

Chapter 2

2.0 INTRODUCTION

Formal report writing in professional, technical and business contexts has evolved certain conventions regarding format, style, referencing and other characteristics. These will vary in detail between organizations, so the information given below should be treated as general guidelines which hold good in the absence of any more specific 'house styles'.

2.1 FORMAT

The format will depend upon the type and purpose of the report, its intended readers, and the conventions of presentation and layout prescribed by the organization in which you are operating. In general, there are two broad types of format which are differentiated by whether the summary and/or recommendations are placed after the main body of the report, or are placed earlier, before the main body. The eventual format chosen might be a combination or a condensed version of these two formats.

2.1.1 A format where the findings/recommendations follow the main body

- Cover sheet
- Title page
- Abstract
- Table of contents
- Introduction
- The body of the report
- Conclusion (and recommendations if applicable)
- References / Bibliography
- Glossary (if needed)
- Appendices

2.1.2 Format where the findings/recommendations precede the main body

- Letter of transmittal
- Title page
- Table of contents
- Summary and/or recommendations
- Body of report
- Conclusions
- Appendices
- Bibliography

2.2 REPORT CHECKLIST

Here are some aspects which may be found in each section of a report and which may be of use in organising and checking the details in your own reports.

2.2.1 Title page

- title
- writer
- organisation
- date
- person/group who commissioned the report

2.2.2 Table of contents

- accurate, clear layout
- section numbering system and indentation
- complete
- page numbers
- list of illustrations if applicable

2.2.3 Abstract

- appropriate length
- complete summary of key information
- informative, not descriptive, in form
- impersonal tone
- connected prose

2.2.4 Introduction

- relating topic to wider field
- necessary background information
- purpose of report
- scope of report
- explanation of arrangement of report
- sections

2.2.5 Body format

- main headings indicating equal level of importance
- all subheadings relating to section heading
- choice of levels indicating hierarchy of importance
- hierarchy of importance shown by careful and consistent use of features such as capitals, different fonts, underlining, bold, italics
- indenting
- numbering/letter system
- space between sections to enhance readability and layout
- when using charts, statistics and illustrations check for suitability, captions, reference in text and positioning

- acknowledgement of all sources, including material referred to indirectly, direct quotations, copied diagrams, tables, statistics
- ensure a systematic link between references in the text and the reference list and bibliography

2.2.6 Expression

- correct
- own words
- concise
- clear to intended reader
- formal and factual

2.2.7 Content

- logical development of ideas from one section to another, and within each section
- citing evidence
- relevant
- objective
- specific

2.2.8 Conclusion(s)

- arising out of the facts
- convincing
- a substantial basis for the recommendations

2.2.9 Recommendations (if applicable)

- based on the conclusions
- practical
- specific
- well organised, with the most important first

2.2.10 List of references

- sources in the text listed by the Harvard system

2.2.11 Bibliography

- texts consulted but not referred to directly in the report

2.2.12 Glossary (if included)

- arranged alphabetically

2.2.13 Appendix (appendices)

- placed at end of a report if included
- arranged in the order referred to in the report

2.3 REPORT SECTIONS

2.3.1 Introductions

Introductions to formal reports deal with the following aspects of the text:

(a) **Topic or subject matter:** how the report relates to a field, discipline or area of knowledge (reference to external framework). This is normally expressed in terms of why the topic is of sufficient importance or significance to deserve detailed coverage in a report.

(b) **Purpose:** what is the communicative intention in compiling the report (to describe, explain, examine, review, discuss etc.).

(c) **Scope:** which aspects of (a) does the report seek to highlight in fulfilling this purpose; often takes the form of an overview of the organization and structure of the report, ie the focus of the major sections; may mention aspects of the topic which have been intentionally omitted.

The above form of introduction differs from that of introductions to shorter scientific reports, in which a brief statement of the aim of the experiment or the hypothesis to be tested is all that is normally found.

The above three-part structure also distinguishes formal report introductions from essay introductions; the latter normally place more emphasis on the topic/field relationship through taking up a position (the *thesis* of the essay) in relation to the aspect of the topic highlighted in the title (often in the form of an arresting statement or thought provoking quotation).

Report introductions may—especially in the case of longer or more formal reports—refer in addition to the sources of the information incorporated within the document; this is done in terms of categories of sources (ie general statements about how and where you gathered your information: from books, articles, statistics, other reports, interviews and so forth).

A final point to note: in this form of introduction the focus should be on the particular report which is being introduced, rather than on the wider field or area to which it relates.

The length of the introduction will vary in proportion to that of the report.

2.3.2 Conclusions

Report conclusions, unlike introductions, cannot readily be analysed in terms of characteristic structural features. Conclusions are distinguished more by function than by form. In general terms, the principal function of conclusions is to relate to the purpose and scope of the report, as stated in the Introduction. In other words, the conclusion should confirm for the reader that the communicative intention has been achieved, and that the previewed aspects of the topic have been covered.

