Writing a Report

Session overview

- What is a report?

- What are the differences between essays and reports?

- How do I structure a report?
    - What sections are included?
    - How do I number each section?
    - How do I format a report?

- What kind of language should I use in a report?

What is a report?

The purpose:

- Reports are usually **commissioned** or **requested** by a person or an organisation in order to get information about something
- The report is, therefore, a written presentation in response to that specific request and its purpose

The aim:

- To give a straightforward, clearly-structured account of something, to answer a question and often, to offer solutions to a problem

Comparing reports and essays

Reports

Reports present *facts/information*, the aim being to explain them as clearly as possible

Reports are written for the *person* or *organisation* that requested them

Reports will be *scanned*, which means the most important information needs to be easily accessible, and summarised where appropriate

Reports end with a conclusion *and recommendations* for addressing issues raised in the report

Essays

Essays argue or discuss an issue, incorporating the author's own stance

Essays are written for a lecturer

Essays will be read carefully

Essays end with a conclusion

Structuring a report

Most reports will contain the following sections (in this order):

Letter of transmittal
Title page
Table of contents
List of figures
Executive Summary
Introduction
Body
Conclusion
Recommendations
Bibliography
Appendices

Letter of transmittal

A letter to the person who commissioned the report "announcing" the completion and delivery of the report

- Include
  - Salutation (e.g. Dear Ms Watson)
  - The purpose of the letter (e.g. here is the marketing report you commissioned)
  - The main findings of the report
  - Mention any important considerations
  - Acknowledge any particular help
  - Thanks

Title page

The 'cover' of the report, which presents the key details in a professional layout

Include:

- The name of the report (i.e. the topic of the report)
- The organisation that commissioned it
- Your name (and student number)
- The date

Table of contents

Important for allowing readers to quickly access the information they need

- Show each of the numbered points and sub-points
- Include page numbers for each
- Include a list of figures if necessary
- Include a list of appendices
- Ensure your layout is clear and professional

Structuring a report

Table of contents

Structuring a report

Summary / executive summary / abstract

Some readers will not wish to read the entire report, so the summary / abstract presents the entire report in brief (roughly one page)

Include:
– who requested the report
– purpose
– background context
– brief methodology
– main findings, and
– Recommendations

• Use paragraphs for an abstract and paragraphs / dot points for an executive summary

• Make sure the layout is methodical, working through each section of the report clearly

Structuring a report

Introduction

- State who commissioned the report

- Briefly explain the context / problem that triggered the report, giving any necessary background information

- Clearly state the purpose of the report and its scope   (i.e. what it **does and does not** cover)

- Mention the types of sources used (i.e. texts, surveys, observation, interviews)

Body of report

- Literature review (if applicable)

- Research methodology
  - Explain what you did and why, mentioning any possible problems

- Your findings
  - State the facts clearly
  - Include graphs and charts where appropriate and label them

- Discussion
  - Discuss and interpret the findings
  - Can be organised into discrete, relevant sections

Structuring a report

Conclusion

- Sum up your main findings and key points of discussion

- Make sure that you do not bring in any new information

- Be brief and to the point – you should already have reported on everything in sufficient detail

Structuring a report

Recommendations

After 'reporting' on the present state of your particular topic, you need to make recommendations about what should now occur in response to your findings

- These recommendations should evolve from your findings, discussion and conclusions

- Use dot points so each recommendation can be read easily

- This section can be a section that stands alone, **OR**
- This section can be sequenced after each finding and discussion

This report makes the following recommendations:
  - That…
  - That…
  - That…

Reference List

- Begin on a new page
- Use the style required in your unit

Structuring a report

Appendices

Appendices are the place to include any data too bulky to place in the body of your report

You might include:

- Your survey tool (but not all your responses)
- Any graphs or tables too large for the body

Number each appendix clearly (i.e. Appendix A)

Formatting

- Make sure your numbering system is clear and accurate

- Use a header and/or footer with the name of the report and page numbers

- Be professional not pretty
  – Ensure your wording and formatting are consistent and meticulous

- Use a clear and formal typeface: Times New Roman or Helvetica are best

- Tables and graphs must have a title and be clearly labelled

- Use plenty of white space

Language in a report

Language should be formal language, but simple and clear

- By and large, sentences should be short, relieved when appropriate by some complex sentences

- Use sub-headings and dot points when appropriate, but also include paragraphs with topic sentences

- Read other reports to get a feel for the language

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Workshops: For details and registration,
http://www.canberra.edu.au/library/research-gateway/research-skills-training

Individual consultations: 30 minute consultations, Monday to Friday

Drop-in Sessions: 15 minute consultations
11:30 am-12:30 pm, 2:30 pm-3:30 pm: Library Building 8, Level B:
1C34: 1:00 pm-2:00 pm Teaching and Learning Commons

Faculty of Health Drop in
Thursday 1:00-2:00 pm: Student Resource Centre, Building 6B

Online Tutoring Service: Smarthinking
Access Smarthinking from LearnOnline (Moodle) site

Online resources
For more information visit,
http://learnonline.canberra.edu.au/course/view.php?id=2101

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