



## What is a report?

This is an *introductory* guide to report writing. It gives some general advice on the content and structure of a report. It is very important for you to consult your Departmental Guidelines or Unit Guide for advice on the required report format for the units in which you are enrolled.

### Differences between the report and the essay

	Report	Essay
<b>The topic</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is often a problem or case study which sets up a hypothetical situation.</li> <li>is based on reading, field work or practical work.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is usually a question or a proposition.</li> <li>is based on reading and sometimes field work.</li> </ul>
<b>The purpose</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is to investigate, present and analyse information thoroughly and logically.</li> <li>is often to recommend action to solve a problem.</li> <li>is usually to make proposals.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is to articulate a well-argued response to the question or proposition.</li> <li>establishes a proposition.</li> </ul>
<b>The reader</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is established in the topic and is often a client or manager.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is usually the lecturer.</li> </ul>
<b>The format</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>comprises sections with headings.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>usually does not include sections.</li> </ul>
<b>The style</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has to be objective.</li> <li>sometimes includes the use of bullet points.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>can be subjective, but needs the impersonality suited to academic study.</li> </ul>
<b>Assessment</b>	Success depends on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the demonstration of good research skills</li> <li>the objective presentation and analysis of relevant information.</li> </ul>	Success depends on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the interest of the argument.</li> <li>how the essay relates one point to the next and how well it establishes the proposition.</li> </ul>

### Features of reports

1. Referencing and quotations in reports follow the same guidelines required for essays. Endnotes are often preferred in an area like Marketing.
2. For most reports, a system of *numbered* sections with headings is used. However, some departments do not require this. Again, check with the Departmental Guidelines for your subject.
3. Just as in the essay, a good report will analyse and evaluate as well as merely describe. The ability to respond to these academic requirements separates the good or excellent report from the average.

## Typical report structures

Different types of reports typically include sections. In the table below, compare the section headings which may be included in the different types of reports. Language and Learning Online includes samples of different types of reports used in different subject areas.

<b>Business and technical reports</b>	<b>(Scientific) Laboratory reports</b>
Title page [Memos of Authorisation and Transmittal] Executive summary Table of contents Introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Purpose</li><li>○ Methodology</li><li>○ Limitations <i>etc</i></li></ul> Findings Discussion Conclusions Recommendations References Appendices	Title page Abstract Introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Review of previous research</li><li>○ Aim of present research</li></ul> Method <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Materials</li><li>○ Procedure <i>etc</i></li></ul> Results Discussion References Appendices <i>etc.</i>

### Other useful references

Cotesta, P, Crosling, G, Murphy, H & Sands, J 2005 'Writing reports in accounting' in *Writing and presenting in accounting*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, LexisNexis Butterworths, Chatswood, NSW, pp.10-51.

Drury, H 1997, *How to write a laboratory report*, Learning Assistance Centre, University of Sydney.

Findlay, B 2006, *How to write psychology laboratory reports and essays*, 4<sup>th</sup> edn, Pearson Education, Frenchs Forest, NSW.

Language and Learning Online:

- Engineering report, <<http://www.monash.edu.au/lis/lonline/writing/engineering/technical-report/index.xml>>
- Health Sciences case report, <<http://www.monash.edu.au/lis/lonline/writing/medicine/health-sciences/index.xml>>
- Information Technology report, <<http://www.monash.edu.au/lis/lonline/writing/information-technology/report/index.xml>>
- Management case study report, <<http://www.monash.edu.au/lis/lonline/writing/business-economics/management/index.xml>>
- Marketing report, <<http://www.monash.edu.au/lis/lonline/writing/business-economics/marketing/index.xml>>.

Silyn-Roberts, H 2002, 'Writing a report' in *Writing for science*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, Prentice Hall, Auckland, New Zealand, pp. 36-71.

Summers, J & Smith, B 2004, 'Report writing' in *Communication skills handbook*, John Wiley & Sons, Milton, Qld, pp. 37-46.

Weissberg, R & Buker, S 1990, *Writing up research. Experimental research report writing for students of English*, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey.