 reversible, 351–352
 in vivo imaging of larval NMJ, 359
- Photoreceptors, 157–160
 arrangement in ommatidia, 225
 electroretinograms (ERGs), 225–229
 intracellular recordings, 234
 patch-clamp analysis, 232–234, 233f
 phototransduction, 225–226
 prolonged depolarizing afterpotential, 228, 229
- Phototaxis, 412, 416–417, 417f
- piggyBac*, 136
- Pins (Partner of Inscuteable), 7, 8f, 8t
- Pipettes, fabrication for whole-cell patch-clamp recording, 305–306, 305f
- pMad, 25
- Posterior dorsal medial nerve (PDMN), 215
- Potassium (K^+)
 equilibrium potential of, 377
 membrane permeability to, 175–178
 membrane potential and, 175–180, 180f
 Na^+/K^+ ATPase, 178
- Potassium (K^+) current, 281, 386–390, 387f
- Potassium (K^+) ion channels
 anatomy of, 278–279, 278f
 blocker, 281
 description of, 280–281
 voltage-gated, 178, 179
- Primary antibodies used to label brains, 161t
- Programmed cell death, 62
- Proline- and acidic amino acid-rich proteins, 380t, 381
- Prolonged depolarizing afterpotential (PDA), 228, 229
- Prospero (Pros), 6–8, 7t
 action of, 8
 as cell-polarity marker, 7–8, 8t
- Protein kinase A, 380t, 381
- PSI (peripherally synapsing interneuron), 215–217, 216f
- PTX, 33, 49, 71
- Pulse-chase experiments, in larval brains, 9, 10f, 14–15
- Pupal eclosion rhythms, 484

532 / Index

Q

- Quantification of dendritic arbor morphology, 79–80, 79t, 80f
 Quinine-adulterated food, larval feeding response to, 513–515
 Quinine hydrochloride solution, 416–417
 Quinn, William G. “Chip,” 429

R

- Rab3, 181
 Ratiometric Ca^{2+} indicators, 320
 RC (resistor-capacitor) circuit, 172, 173–174, 188, 189f
 Reactive oxygen species (ROS), 394, 403
 Receptors. *See also* Photoreceptors
 glutamate, 96, 178, 179, 320, 358t, 359
 gustatory, 250–251, 272
 odorant, 250–251, 253
 surface labeling of proteins in embryos, 46–48
 Recipes
 agar plates (enriched with fruit juices), 117
 agar plates for embryo collection cages, 154
 antifade mounting medium, 70
 bath solution, 234
 Beadle-Ephrussi ringer solution, 272
 block solution, 19
 Ca^{2+} -free saline, 117
 carbonate buffer, 19
 CBo (osmotically adjusted cacodylate buffer)
 0.1 M, 117
 0.2 M, 118
 Drosophila external calcium saline, 293
 Drosophila external potassium saline, 294
 Drosophila external saline, 293
 Drosophila external sodium saline, 294
 Drosophila internal cesium patch solution, 294
 Drosophila internal potassium patch solution, 294
 Drosophila ringer's solution, 234
 embryo wash (10X stock solution), 89
 external saline, 312
 fix solution, 20
 food media, 472, 481
 GFS saline, 223
 grape juice agar, 89
 HFM1-43 dye solution, 118
 high-potassium HL-3 saline, 118
 HL-3 saline, 118, 210
 high-potassium, 118
 HL3 supplemented with glutamate, 353
 hybridization buffer, 20
 RNase-free, 32
 hydrolysis stop buffer, 20
 internal saline, 313
 intracellular solution, 234
 Jans' saline, 119
 juice plates, 48–49
 Kankel-White medium, 20
 lead citrate solution, 119
 live yeast paste, 119
 MABT, 20
 modified Trump's universal fixative, 119
 nonalcoholic Bouin's fixative, 119
 normal goat serum, 165
 paraformaldehyde (PFA), 90
 paraformaldehyde (4%) fixative, 119–120
 paraformaldehyde (4% in PB) fixative, 154
 patch pipette dye, 295
 PB (phosphate buffer), 154
 0.1 M, 120

