REPORT
WRITING

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What is a Report?

"A report is the formal writing up of a piece of research or project work. They are usually written in a concise style, giving precise detail. Information is presented under clear headings." (Palgrave, 1999)

What is the purpose of a report?

- To communicate your research in a clear and structured manner. A report aims to inform, as clearly and concisely as possible.

- To give you a skill that is transferable to the work place. Report writing is an essential skill for professionals.

- Good reports are planned and allocated the appropriate amount of time to be completed to a high standard.

Report vs. Essay

- A common problem is that students transfer what they have learned about essay writing to report writing.

- Both essays and reports need:
  - A formal style.
  - Careful proof-reading and neat presentation.
  - An introduction, body and conclusion.
  - Analytical thinking.

- But there are some essential differences between the two.

Report Vs. Essay

A Report	An Essay
Presents information	Presents an argument
Is meant to be scanned quickly by the reader	Is meant to be read carefully
Uses numbered headings and sub-headings	Uses minimal sub-headings, if any.
Uses short, concise paragraphs and dot-points where applicable	Links ideas into cohesive paragraphs, rather than breaking them down into a list of dot-points
Uses graphics wherever possible (tables, graphs, illustrations)	Rarely uses graphics
May need an abstract (sometimes called an executive summary)	Will only need an abstract if it is very long, or if your lecturer asks for one specifically
May be followed by recommendations and/or appendices	Seldom has recommendations or appendices

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Report Structure

- Using this structure will help to give your report the correct level of formality; it will also help to ensure that you do not leave out anything important.
  - Title page
  - Table of contents
  - Introduction
  - Main Body (or the questions/tasks you will answer)
  - Conclusion
  - Recommendations*
  - Reference List
  - Appendices (if required)   *check your module handbook

Report Structure (Title Page)

- **Title Page** – This must contain:

    - The report title which clearly states the purpose of the report
    - Full details of the person(s) for whom the report was prepared
    - The hand-in date of the report
    - The word count…

- **THE WORD COUNT! – This only includes your main body of text…**

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Report Structure (Word Count)

- The word count **does not** include:
    - The title page
    - The contents page
    - Any written text within a table/image/diagram
    - The full reference list (at the end of your work)
    - Any appendices (if included)

- The word count **does** include:
    - Any headings or sub headings (including table and figure titles)
    - All written text in your main body of work

Report Structure (Table of Contents)

- **Table of Contents** – A clear, well-formatted list of all the sections and sub-sections of the report. Don't forget to put the page numbers! If applicable, there should be a separate list of tables, figures, illustrations and/or appendices after the main index.

- Make sure that the headings in this list correspond exactly with those in your main body. It is best to do your list of contents right at the end.

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Table of contents cont.

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Report Structure (Introduction/Main Body)

- **Introduction** – Give enough background information to provide a context for the report.
  - State the purpose of the report.
  - Clarify key terms and indicate the scope of the report (i.e. what the report will cover).

- **Main body** – This is the substance of your report. The structure will vary according to the nature of the material being presented, with headings and sub-headings used to clearly indicate the different sections (unlike an essay).

Report Structure (Conclusion/Recommendations)

- **Conclusion –** Sum up the main points of the report and clearly relate to the objectives. This should be one paragraph, or ten percent of the overall report. Do not include new information/material here!

- **Recommendations** – If appropriate, recommendations should follow on logically from your conclusion and be specific, measurable and achievable.

Report Structure (Reference List/Appendices)

- **References –** This is a list giving the full details of all the sources to which you have made reference within your text.

- **Appendices –** An appendix contains material which is too detailed, technical, or complex to include in the body of the report (for example, specifications, a questionnaire, or a long complex table of figures), but which is referred to in the report.

  – Appendices are put at the very end of the report, after everything else. Each appendix should contain different material. Number each appendix clearly.

Visual Presentation

- **<u>Make sure you present your report in the following way</u>**:

  - **Font**: Arial

  - **Line spacing**: 1.5

  - **Main Headings**: Font size 16

  - **Sub Heading**: Font size 14

  - **Main body of text**: Font size 12

  - **Add page numbers when your report is complete**

Planning

- When planning your report:
  - Look carefully at your assignment brief
  - Brainstorm the topic
  - Decide on what you want to research and undertake
  - Prepare a brief outline of your report or report plan
  - Refer to study guide section 3.0 'Planning your assignment'

- Procedure after planning:
  - Undertake your research and analyse the information gathered
  - Re-visit your report outline and discard any information you don't need
  - Write up – always be aware of your referencing and plagiarism

Writing up the Report

- Write Up:
  - Use headings and sub headings (as per the study guide) to make the report clear and structured.
  - After you have prepared a rough draft of the entire report, check it once more against the outline and notes to ensure that you have not missed any points or facts.
  - Make necessary additions, deletions or alterations in a manner that suits your purpose.
  - Number the pages as you would do in the final draft.

- Now take a break – have a cooling off period (allows you to examine your work closely at a later date). **Always allow time to review your work and proof read after completion and before hand-in deadlines.**

Finishing your Report

- Make sure your line spacing is 1.5, your main text is Arial 12, your main headings are Arial 16 and any sub-headings are Arial 14. Adjust you work should any of the above alter your structure or table/figure arrangement.
  - After amendments, check your numbered pages are still in correlation with the page numbers in your contents page.
- Make sure no tables or figures overlap onto ensuing pages.
  - If your table is bigger than one whole page, consider whether it would be more suitable to move it to your appendices.

- Check that your full reference list is correct!

Further Guidance

- If you need a visual representation of what a report should look like, then the HE Study Skills Guide (available on HE LearnZone under the 'Academic Support & Employability' tab) is an exact replica of how a report should be structured and laid out, including the presentation of tables and figures.

- However, please be aware that, under some circumstances appropriate to your specific module, you may need additional information (e.g. dissertation structures also include an abstract).