



Report Writing

What is a report?

Reports are written when a topic is to be investigated or researched in detail. It is designed to provide factual information that may be acted upon. There are many different types of reports, but the focus here is on writing academic reports.

What is the difference between a report and an essay?

The main difference between a report and an essay is the format used for presentation. An essay is structured with paragraphs and full sentences, whereas a report has headings, subheadings and numbered points. A report is structured in this way so that the reader can easily scan the document to find the important information. Another difference is that a report contains facts and observations whereas an essay engages in discussion and arguments.

How is a report structured?

It should be presented in the following order:

- **Cover Page**
It must include the title of the report, your name, the name of your lecturer, the number and name of the unit, and the due date. Use the cover sheet provided by the College.
- **Table of Contents**
It should include the headings and subheadings used in the report with their appropriate page numbers.
- **Summary**
It should provide an overview of the whole report, including a brief account of its contents, findings and recommendations. It is suggested that this section be written last, after the rest of the report has been prepared.
- **Introduction** – it has 3 main objectives:
 - Defines the purpose or aim - what is to be achieved
 - Establishes the background to the report
 - Describes the scope – the specific areas the report covers, including any limitations of the research.
- **Main Body**
It should present the findings in a logical and in sequential order. Use concise headings and subheadings and numbered points to identify each section and to introduce new facts or observations. Use paragraphs to separate ideas; for each new idea start another paragraph.
- **Conclusion**
It consists of a summary of the main points or findings of the report and an evaluation of the major facts presented. It contains no new information, ideas or facts.

- **Recommendations** (sometimes not required)
It should contain brief statements outlining suggested actions for solving problems based on the information provided in the report.
- **Reference List/Bibliography**
It should list in alphabetical order the information sources used in the report.
- **Appendices**
In this section, include any additional information such as statistics, tables, questionnaires or articles. Each separate appendix should be labelled 'A', 'B', etc and where appropriate referred to in the main body of the report.

Sample Report Structure

Title Page

Table of Contents

Summary

1. Introduction

2. Main Body Heading

2.1 Subheading

2.1.1 Evidence 1

2.1.2 Evidence 2

2.1.3 Evidence 3

2.2 Subheading

2.2.1 Evidence 1

2.2.2 Evidence 2

2.2.3 Evidence 3

2.3 Subheading

2.3.1 Evidence 1

2.3.2 Evidence 2

2.3.3 Evidence 3

3. Conclusion

4. Recommendations

Reference List/Bibliography

Appendices

Appendix A

Appendix B

Appendix C

Hints on Report Writing

Getting started:

- Remember that you do not have to write your report in the order that it will be read. It is often easier to start with the main body first and do the introduction, conclusion and recommendations later. Leave the summary until last.
- Decide on your main heading and subheadings and arrange these in a logical sequence. Then go through the information you have gathered and list your points under the appropriate headings.

Presenting your report:

- Ensure that you have presented each section in the correct order.
- Finally, proof read your report from beginning to end.

Bibliography

Anderson, J. & Poole, M., 2001, *Assignment and thesis writing*, 4th edn, John Wiley, Milton, Qld.

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Camillo, J. & Groat, V. 1994, *Presenting reports*, Outer Eastern College of TAFE, Wantirna South.

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Further Information

There are two OIL (Online Information Literacy) modules, one on writing Scientific Reports and another on Business Reports, available on the Central TAFE Library website at: www.centraltafe.wa.edu.au/library