This general function can be more specifically expressed in a number of ways, including

- to restate purpose and scope
- to review or synthesise the main sections or units of the discussion
- to reiterate the principal points or findings
- to affirm the validity of argument or judgement
- To assert the viability of approach or interpretation

Two further points to note:

- Though normally and substantially retrospective, conclusions can extend or advance the topic, for instance by disclosing a further perspective (to be pursued elsewhere) or by making an additional, final judgment. Thus it is not strictly true to say that conclusions never contain anything 'new'.
- In reports, the conclusion section can take the form of a series of separately stated points and for these the plural term 'conclusions' may be used. Subsequent recommendations would then be intended to address these points.

2.3.3 Abstracts

2.3.3.1 *The form and function of the abstract of a report include the following:*

- definition, providing the essence of the report in a few words
- informative form, or
- descriptive form
- impersonal tone
- connected writing
- length 150-250 words (for longer reports, 1/2-1 page single-spaced)

2.3.3.2 *American academic Kenneth K. Landes, irritated by what he perceived to be the inadequacies of many abstracts in professional journals, wrote in 'A scrutiny of the abstract' (1966):*

The abstract is of utmost importance, for it is read by 10 to 500 times more people than hear or read the entire article. It should not be a mere recital of the subjects covered. Expressions such as "is discussed" and "is described" should *never* be included! The abstract should be a condensation and concentration of the *essential information* in the paper. (*Bulletin of the American Association of Petroleum Geologists* vol 50, no 9)

2.3.3.3 *Informative abstract*

An informative abstract is usually written by the author(s) of a report. It appears in the same document as part of the complete text. This abstract describes the research or project and presents the main ideas of the report in a summarised form. Informative abstracts do not duplicate references or tables of results. To achieve economy of expression, the style of informative abstracts often omits terms which identify the particular report (such as 'this paper' or 'this report').

Lawson, J. (1990) 'The education of the future senior health manager'. *Australian Health Review* vol 13 no 3 pp 184-8

Primarily due to economic forces, health services are being forced into a tight organizational framework of hospitals, clinics and services which need to be managed by educated professional managers. These managers need to be competent general and financial managers, competent planners, knowledgeable about health status, health issues, the Australian health care systems and knowledgeable about society, law and ethics. Assumptions that recruitment of people with such a formidable array of talents would be difficult are incorrect as judged by current experiences. Very talented and experienced candidates are being attracted to graduate education programs in health service management in many Australian universities. Accordingly the future management of Australian health services should be in good hands.

2.3.3.4 Descriptive abstract

A descriptive abstract is compiled by someone other than the author of the report to appear in another source, such as a data bank or library catalogue. A descriptive abstract describes the contents of a report but does not include interpretive statements, conclusions or recommendations. It is possible to base a descriptive abstract on the table of contents of a report. It is usually much briefer than an informative abstract.

Edwards, P. & Gould, W. (1988) *New directions in apprentice selection: self perceived 'On the job' literacy (reading) demands of apprentices*. Victorian TAFE Papers 8, 14-17

This article is based on an investigation of the self-perceived, on-the-job literacy tasks of electrical mechanic apprentices. Among other things it indicates the nature of the reading they commonly undertake and suggests implications for the kinds of reading experiences provided for them in trade courses.

2.4 SECTION/POINT IDENTIFICATION SYSTEMS

An important difference between an essay and a report is the layout. This aspect of a report is not merely a surface feature of the presentation. It represents important choices made by the writer regarding the range of the material covered, the relative importance of the sections in the report, and the relatedness of information within sections. As such, it plays a very important role in **communicating meaning** to the reader. The report presents meaning and information in two complementary and equivalent ways:

- the meaning represented by the words, thought, research, information
- the meaning represented by the layout

A writer usually chooses one of the following two layout systems: decimal numbering or number-letter. Once a system is chosen, the writer must present this system consistently throughout the report.

2.4.1 Decimal numbering

| | | | | | | |
|---|--|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| <i>First level</i> (of importance/generality) (also termed the A heading) | | 1.0 | 2.0 | 3.0 | 4.0 | 5.0 |
| <i>Second level</i> (also termed the B heading) | | 1.1 | 2.1 | 3.1 | 4.1 | 5.1 |
| <i>Third level</i> (also termed the C heading) | | 1.1.1 | 2.1.1 | 3.1.1 | 4.1.1 | 5.1.1 |
| <i>Fourth level</i> (also termed the D heading) | | 1.1.1.1 | 2.1.1.1 | 3.1.1.1 | 4.1.1.1 | 5.1.1.1 |

N.B. The 'point-zero' is not always used in decimal numbering systems

This is generally used with indenting to structure the text in the following way.