- PBS (phosphate-buffered saline), 21, 70, 120, 165
 10X, 33, 49, 90
 PBSBT, 21
 PBST, 21, 165
 PBS-TX, 90
 PBT
 0.1 M phosphate buffer with 0.1% Triton X-100, 155
 0.1 M phosphate buffer with 0.2% Triton X-100, 120
 pH 7.4, 70
 PEMFA, 70–71
 PTX, 33, 49, 71
 SSC stock solution, 21, 33
 TNB blocking buffer, 33
 TNT wash buffer, 33
 toluidine blue stain, 120
 trituration solution, 235
 tyramide (fluorescently labeled), 21
 voltage-clamp saline, 390
 yeast plate, 155
 zero-calcium HL3, 353
 Recombination-mediated cassette exchange (RMCE), 393–394
 Recombineering, 394, 396
 Refractory period, 217
 Remodeling, dendrite, 78
 Repo, as glial marker, 55–57, 59
repo-flp, 66
repo-Gal80, 67
 Resistance, in electronic circuit, 174
 Resistor
 in electronic circuit, 172, 173–174
 ion channel as, 172
 Resistor-capacitor (RC) circuit, 172, 173–174, 188, 189f
 Response latency, 217
 Resting membrane potential, 175–180
 driving force (ionic electromotive force, EMF_{ion}), 179–180
 for entire cell, 177–178
 equilibrium potentials of individual ions, 177
 mechanisms of generation of, 175
 membrane permeability to ions and, 178, 179
 Na^+/K^+ ATPase and, 178
 physical basis of, 175–177, 176f
 reversal potential, 179, 200, 280–281
 separation of charge, 176–177
 “spring model,” 180
 voltage of, 175, 277–278
 Retina, 157–158
 Reversal potential, 179, 200
reversed polarity (repo), 55
 Reverse MARCM, 134–135
 Reversible photobleaching, 351–352
 Rhod-2 Ca^{2+} indicators, 316, 318, 320, 323–325
 Rhod-dextran Ca^{2+} indicators, 319, 322, 326–329
 Rhod-FF AM Ca^{2+} indicator, 320–321
 Rhod-5N AM Ca^{2+} indicator, 320–321
 Rhodopsin, 157–158
 light absorption and photoisomerization, 225–226
 prolonged depolarizing afterpotential (PDA), 228–229
 Riboprobe synthesis, 17–18
 Ribosomal S6 kinase, 506
 RIM family of proteins, 358
 RMCE (recombination-mediated cassette exchange), 393–394
 RNA in situ hybridization

- in larval brains, 16–21
 whole-mount embryo fluorescence in situ hybridization and antibody staining, 29–32
 RNA interference (RNAi)
 analysis of glial gene function by cell type-specific dsRNAi, 63–64
 disadvantages of, 394
 ion channel knock down, 378
 use in embryonic CNS studies, 57
 Robo, 39–41
 Robo2, 40–41
 Robo3, 40–41
 ROS (reactive oxygen species), 394, 403
rutabaga gene, 380, 380t

S

- Scolopidia (chordotonal sensory units), 238
 Scoring behavior with an index, 408
 Scribble (Scrib), 8, 8t, 17f
 SDN (Shaker Dominant Negative), 377, 386, 387f, 389
 Secondary antibodies used to label brains, 162t
 Segmental nerve, 25
seizure potassium channels, 167
 Self-avoidance, dendrite morphogenesis and, 78
 Sema proteins, 77
 Sensilla, 141, 142
 chemosensory coding in, 247–272
 gustatory system
 electrophysiological recording from taste sensilla, 252, 265–272, 267f, 268f, 271f
 organ anatomy, 249–250
 olfactory system
 electrophysiological recording from olfactory sensilla, 251–252, 255–264, 257f, 259f, 260f, 264f
 organ anatomy, 248
 Sensory transduction
 phototransduction, 225–226
 Serotonin, 458
 Shab channel, 386
Shab gene, 281
shakB² mutant, 222
 Shaker channel, 386, 389–390
Shaker gene, 167, 281, 376–377, 376t, 378, 386, 389
shaking-B (shakB) gene, 215
Shal gene, 281
Shaw gene, 281
shibire gene, 183, 379
 Signal-to-noise ratio, 13
 Signal transduction and second messengers, 380–381, 380t
 Ca^{2+} , 380–381, 380t
 CaMKII, 380t, 381
 cyclic AMP, 380, 380t
 proline and acidic amino-rich proteins, 380t, 381
 protein kinase, 380t, 381
 Simple Neurite Tracer, 79
 siRNAs (small interfering RNAs), 63
 Sleep
 analysis of
 consolidation, 487
 latency to sleep, 488
 sleep deprivation and rebound, 488
 sleep duration, 487
 behavior-based measurement of, 486–487
 overview, 486–487

