

Tikrit University

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English

(How to Write a Report in English)

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How to Write a Report in English

A report is a nonfiction account that presents and/or summarizes the facts about a particular event, topic, or issue. The idea is that people who are unfamiliar with the subject can find everything they need to know from a good report.

Reports make it easy to catch someone up to speed on a subject, but actually writing a report is anything but easy. So to help you understand what to do, below we present a little report of our own, all about report writing and report format best practices.

What is a Report?

In technical terms, the definition of a report is pretty vague: any account, spoken or written, of the matters concerning a particular topic.

Really, when people talk about “reports,” they’re usually referring to official documents outlining the facts of a topic, typically written by an expert on the subject or someone assigned to investigate it. There are different types of reports, explained in the next section, but they mostly fit this description.

What kind of information is shared in reports?

1-Details of an event or situation

2-The consequences or ongoing effect of an event or situation

3-Evaluation of statistical data or analytics

4-Interpretations from the information in the report

5-Predictions or recommendations based on the information in the report

6-How the information relates to other events or reports

Reports are closely related to essay writing, although there are some clear distinctions. While both rely on facts, essays add the personal opinions and arguments of the authors. Reports typically stick only to the facts, although they may include some of the author's interpretation of these facts, most likely in the conclusion.

Moreover, reports are heavily organized, commonly with tables of contents and copious headings and subheadings. This makes it easier for readers to scan reports for the information they're looking for. Essays, on the other hand, are meant to be read start to finish, not browsed for specific insights.

Kinds of Report Formats

There are a few different types of reports, depending on the purpose and to whom you present your report. Here's a quick list of the common types of reports:

- **Academic report:** Tests a student's comprehension of the subject matter, such as book reports, reports on historical events, and biographies
- **Business reports:** Identifies information useful in business strategy, such as marketing reports, internal memos, ...etc.
- **Scientific reports:** Shares research findings, such as research papers and case studies, typically in science journals

Reports can be further divided into categories based on how they are written. For example, a report could be formal or informal, short or long, and internal or external. In business, a **vertical report** shares information with people on different levels of the hierarchy (i.e., people who work above you and below you), while a **lateral report** is for people on the author's same level, but in different departments.

There are as many types of reports as there are writing styles, but in this guide, we focus on academic reports, which tend to be formal and informational.

The Structure of a Report

The report format depends on the type of report and the requirements of the assignment. While reports can use their own unique structure, most follow this basic template:

- **Executive summary:** Just like an abstract in an academic paper, an executive summary is a standalone section that summarizes the findings in your report so readers know what to expect. These are mostly for official reports and less so for school reports.
- **Introduction:** Setting up the body of the report, your introduction explains the overall topic that you're about to discuss, with your thesis statement and any need-to-know background information before you get into your own findings.
- **Body:** The body of the report explains all your major discoveries, broken up into headings and subheadings. The body makes up the majority of the entire report; whereas the introduction and conclusion are just a few paragraphs each, the body can go on for pages.
- **Conclusion:** The conclusion is where you bring together all the information in your report and come to a definitive interpretation or judgment. This is usually where the author inputs their own personal opinions or inferences.

If you're familiar with how to write a research paper, you'll notice that report writing follows the same introduction-body-conclusion structure, sometimes adding an executive summary. Reports usually have their own additional requirements as well, such as title pages and tables of content, which we explain in the next section.

The Essential Things that a Report should Include

There are no firm requirements for what's included in a report. Every school, company, laboratory, task manager, and teacher can make their own format, depending on their unique needs. In general, though, be on the lookout for these particular requirements—they tend to crop up a lot:

1-Title page: Official reports often use a title page to keep things organized; if a person has to read multiple reports, title pages make them easier to keep track of.

2-Table of contents: Just like in books, the table of contents helps readers go directly to the section they're interested in, allowing for faster browsing.

3-Page numbering: A common courtesy if you're writing a longer report, page numbering makes sure the pages are in order in the case of mix-ups or misprints.

4-Headings and subheadings: Reports are typically broken up into sections, divided by headings and subheadings, to facilitate browsing and scanning.

5-Citations: If you're citing information from another source, the citations guidelines tell you the recommended format.

6-Works cited page: A bibliography at the end of the report lists credits and the legal information for the other sources you got information from.