It is possible for a reader to gain a strong indication of the relatedness, and relative importance of the parts of the text as a result of this layout, even though no **meaning from the content** is provided.

1.0 _____

1.1 _____

1.2 _____

1.2.1 _____

1.2.2 _____

1.2.2.1 _____

1.2.2.2 _____

2.0 _____

2.1 _____

etc.

2.4.2 Number - letter (still encountered, but becoming less commonly used)

| | | | | | | | |
|--|------------------|------|-------|------|-----|------|-------|
| <i>First level (of importance/generality)</i> (A heading) | I | II | III | IV | V | VI | VII |
| <i>Second</i> (B heading) | <i>level</i> A | B | C | D | E | F | G |
| <i>Third</i> (C heading) | <i>level</i> 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| <i>Fourth</i> (D heading) | <i>level</i> (a) | (b) | (c) | (d) | (e) | (f) | (g) |
| <i>Fifth</i> (E heading) | <i>level</i> (i) | (ii) | (iii) | (iv) | (v) | (vi) | (vii) |

I _____

A _____

B _____

1 _____

2 _____

(a) _____

(b) _____

II _____

A _____

2.5 TABLE OF CONTENTS

The table of contents is assembled from the headings and subheadings of the report's sections, and includes the appropriate identification numbers/letters as well as the page numbers. Here are two examples of setting out, although there are many variations.

2.5.1 Example A

| | |
|--|----|
| Abstract | i |
| INTRODUCTION | 2 |
| 1.0 Computer crime | 2 |
| 1.1 Main types of computer crime | 2 |
| 1.1.1 Theft of computer time | 3 |
| 1.1.2 Theft, destruction, or changing programs/data | 3 |
| 1.1.3 Alteration of data stored in computer files | 3 |
| 1.1.4 Accessing a private computer system | 3 |
| 1.1.5 Percentages of computer crime in Australia | 4 |
| 1.2 How computer technology has changed traditional crimes | 4 |
| 1.2.1 The modem | 4 |
| 1.2.2 Organised crime | 5 |
| 1.2.3 Old laws | 5 |
| 1.2.4 Access to computers | |
| 1.3 Why computer crime is so costly and widespread | 5 |
| 1.3.1 Cost | 5 |
| 1.3.2 Extent of computer crime | 6 |
| 2.0 The profile of a computer criminal | 7 |
| 2.1 The novice | 7 |
| 2.2 The student | 8 |
| 2.3 The tourist | 8 |
| 2.4 The crasher | 8 |
| 2.5 The thief | 8 |
| 2.6 Other types | 9 |
| 3.0 The law and penalties | 9 |
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| 3.2 New laws - resistance to change | 9 |
| 3.3 Examples of poor laws | 10 |
| CONCLUSION | 11 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | 13 |

2.5.2 Example B

| | |
|----------|--|
| CONTENTS | |
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| 2 | Professional footcare in Sunraysia.....4 |
| 2.1 | The practitioners |
| 2.1.1 | The pioneers4 |
| 2.1.2 | The early chiropodists.....5 |
| 2.1.3 | The modern day podiatrists.....6 |
| 2.2 | The changing roles |
| 2.2.1 | Chiropodial treatment.....7 |
| 2.2.2 | Podiatric treatment.....7 |
| 2.3 | State registration: The Chiropody Act of 1968 |
| 2.3.1 | Implication for unqualified chiropodists.....8 |
| 2.3.2 | Employment of podiatrists.....8 |
| 2.3.3 | Effects on the consumer.....8 |
| 2.3.3.1 | free podiatric treatment.....8 |
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| 2.4 | Footwear vs footcare |
| 2.4.1 | The availability of quality footwear.....9 |
| 2.4.2 | Specialist and sports shoes.....9 |
| 3 | The role of the podiatrist in education.....10 |
| 4 | Conclusion and Recommendations.....11 |

| | | |
|-----|---|----|
| 5 | Bibliography..... | 12 |
| 6 | Appendices..... | 13 |
| 6.1 | Time line of significant events..... | 13 |
| 6.2 | Directory of podiatrists in current practice..... | 14 |

2.6 REFERENCING

The Harvard (author-date) system is the one usually encountered in the sciences and social sciences, and is the system promoted in Professional Writing & Communication subjects and the University of South Australia generally. All the examples below relate to the author-date system of referencing.

2.6.1 Citations

When you write an assignment you must **cite** in your text references to all material you have used as sources for the content of your work. These citations must be made wherever and whenever you **quote, paraphrase** or **summarise** someone else's opinions, theories or data (in your text). Your references may be to books, periodicals, articles, newspapers, reports or personal communications. A **list of references**, in alphabetical order of authors' surnames, must be attached to the end of your report, giving complete details of all references actually used in the report (see 5.6.2).