- protocols
 activity monitoring with the DAM system, 489–491
 processing sleep data, 499–504
 regulation of, 486, 488
 video monitoring for study of, 487
 Slit, 39, 78
Slowpoke gene, 167, 281
 Small interfering RNAs (siRNAs), 63
 Small synaptic vesicles (SSVs), 346–347
 Smith, David, 425, 426
 SNAP-25 (synaptosomal-associated protein 25), 181, 183
 SNARE (soluble NSF attachment receptor) proteins, 181, 379
 Sodium (Na⁺), membrane potential and, 175, 178–180, 180f
 Sodium (Na⁺) current, 279–280, 280f
 Sodium (Na⁺) ion channel
 anatomy of, 278–279, 278f
 blocker, 280
 description of, 279–280
 voltage-gated, 178, 179
 Sodium/potassium (Na⁺/K⁺) ATPase, 178
 Sodium/potassium (Na⁺/K⁺) exchanger, 279
 Songs, courtship, 237–238
 Sound-evoked potentials, recording from antennal nerve, 239–243
 Spatial identity cues, interaction with temporal cues, 24
 Spineless, 77
 SPSS, 80
 SSC stock solution, 21, 33
 SSR (subsynaptic reticulum), 95
 SSVs (small synaptic vesicles), 346–347
 Stata, 80
 Stimulator, in electrophysiology rig, 186
stoned, 183
 Subperineurial glia, 59, 60f, 61–62
 Subsynaptic reticulum (SSR), 95
 Suction electrodes
 example of homemade system, 207f
 manufacture of, 207–208
 Surface labeling of proteins in embryos, 46–48
 SWiSH, 425
 Syd-1, 358
 Sylgard-coated coverslips, preparation of, 107–108, 108f
 Synapse, structure of, 357
 Synaptic assembly
 constructs suitable for imaging, 358–359, 358t
 key players in, 357–359
 overview, 355–357
 protocol
 building imaging chamber for in vivo imaging, 361–363, 361f
 quantitative analysis of NMJ morphology, 369–371
 in vivo imaging of *Drosophila* larvae, 364–368
 Synaptic boutons
 budding and outgrowth, 96
 ghost boutons, 96, 113
 type I
 type I big (Ib), 95
 type I small (Is), 95
 type II, 95, 96
 type III, 95, 96
 Synaptic connections, methods for
 manipulating, 376–384
 cell adhesion molecules (CAMs), 381–382, 382t
 environmental manipulations, 384, 384t
 acute increases in locomotor activity, 384, 384t
 elevated rearing temperature, 384, 384t
 growth factors, 382, 383t
 membrane excitability, 376–378, 376t
 expression of ion channels, 376t, 377–378
 ion channel mutations, 376–377, 376t
 signal transduction and second messengers, 380–381, 380t
 Ca²⁺, 380–381, 380t
 CaMKII, 380t, 381
 cyclic AMP, 380, 380t
 proline- and acidic amino acid-rich proteins, 380t, 381
 protein kinase, 380t, 381
 synaptic transmission, 378–379, 379t
 tools targeting postsynaptic function, 379, 379t
 tools targeting presynaptic function, 379, 379t
 transcription factors, 382–384, 383t
 activator protein 1 (AP-1: Fos/Jun), 382–383, 383t
 cAMP response element binding (CREB) protein, 383–384, 383t
 Synaptic current
 description, 282–283, 282f
 minis, 282–283, 282f
 Synaptic electrophysiology, 171–214
 overview, 171–175
 electrical terminology, 172
 electronic circuit and cellular circuit compared, 172
 resistor-capacitor (RC) circuit, 172, 173–174
 protocols
 electrode/microelectrode fabrication, 206–210, 207f, 209f
 electrophysiological recording from “model” cell, 188–192, 189f, 190f
