Report summary

Introduction

Purpose

You may need to write a report to address a problem, present useful information to key stakeholders, inform decision-making, or present research findings.

Structure and content

Structure

1. **Most**: require headings and sub-headings; are written in paragraphs; may include graphics; include in-text citations and a reference list
2. **Some**: use numbered headings and sub-headings; may require an executive summary; may use bullet points in addition to paragraphs; may end with recommendations

Business reports	Vary in content and format but share a similar purpose of providing useful information to managers and stakeholders.
Laboratory reports	Common in STEM disciplines to show results of experiments or investigations. They follow a common pattern of introduction, methods, results, discussion.
Research reports	Provide an account of research such as quantitative research involving data produced in a study, qualitative research involving data based on interviews and focus groups or a library database search, or some combination of the two.
Technical reports	Common in Engineering and IT disciplines to inform decision-making, such as presenting a solution to a technical problem.

Content

Preliminary information	Title page Table of contents Executive summary (in some types of report)
The body	Introduction Literature review (in some types of report) Methods/Procedure Findings/Results Discussion Conclusions Recommendations (in some types of report)
End matter	Appendices Reference list

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Useful strategies

Language choices

Consider the readership and purpose of your report when choosing which words to use. Technical or discipline-specific vocabulary may be appropriate for an audience in the same field but may be challenging for a more general audience.

Structure and content choices

Assignments at university often include the required sections of a report and over time, you will learn the common structures in the workplace. In all cases, however, you should consider

- What is my report trying to achieve?
- What does my reader already know?
- What does my reader need to know?
- How can I help the reader effectively navigate my report and maximise understanding?

Using data in reports

Graphics may include technical diagrams, illustrations, tables or graphs. They convey complex information, demonstrate relationships, illustrate trends and classify data. When you use graphics in your report, you should consider:

- what type of graphic is most suitable to convey the information
- how you can integrate the graphic into your text so your reader understands your point
- how you can incorporate a commentary on the graphic. by focussing the reader's attention on the key trend or figure, we can maximise the reader's understanding.

Useful language

Using graphics

Table 1	shows	an overview of …
Figure 1	compares	the experimental data on X.
	presents	the summary statistics for …
	provides	the results obtained from the preliminary analysis of X.

Commenting on data

A possible explanation for this might be that …
This result may be accounted for by the fact that …
These relationships may partly be explained by …
This inconsistency may be due to …
These results are likely to be related to …
This discrepancy could be attributed to …

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Describing numbers

Number	Most... The most... The majority of ... The greatest number of ...	The least... A minority of ... The least number of ...
Percentage	A high percentage of ... A higher percentage of ...	A low percentage of ... A lower percentage of ...
Fractions	The greatest part...	The smallest part...

Making comparisons

Compared to X, ...

Compared with Y, ...

X is _____- er than Y (higher than, stronger than)

X is not as _____ as Y (high, strong)

In comparison with X, ...

In comparison to X, ...

In contrast to X, Y is...

On the other hand, ...

In the same way, ...

Equally, ...

Similarly, ...

In comparison, X is ...

In contrast, Y is ...

X is more _____ than Y (significant, expensive)

X is less _____ than Y (significant, strong)

X is similar/different to Y in that ...

X differs from Y in that ...

X is .... whereas/while Y is ....

Both X and Y are...

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