2.6.1.1 For the citations in your text, only the author's surname, year of publication for the material cited, and page numbers, if required, should be listed. Page numbers for your references are necessary only when you quote or paraphrase particular passages, lists or figures from your sources:

Smith (1971, p. 45) has argued that 'the relative seriousness of the two kinds of errors differs from situation to situation.'

2.6.1.2 If you paraphrase material from your sources you must make it clear from your reference that you are giving a modified version of someone else's work in your own words:

A recent study (Jones and Smith, 1974) has shown . . .

2.6.1.3 Reference to material written by more than two authors should include the surnames of all authors the first time the citation appears. In later citations of the same reference, include only the surname of the first author and the abbreviation et al. (meaning 'and the others'):

A recent study (Jones, Smith, Brown and White, 1973) has shown . . .

The research previously cited (Jones, et al., 1973)

2.6.1.4 Reference to different authors with the same surname should be distinguished by use in the authors' initials:

A recent study (C.L. Jones, 1974) has shown . . . but A.G. Jones (1956) has suggested . . .

2.6.1.5 When you have read an account of original work by one author (primary reference) in another book or article (secondary reference), both sources must be acknowledged in your reference:

Smith (Jones, 1961) states that . . .

or

Smith's experiment in 1952 (cited in Jones, 1961) states . . .

or

Jones (1961), in reporting Smith's 1952 study, states that . . .

Smith is the primary reference, Jones is the secondary reference.

2.6.1.6 If you need to cite several references at the same point, separate the authors' names by semi-colons, with surnames in alphabetical order:

Recent studies (Brown, 1971; Miller and Smith, 1972; Jones, 1966) show . . .

2.6.1.7 References to two or more publications in the same year by a given author should be distinguished by adding a, b, and so on:

A recent study (Jones, 1974b) has shown . . .

Recent studies (Jones, 1972, 1973a and b) have shown . . .

2.6.1.8 References to personal communications should include initials, name, **pers. comm.** and date:

they probably represent distal turbidities (K.A.W. Crook, pers. comm., 1971) . . .

2.6.2 References

The reference list is placed at the end of the report. It is arranged in alphabetical order of authors' surnames and chronologically for each author. The reference list includes only references cited in the text. The author's surname is placed first, immediately followed by the year of publication. This date is often placed in brackets. The title of the publication appears after the date followed by place of publication, then publisher (some sources say publisher first, then place of publication). There are many other minor differences in setting out references (eg use of commas, colons, full stops) depending upon personal preferences or house styles. The important thing is to check for any special requirements or, if there are none, to be consistent.

Some lecturers require only a reference list. Others require, in addition, a bibliography. While the reference list includes only those texts cited in the body of your paper, a bibliography includes all material consulted in the preparation of your report.

Notice that the titles of books, journals and other major works appear in italics (or are underlined when handwritten), while the titles of articles and smaller works which are found in larger works are placed in (usually single) quotation marks.

REFERENCES

Beasley, V. (1964), *Eureka! or how to be a successful student*, Flinders University, Bedford Park, South Australia.

Betts, K. and Seitz, A. (1986), *Writing essays in the social sciences*, Melbourne, Thomas Nelson.

Clanchy, J. and Ballard, B. (1981), *Essay writing for students*, Melbourne, Longman Cheshire.

Marshall, B.R. (1985), 'Common Writing Problems in Tertiary Education' *Australian Educators Journal*, Vol 7, No.3, pp. 56-64.

White, R.V. (1979a), *Functional English*, Sunbury-on-Thames, Nelson.

White, R.V. (1979b), *English for Academic Purposes*, Sunbury-on-Thames, Nelson.

2.6.3 Quotations

When the exact words of a writer are quoted, they must be reproduced exactly in all respects: wording, spelling, punctuation, capitalisation and paragraphing. Quotations should be carefully selected and sparingly used, as too many quotations can lead to a poorly integrated argument. Use of a direct quotation is justified when:

- changes, through paraphrasing, may cause misinterpretation
- the original words are so concisely and convincingly expressed that they cannot be improved upon
- a major argument needs to be documented as evidence
- the student wishes to comment upon, refute or analyse the ideas expressed in another source.

Unless it is clearly stated otherwise, the citation of another's opinions or conclusions often signifies your acceptance of the point of view as your own. *The intention of the original text must not be altered.*

2.6.3.1 Short quotations (up to 4 lines)

Incorporate the quotation into the sentence or paragraph, without disrupting the flow of the text, using the same spacing as in the rest of the text. The source of the quotation is either acknowledged in a footnote or in the text. Use single quotation marks at the beginning and end of the quotation:

The *Style Manual* (1978, p. 46) states that 'the modern tendency to use single quotation marks rather than double is recommended.'