 focal recordings of synaptic currents from single boutons at larval NMS, 204–205
 larval body wall muscle recordings, 193–199
 voltage-clamp analysis of larval neuromuscular junction, 200–203
 resting membrane potential, 175–180
 driving force (ionic electromotive force, EMF_{ion}), 179–180
 for entire cell, 177–178
 equilibrium potentials of individual ions, 177
 mechanisms of generation of, 175
 membrane permeability to ions and, 178, 179
 Na⁺/K⁺ ATPase and, 178
 physical basis of, 175–177, 176f
 reversal potential, 179, 200
 separation of charge, 176–177
 “spring model,” 180
 voltage of, 175
 synaptic transmission, 181–186, 185f
 Synaptic plasticity
 experimental methods for examining, 375–392
 protocol: manipulation of membrane excitability by expression of modified Shaker constructs, 386–390, 387f
 synaptic connections, methods for manipulating, 376–384
 cell adhesion molecules (CAMs), 381–382, 382t
 environmental manipulations, 384, 384t
 acute increases in locomotor activity, 384, 384t
 elevated rearing temperature, 384, 384t
 growth factors, 382, 383t
 membrane excitability, 376–378, 376t
 expression of ion channels, 376t, 377–378
 ion channel mutations, 376–377, 376t
 signal transduction and second messengers, 380–381, 380t
 Ca²⁺, 380–381, 380t
 CaMKII, 380t, 381
 cyclic AMP, 380, 380t
 proline- and acidic amino acid-rich proteins, 380t, 381
 protein kinase, 380t, 381
 synaptic transmission, 378–379, 379t
 tools targeting postsynaptic function, 379, 379t
 tools targeting presynaptic function, 379, 379t
 transcription factors, 382–384, 383t
 activator protein 1 (AP-1: Fos/Jun), 382–383, 383t
 cAMP response element binding (CREB) protein, 383–384, 383t
 Synaptic potentials
 recording in larval body wall muscles, 195–197, 196f
 Synaptic transmission, 181–186, 182f
 description of, 181
 electrophysiology equipment, 184–186
 AD/DA interface board, 185
 amplifier, 184–185
 computer and software, 185
 examples of rigs, 185f
 microelectrode puller, 186
 micromanipulators, 186
 microscope, 184
 oscilloscope, 186
 stimulator, 186
 vibration isolation table, 184
 video monitor system, 186
 wiring diagram of rig, 187f
 history of neurogenetic and electrophysiological studies of, 183
 methods for manipulating, 378–379, 379t
 tools targeting postsynaptic function, 379, 379t
 tools targeting presynaptic function, 379, 379t
 quantal units of neurotransmitter release, 181, 182f
 studying using larval NMS
 electrode fabrication for, 206–210, 207f, 209f
 electrophysiological recording from larval body wall muscles, 193–199
 electrophysiology equipment, 184–186, 185f, 187f
 focal recording of synaptic currents from single boutons, 204–205
 overview, 183–184
 voltage-clamp analysis, 200–203
 Synaptic vesicles, 171, 181
 association with presynaptic active zone, 357
 fusion with membrane, 281, 358
 recycling, 183
 trafficking, 181
 transmitter release, 281
 Synaptobrevin, 358t, 379
 Synaptobrevin-GFP, 359
 Synaptopods, 96, 113
 Synaptotagmin, 181, 183, 346, 358t, 403
 Synaptotagmin-GFP, 359
 Synchronizing populations of larvae, 9–10
 Syntaxin, 181, 183

