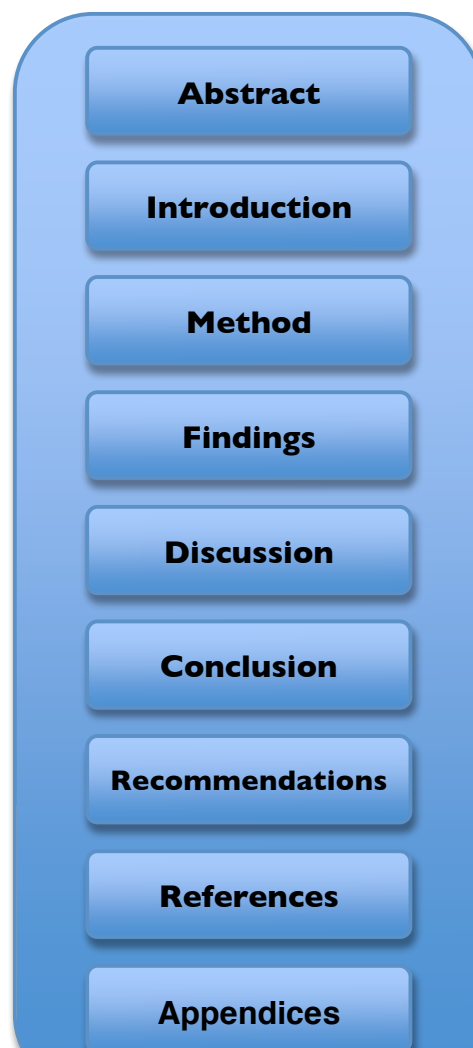


## Report writing

### Purpose and audience

- A report provides clearly organised information and/or data about a situation or problem under investigation.
- The information/data may come from your experience, your reading, experiments or measurements conducted in a laboratory or out in the field.
- Your assignment might specify the type of audience of your report – e.g. non-specialist readers, specialists in your field of study. If unsure, clarify with your lecturer.
- Knowing your audience will determine how much information and how much context you need to provide, and the choice of technical and non-technical language in your writing.

### Report structure



1. Abstract/Executive Summary – see *Assignment types: abstract and executive summary*.

2. Introduction:

- The introduction provides an overview of the report.
- Describe your aims and objectives explicitly, and the context of the problem or situation.
- If relevant, indicate the scope or limitations of your investigation.
- If necessary, provide a brief historical background (with subheadings) of significant events leading up to the present investigation.
- If the explanation of the context is lengthy, you may want to make it a separate section and call it *Background/Context/Definitions/Key Terms*.
- If you are required to provide an analysis of existing research, you will need a separate section and call it *Literature Review*.
- Use the present tense to outline the problem and your aims.
- Use past tense to describe events that have occurred when giving background information or context.

3. Method:

- List the procedures and process undertaken in your investigation in clear order. If necessary, use subheadings like *Sample, Instruments*.
- For a technical report, you may need to include descriptions of materials, equipment and resources.
- Use the past tense as the events of the research are over.
- Unless you are told specifically to write in first person, choose impersonal sentence structures such as passive constructions, e.g. *20 students were selected randomly to form the sample group* instead of *I selected 20 students randomly to form the sample group*.

4. Findings/Results/Data:

- Present your information in a clear and logical sequence.

- You may want to use charts, tables, graphs and pictures to demonstrate your results. These are collectively called figures in a report. Make sure that each of these is labelled and numbered consecutively.
- If you have a large amount of empirical results, include them in an appendix.
- Use the past tense and passive construction to describe what was found, in keeping with the impersonal tone of the report.

#### 5. Discussion/Analysis:

- This section resembles a short essay – it is a connected series of sentences that explain and argue for an interpretation of the evidence in the report.
- Use the present tense to discuss the ongoing situation as revealed in the investigation. Check with your lecturer if you should adopt a personal or impersonal tone in the discussion.

#### 6. Conclusion:

- This section is like the summary of an essay – it provides an overall purpose of the report, the steps through which it has progressed, and its overall findings and point of view.
- No new material should be included in the conclusion.

#### 7. Recommendations/Implications:

- If the nature of the report has been to identify actions to be taken as a result of the findings, they should be listed here sequentially.
- Use the past tense to review what the report found, and comment in the present tense.

#### 8. References:

- Demonstrates that you have researched the area.
- Demonstrates that you are enlisting the support of someone's research to support your own ideas and findings.
- Demonstrates what ideas or information you have referred to from someone's research as distinct from your own.
- Demonstrates that you acknowledge and give credit to the work of someone else.

- Make sure that you are familiar with the referencing style as prescribed by your faculty.
- Only include those references that you have used in your report (i.e. those that you have cited in the report).

#### 9. Appendices:

- An appendix is any extra material that you wish to include at the end of your report for the audience to consider.
- It may be that it is not essential in the body of the report itself, or is too lengthy and would interrupt the flow of information.
- In some cases, it may be evidential material on which your findings are based (e.g. statistical calculations or data from another source).
- Each appendix should be titled and numbered (e.g. Appendix A, Appendix B), and listed in the table of contents.

Adapted from the following source:

Morley-Warner, T. 2000, *Academic writing is... A guide to writing in a university context*, Centre for Research and Education in the Arts, Sydney.