2.6.3.2 Long quotations (more than thirty words)

Do not use quotation marks. Indent the quotation from the remainder of the text. Some writers recommend the use of smaller type or italics to set off indented quotations. Introduce the quotation appropriately, and cite the source at the end of the quotation as you would in your text.

2.6.3.3 Interpolations

These may be used in quotations when words in the original text need to be changed (eg, in tense) or added to fit in with the essay, the material may be introduced into the quotation by enclosing it in square brackets []. A common interpolation is the use of the term *sic* in square brackets. This is Latin for 'thus' or 'so', and indicates that the original has been reproduced exactly, even though it appears to have an error.

2.6.3.4 Ellipsis

Irrelevancies within very long quotations can be omitted by the use of an ellipsis which is indicated by three spaced dots (. . .). Nowadays it is not usual to place an ellipsis at the beginning or the end of a quotation which is intended to stand alone or forms part of one of your own sentences.

2.6.4 Referencing practice

How would the following citations be entered in your text, and recorded in your reference list or bibliography, using the Harvard system?

1. A reference to James Elliot's article 'Nursing citizenship—a neglected issue', which appeared in 1985 on pages 53-61 of issue number 4 of the second volume of *The Australian Journal of Advanced Education*.
2. A quotation from page 15 of the book *Socialization after childhood*, which was written by Oliver Graham Brim and Sharon Wheeler, and which was published by John Wiley and Sons in New York in 1966.
3. A reference to the 1983 publication *Developments in design and materials in Engineering*, a book resulting from the joint authorship of Julia Elaine Miller and Grant McGrath, and published in Sydney by Science and Design Press.
4. A reference to an issue raised in 1986 by Susan Eisley in her article in *The Australian Podiatry Journal* (vol. 16, no. 3, pages 48-51) entitled: 'Regulation of podiatry: an emerging responsibility for the profession'.
5. A quotation from one of the contributions to a 1978 collection of papers/articles edited by Louise Norman under the title of *Ergonomics and computers* and published by McGraw-Hill in New York. The lines are taken from the first paragraph of 'Psychological factors in stress-related fatigue' by Alessandro Jacox, found on pages 36-42 of the book.
6. A reference to an article called 'Ethical issues for the surveyor' on pages 40-47 of the *International Surveying Review*. The article was written by Julia Claire McClosky in 1981, and appeared in an edition of the journal published in that year (vol. 28, no.2).
7. A reference to the second volume of the journal *Physiotherapy today*, to Brian K. Miller's 1985 article 'Just what is a professional?', found in issue number 4 on pages 21-27.

2.7 Style sheets

Most journals and many organizations produce style guides for people who are writing papers or articles for them. These style guides describe how the work should be set out, and often the method of referencing required.



What is report writing ?

The purpose of a report is to inform someone about a particular subject. Reports are made up of facts and arguments on a specific subject. Reports allow information to be presented in an ordered way. You can write reports for business, physiology, health and safety.

Many different types of report are used in business-some quite and informal, others fairly lengthy and formal. The ultimate purpose of any report is to provide the foundation for decisions to be made and action taken.

Some reports contain no more than simple statement recording an event, a visit or some circumstances, with a note of action taken. Other reports include detailed explanations of facts, conclusions, and perhaps recommendation for action.

More detailed reports are required a lot of research. This may involve interviews, visits, questionnaires and investigations. The information may be presented in written, tabular or graphic form, and the writer needs to produce clear conclusions and recommendations.

The skills in writing a proposal are the same as in writing a report. However, there are certain differences between these two documents :

| REPORTS | PROPOSALS |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contain information about what has happened in the past • Aim mainly to provide information • Record objective facts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine what may happen in the future • Aim mainly to persuade the reader to make a specific decision • Express opinions-albeit supported by objective facts |

THE SIMPLE ENGLISH GUIDE TO WRITING REPORT

When writing reports, make your audience's job as easy as possible. Use active verbs and short sentences and keep to the point, just as you would in any other kind of writing. This guide covers the main stages of writing a report :

- defining the purpose
- investigating the topic
- organising the report into sections
- order of presentation
- order of writing
- numbering sections and paragraphs
- planning the writing
- revision

DEFINING THE PURPOSE

This helps you to be clear about :

- why you are writing
- what to include
- what to leave out and
- who your readers are

If you can express the purpose in a single sentence, so much the better

INVESTIGATING THE TOPIC

How you do this depends on the topic and purpose. You may need to read, interview, experiment and observe. Get advice from someone more experienced if you need to.

ORGANISING THE REPORT INTO SECTIONS

Your job is to make it easy for the readers to find the information they want. In reports that are one or two pages long, readers should have no trouble finding way around. With a 'long' report (more than four or five pages), you need to take great care in how you organise the information.