T
 Taste hairs, 249, 249f, 268f
 Taste pathways, 444, 445f, 446
 Taste peg, 249, 249f
 T-bars, 95–96, 357f, 358
 Tempel, Bruce, 429
temperature-induced paralytic E (tipE) gene, 376–377, 376t
 Temperature-sensitive (ts) alleles, 393

534 / Index

- Temporal identity cues, for embryonic neuroblasts, 24
- Tergal depressor of trochanter (TDT), 215
- Tergotrochanteral jump muscle (TTM), 215–222, 216f, 219f, 220f
- Tergotrochanteral motoneurons (TTMn), 215–217, 216f, 222
- Tetanus toxin light chain (TetTxLC), 379
- Tethered flight experiments, 412–413, 423–426, 424f, 426f
- Tetracysteine-tagged proteins, 393, 395f
construction and expression of, 396–399, 398f
 FlAsH-FALI at third-instar NMJ, 400–403
- Tetraethylammonium chloride, 281
- Tetrodotoxin, 280
- TEVC. *See* Two-electrode voltage clamp (TEVC)
- Tiling of dendritic arbors, 78
- tipE* gene, 376–377, 376t
- Tip-recording method, 252
- T-maze apparatus, 431–433, 431f, 433f
- T-maze visual learning, 412
- TNB blocking buffer, 33
- TNT wash buffer, 33
- Toluidine blue stain, 120
- Torque meter, 425
- Tracheal dendrite (td) neurons, 76
- Transcription factors
axon guidance, 41
dendrite morphogenesis and, 77
motor neurons, 25
sequential activation cascade, 24
synaptic connections, methods for
 manipulating, 382–384, 383t
 activator protein 1 (AP-1: Fos/Jun), 382–383, 383t
 cAMP response element binding (CREB) protein, 383–384, 383t
- Transient receptor potential (TRP) superfamily, 238
- Transit-amplifying cells, 6
- Tricornered (Trc) kinase, 78
- Trituration solution, 235
- Trophic support of neurons by glia, 62–63
- TRP ion channel, 226
- TRPL ion channel, 226
- TTM (tergotrochanteral jump muscle), 215–222, 216f, 219f, 220f
- TTMn (tergotrochanteral motoneurons), 215–217, 216f, 222
- tub-Gal80*, 66–67, 126, 127f, 128f, 130, 133–134
- Tubulin promoter, 143
- Tukey HSD (Honestly Significant Difference) test, 440
- Tully, Tim, 429
- Tungsten electrode sharpener, 256–257, 257f
- Two-electrode voltage clamp (TEVC), 184, 185f, 200–203, 202f
potassium currents, study of, 386–390, 387f
- Type II neuroblasts, molecular markers of, 6–7, 6f, 7t
- Type I neuroblasts, molecular markers of, 6–7, 6f, 7t
- Tyramide (fluorescently labeled) recipe, 21
- Tyramide signal amplification system
in whole-mount embryo fluorescence in situ hybridization and antibody staining, 29–32
- ## U
- UAS-dsRNAi* constructs, 64
- UAS-flp/lexAop-flp*, 66
- UAS*-marker genes
FlAsH-FALI, 394, 395f
ion channel expression, 377–378
in MARCM analysis, 126, 128, 130–138
- ## V
- VAMP (vesicle-associated membrane protein)/synaptobrevin, 181, 183
- Ventral nerve cord
breaking off of during dissection, 13
glial cell development, 55
organization and development of embryonic, 23–28
- Vibration isolation table, 184
- Vision Egg, 425
- Visual learning and perception studies, 411–426
overview of, 411–413
 flight arena paradigm, 412–413
 phototaxis-type assays, 412
 population assays, 413
 single fly walking paradigm, 413
 T-maze use, 412
protocols
 individual fly assay: aversive phototactic suppression, 416–417, 417f
 individual fly assay: visual learning in larvae, 414–415, 415f
 population assay: conditioning to colors, 418–420, 418f
 population assay: optomotor maze, 421–422, 422f
 tethered fly paradigm, 423–426, 424f, 426f
- Visual physiology in adult eye, 225–235
overview, 225–226
protocols
 electroretinogram recordings, 227–229, 229f
 preparation of dissociated ommatidia, 230–231
 whole-cell patch-clamp analysis of adult photoreceptors, 232–235, 233f
- Visual system, 157–160
 optic lobes, 158–160
 retina, 157–158
- VNC. *See* Ventral nerve cord
- Volocity, 80
- Voltage
description of, 172
in electronic circuit, 172, 173–174
- Ohm's Law, 173
- Voltage clamp
cautions for experiments, 201
description of, 386
as measure of synaptic current, 282, 282f
photoreceptors, recordings from, 225, 226, 232–234, 233f
synaptic transmission, analysis of, 200–203
two-electrode voltage clamp (TEVC), 184, 185f, 200–203
 potassium currents, study of, 386–390, 387f
- Voltage-clamp saline, 390
- Voltage-gated ion channel, 178, 179
anatomy of, 278–279, 278f
Ca²⁺ ion channel, 278–279, 278f, 281–282, 316
characteristics in aCC and RP2 motor neurons, 280f
K⁺ ion channel, 278–279, 278f, 280–281
Na⁺ ion channel, 278–280, 278f
- ## W
- Whole-cell patch-clamp recording
description of, 297–299
from larval neurons, 291–293
photoreceptors, 232–235, 233f
of in vivo brain, 297–314
 amplifier electronics, 311
 assessing recording quality, 310f, 311
 limitations of technique, 311–312
 overview, 297–299
 patching, 310–311
 protocols:
 dissection of the head cuticle and sheath of living flies, 300–304, 301f, 303f
 fabrication of pipettes, 305–306, 305f
 whole-cell in vivo patch-clamp recordings, 307–310, 307f
 value of, 298
- Whole-mount embryo fluorescence and histochemical antibody staining, 68–69
in situ hybridization and antibody staining, 29–32
- Wide-field epifluorescence microscope, 343–344
- wingless* (*wg*), 382, 383t
- wishful thinking* (*wit*), 382, 383t
- Wnt5, 39
- Worniu (Wor), 6, 9
- Wrapping glia, 59, 60f, 61
- ## Y
- Yeast plate, 155
- Yellow cameleon-2 Ca²⁺ indicator, 318, 321
- ## Z
- Zero-calcium HL3, 353
- Zfh-1, 25