

Report writing

Study Guide

What is a report?

Reports are structured documents that present information about something you have researched or investigated. Their structure makes it easy for the reader to find information within the report.

Getting started

There are some questions that you need to ask yourself before you start writing:

- What is the purpose of the report?
- Who will the report be aimed at (audience)?
- What information does the reader need to know (or what don't they need to know)?
- Are you clear about the layout of the report? You may want to check this with your lecturer
- What do you know already?
- What more do you need to find out?
- Due date and word count?

Analyse the topic (brainstorming)

- Read the report topic carefully
- Highlight keywords and if you don't know some of the meanings of the words, use a dictionary to find the meanings
- Write down words that are similar to those in the topic question
- Take note of the instruction words such as 'compare', 'contrast' or 'evaluate'. Check what these concepts involve. This will give you an idea of what you need to present in your report
- Spend 10 minutes writing down thoughts that you have when reading the topic

Writing your first draft

When writing your first draft, write (or type) quickly and clearly. Write concisely. Use short sentences.

- Decide upon the subheadings that you will use in the main body and order them in a logical way
- Depending on the type of report you are writing you can assign a numbering system to the headings (such as 1 followed by 1.1, 1.2 etc). Ask your lecturer for their preferred style
- Arrange your information under the main headings and subheadings you have created
- Define key terms or abbreviations at the beginning of the main body
- Keep your audience in mind as you write
- Write in a style relevant to your topic and keep this consistent throughout i.e. an impersonal style is used in scientific reports and does not use words such as I, we or you.
- Include statistics, diagrams or other illustrations relevant to your topic and remember to reference them. (Collect a referencing guide from the library or online at <https://tafesa.libguides.com/harvardreferencing>)

Editing

Always edit your report. 'Tidy up' your phrases and sentences. Check your draft for the following:

- Spelling and grammar
- Is it easy to understand, and is the information/argument presented clearly and logically?
- Does it cover all the relevant issues?
- Does it stick to the point?
- Is it accurate? Check the accuracy of data and facts
- Are the references, numbering system for headings and style of writing consistent throughout?
- After editing, proofread the final copy. It can also be helpful to have someone else proof read
- Make sure you keep a copy of your final document

Basic Structure

Preliminary section	Title: <i>Report on the proposal to establish a community centre at Kilburn</i>
	Table of contents – list of the sections, headings appendices and page numbers
	Abstract or Summary – brief description of your report, how it was investigated, the results and recommendations.
	In executive or business reports, an Executive Summary can be used in this section. See the Executive Summary guide at https://tafesa.libguides.com/executivesummary for more information
Section 1	1.0 Introduction – background information on the report
	1.1 <i>EPA Report – Bradken Foundry</i>
Section 2	2.0 Your key findings / information – use headings and subheadings
	2.1 <i>Closure of Kilburn Primary School</i>
	2.2 <i>Greening SA initiative</i>
	2.3 <i>Current venues</i>
	2.4 <i>Resident's Association support</i>
	2.4.1 <i>Sporting club support</i>
Section 3	3.0 Conclusion – results of your research
	3.1 <i>Feasibility study</i>
	4.0 Recommendations
	4.1 <i>Establishment of a community centre at Kilburn presentation of findings to council</i>
Supplementary section	Reference list – a list of the references you used in the report
	Appendices – information not included in the main body (surveys, graphs, charts tables etc.). An appendix contains detailed information that you have summarised within the report. It is often the raw data you have researched, and it is for the reader to refer to should they want to have additional information of the findings you have provided within the report. For example, in your report, you may incorporate some content of the organisation's strategy but not the entire strategy on customer service. The Appendix would be used to include the complete strategy so the reader can refer to it. The Appendix does not count in the word count. It is optional to include an Appendix, but it can useful and adds to the credibility/authenticity of the information you have included. More information on appendices can be found at: https://www.une.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/392156/WE_Appendices.pdf
	Appendix 1 – <i>EPA Reports</i>
	Appendix 2 – <i>Results of the feasibility study</i>