Reports can be set out in eight parts, but you won't always need them all.

- title or title page
- content list
- abstract
- introduction
- discussion
- summary and conclusions
- recommendations
- appendix

A short report won't read a title page, but should have a title.

The contents list is only needed in long reports. The abstract is only needed in formal reports, such as reports of scientific research. It is a summary of the report. The abstract appears in library files and journals of abstracts. It won't usually be printed with the report so it needs to be able stand alone.

Keep it between 80-120 words. Don't confused this with an 'executive summary' which we will talk about later.

The introduction should be brief and answer any of the following questions that seem relevant.

- what is the topic
- Who asked for the report and why?
- What was your background?
- What was your method of working? If the method is long and detailed, put it in an appendix.
- What were the sources ? If there are many , put them in an appendix,

The discussion is the main body of the report. It is likely to be the longest section, containing all the details of the work organised under headings and sub-headings. Few readers will read every word of this section. So start with the most important, follow it with the next most important, and so on.

You should follow the same rule with each paragraph. Begin with the main points of the paragraph, then write further details or an explanation. The summary and conclusion section is sometimes placed before the discussion section. It describes the purpose of the report, your conclusion and how you reached them.

The conclusions are your main findings. Keep them brief. They should say what options or actions you consider to be best and what can be learned from what had happened before. So they may include or may lead to your recommendations; what should be done in the future to improve situation?

Often, writes will put the summary and conclusion and the recommendations together and circulate them as a separate document. This is often called an executive summary because people can bet the information they need with out having to read the whole report.

It may be better (and cheaper) to send everyone an executive summary, and only provide a copy of the full report if someone asks for it. You may save a few trees, and you will certainly save your organization plenty of time and money.

The appendix is for material which readers only need to know if they are studying the report in depth. Relevant charts and tables should go in the discussion where readers can use them. Only put them in an appendix if they would disrupt the follow of the report.

ORDER OF PRESENTATION

We recommend the following order of presentation. You won't always need all these actions, especially those in brackets.

Long reports

- Title or title page
- (Contents list)
- (Abstract)
- Introduction
- Summary and conclusions
- Recommendations
- Discussion
- (Appendix)

Short reports

- Title
- Discussion
- Summary and conclusions
- Recommendations
- (Appendix)

ORDER OF WRITING

The order in which you write needn't follow the order of presentation. We recommend the following order of writing, because each section you finish helps you write the next one.

- Introduction
- Discussion
- Summary and conclusion
- Recommendations
- (Abstract)
- Title or title page)
- (Context list)
- Appendix)

After writing all the sections, read and revise the. Rewrite sections if necessary.

NUMBERING SECTIONS AND PARAGRAPHS

If you use plenty of clear headings and have a full contents list at the start of the report, you should find this is enough to show where each part begins and ends, and to cross-refer in necessary.

If you do have to label sections and paragraphs, keep it as simple as possible. Use capital letters to label sections and numbers to label paragraphs (A1,A2 and so on). If necessary, use small letters on their won for parts of paragraphs.

PLANNING THE WRITING

Usually you will have collected such a mass of information that you cannot decide where to plunge in and begin. So, before you start to write you must make some kind of plan.

SAMPLE REPORT 1

Date: September 1, 2000
To: Center Interns
From: Center Team Leader
Subject: Writing and Designing a Report

This report outlines some of the format considerations for designing business reports. Report formats can be designed in a variety of ways. Often, the organization you are working for may have standard requirements for report formats--be sure to follow these if they exist.

Reports can be as simple as the standard memo format or as complex as a formal report which might include

- title page;
- letter or memo of transmittal ;
- table of contents ;
- list of illustrations;
- executive summary or abstract;
- body text;
- references;
- appendices.

Note: Remember that you may or may not need to include all of these items, depending on the writing situation you are responding to.

Like a memo, any report should always specify the

- date,
- recipients,
- writer(s),
- subject.

The kind of report format you choose should be appropriate for the communication situation. For example, this report is formatted as a memo, which is appropriate for more informal situations or for short reports. Regardless of whether the report is formal or informal, in any report you should begin by stating the purpose of the report. The format, content, and organization of the rest of the report depends on its purpose.

Progress/Status Reports

In any project that extends over a period of time, you will often be asked to provide a progress report. In these reports, you should include the following:

- Summarize the progress you have made so far--use specific terms, for example, "I have analyzed 60% of the available data." Relate your progress back to the original goals of the project.
- Under a "Work Completed" heading, describe the specific tasks you have completed and describe any difficulties and obstacles that you have encountered.
- Under a "Work to be Completed" heading, describe the tasks that remain to be done. If you need to adjust the original schedule, provide a new schedule.
- If appropriate, you can also include a section on "Preliminary Findings" if you want feedback from your readers.
- Close with a reiteration of the final product that will result from your project. Depending on the situation--if there have been substantial changes in the scope or the project or in the schedule--you might also want to request a meeting to discuss the project.

Other Kinds of Reports

As mentioned earlier in this report, there isn't a "standard format" for reports--the most important thing in designing a report is to clearly outline its purpose, and then answer the following questions:

- What did you do?
- Why did you choose the particular research methods you used?
- What did you learn and what are the implications of what you learned?
- If you are writing a recommendation report, what action are you recommending in response to what you learned?

What is most important about report writing is that you have carefully considered the rhetorical situation. When you prepare your report, be sure to analyze the context and determine what information to include, what tone to use, and how to format the document to meet the standards of the organization you are submitting to.



SAMPLE REPORT 2

Many students are dissatisfied with the poor facilities in the school library. As the head librarian, write a report to the principal conveying the students' complaints and suggestions. Use the notes below to write your report.

Facilities

- library too hot*
- insufficient tables and chairs*
- computers in multimedia room – too slow, not functioning*

Books

- torn*
- missing pages*
- outdated*
- inadequate reference books*

Suggestions

- install air-conditioners*
- buy more tables and chairs*
- upgrade computers*
- replace spoilt computers with new ones*
- buy new books*
- purchase books students like to read*
- buy multiple copies of reference books*

Remember to:

- give your report a title*
- use all the points given*

To: The Principal,
Jelatek Secondary School From: The Head Librarian
Re: Dissatisfaction with School Library

As the head librarian, I would like to convey to you the students' dissatisfaction with the poor facilities in the school library.

Many of the students complain that the library is hot and stuffy. This is made worse by the dry spell we have been experiencing in the past few months. The students are unable to do their homework or revision after school hours when the temperature is at its peak. The few fans that we have are inadequate and do not help circulate the air.

There are also insufficient tables and chairs in the library. Moreover, some of the chairs are shaky and on the verge of collapse. As a result, the students have resorted to sitting on the floor between the bookshelves.

Another major complaint has to do with the computers in the multimedia room. These computers are at least six years old and many are slow and not functioning. Even the Internet connection is slow and students feel discouraged and disheartened when they cannot get web access. Consequently, many are forced to frequent the nearby cyber-cafes to complete their assignments.

There have been many complaints about the books in the school library over the years. Many of them are torn and tattered beyond repair. Worse still, some irresponsible students have removed small sections from some of the books, especially reference books. It is very annoying to read a book with missing pages and pictures. The fiction books that we have are also rather outdated. Authors like Enid Blyton and Agatha Christie do not appeal to the students.

There have also been numerous complaints about inadequate reference books, especially from students taking the public exams. Many of our students who cannot afford to buy reference books depend on the red-spot lending services provided by the library. It is disheartening to see the look of disappointment on their faces when the book they want to borrow is not available.

To overcome these problems, the students have made several suggestions. They feel it is timely that the library be fitted with air-conditioners as the exam season is around the corner. Many students prefer to do their revision in the library as it is peaceful and quiet. The school should also purchase more tables and chairs and discard those that are wobbly.

It is high time the school upgraded the computers. Some of the students who are computer-savvy have offered their services for free. All they ask for is the right software and hardware. Spoilt computers should be discarded and replaced with new ones. We, the librarians, are willing to source for new computers from the local community.

The school should buy new books. There should be a ratio of four books to every student in school. The teachers should buy books that the students like to read. This can easily be done by getting feedback from students on their favourite authors and the type of books they would prefer to read. Finally, the problem of inadequate reference books can be solved by purchasing multiple copies of such books.

We hope the school authorities will look into our complaints and consider our suggestions in improving the conditions of the library.

Nicole Lim
(Nicole Lim)

Note the features of this particular report:

- format
- structure/organisation of points – introduction, problems, suggestions, conclusion
- language used – present tense
- tone – polite and formal

PROFFESIONAL WRITING FORMAT

1 Memorandum

A memorandum (or memo) is a short report or communication to someone in-house. The subject is often familiar to the recipient. The writer needs to be direct and concise in presenting information.

Organise material so that it is easy to read—use lists, headings, an outline, white space, numbered points. Write in a direct 'to-the point' style.

Companies and institutions often have a 'house' format for memos. Standard memo format is as follows:

Memorandum

To:

From:

Subject:

Date:

Message written in this space

Optional information which may appear at the bottom of the page (depending on house style):

Signature of author

Name of author

Date (if not placed in heading)

Copies to (sometimes placed in heading)

2 Formal letter

Sample format

43 Brentwood St
Warradale SA 5046 *(Heading - sender's address or letterhead)*

14 December 1994 *(Date - month named, not as a number)*

Ms Veronica P Sims
Secretary Environment Protection
Council
55 Grenfell Street
ADELAIDE SA 5000 *(Inside address - receiver's name, position, organisation, postal address)*

Dear Ms Sims *(Salutation)*

Subject: or Re: (optional) Requested price for product *(Subject line if needed)*

Opening of the letter.....
.....
.....

(Double line-space between paragraphs)

Body of the letter with as many paragraphs as needed.....
.....
.....

Close of the letter
.....
.....

(Line space)

Yours sincerely *(Complimentary close)*

Space for signature

Janet G Thomas *(Typed signatory)*

JGT:cd *(Identification)*

Enc. (2) *(Enclosure)*

cc: Mr John Smith Ms Jane Adams *(Copy line)*

3 Formal speech

3.1 Preparing an effective speech

Preparing an effective formal speech is governed by two time factors: you will need **extended time** to preparing something which must communicate in very **limited time**.

3.1.1 EXTENDED TIME: as in a formal written text, extended time is needed to prepare and to plan

- to select a topic (if not prescribed)
- to collect information
- to organize information (grouping and sequence)
- to outline a textual structure
- to take into account other relevant factors relating to context

3.1.2 LIMITED TIME: because the text is presented in spoken mode, it must communicate what is intended (ie get the message across) within a strictly limited span of time.

Limited time necessitates

- less complex content
- a straightforward, easy to follow structure, normally in four parts: TITLE ; INTRODUCTION ; BODY ; CONCLUSION
- assisting the listeners to follow the prepared structure in more obvious ways than in writing ie PROVIDING THEM WITH ACCESS TO YOUR STRUCTURE
- this access involves the inclusion of a number of additional statements or comments which give information not about the topic but about the way in which the talk has been organised:
 - (a) identifying the four major components plus the sections of the body
 - (b) identifying key points
 - (c) linking one section to the next and, where helpful, one point to another
 - (d) providing helpful repetition, thus assisting the listeners to anticipate what will be said, and to recall what has been said.

3.2 Other relevant context factors

3.2.1 MODE

The mode is SPOKEN therefore personal in process:

- link your speech to your audience
- include personal experience, examples, illustrations, as well as facts (if applicable)
- make the personal angle/opinion/evaluation more apparent

3.2.2 TOPIC

- select a topic in which you are genuinely interested
- translate complex and/or very detailed information into a more easily understood form
- develop more ideas than you will think you will need
- consider the use of audio-visual aids (eg overhead projector)

3.2.3 *PURPOSE*

- for information
- for entertainment
- for persuasion
- for inspiration

3.2.4 *AUDIENCE*

- size?
- professional or lay audience?
- age?
- education?
- interests?
- any other unique/ relevant traits?
- why are they there?
- what do they know about the topic?
- what viewpoints might they have on the topic?
- what reactions can you expect?

3.2.5 *SITUATION*

Know the occasion

- how large will the audience be?
- will the audience be in front of you or all around you?
- will you be distant from the audience or close?
- will audio/visual equipment be set up?
- will the occasion be formal/ semi-formal/ casual?
- time allocated for your talk?
- will you have a lectern?
- will you have a microphone? (if so, portable or fixed?)

3.3 **Delivering the speech**

- never read your speech
- speak at a well measured, relaxed pace
- maintain eye contact with your audience
- beware of any distracting mannerisms
- allow pauses
- allow yourself to gesture naturally
- keep your sense of humour
- decide whether to use note cards or folder
- use visual aids if they add to the clarity and interest of the delivery, BUT
- prepare them very thoroughly

- practise several times but don't memorise
- know your introductory comments especially well
- title your speech or include a summarising sentence in your introduction
- ensure you offer access to structure if needed
- anticipate likely questions
- develop a strong conclusion

If you feel nervous

- breathe deeply
- concentrate on your material, and on looking relaxed and confident
- if nerves become a problem, don't try to hide them at all costs

4 Listening skills

We learn 75 percent of all we know through listening, but usually listen at only 25 percent of our efficiency.

4.1 Inefficient listening

Poor listening is caused by

- selective inattention
- selective memory
- expectations of people and their familiarity with the topic
- fear of being influenced or criticised
- bias
- boredom
- listening only to words
- thought is three times quicker than speaking or listening; thoughts often 'race ahead'

4.2 Effective listening

Effective listening requires practice and depends on wanting to hear

- good listening is an active, participatory skill
- listen for more than facts
- use speed of thought to your advantage
- reserve judgement on subject and/or speaker(s)
- don't let poor delivery undermine benefits

4.3 Benefits

Good listening brings its own rewards

- you will gain as much information as possible
- misunderstandings, problems, or disagreements are minimised

relationships improve through effective listening or bullet and number styles use the bullet and number icon on the toolbar.