

## Reviewing

Use charts and diagrams when discussing quantitative information; they can often make the ideas, comparisons, etc. easier to understand.

Carefully proof-read your report. Then ask a colleague to read it to check if they understand the rationale of your conclusions and recommendations.

Check if your report can “stand alone”, i.e. could anyone get the complete picture from it or does it require other documentation, a previous report, etc?

Weeks or months could go by before your ideas are considered or implemented. Is there sufficient data in the report to enable the principal reader to understand the material?

## Presentation

The presentation of your report is important. Make it look as professional as you can. This will add to the impact of the report, help gain the respect and trust of the reader and increase your credibility.

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## The Learning Support Guide to:

# Reports

The art of writing a report is to organise it into straightforward English. This is not always easy if you have spent a great deal of time collecting facts and statistics, if the issues are complicated and your investigation is extensive. To avoid information overload you can:

- simplify what you write
- reject irrelevant / doubtful information
- highlight the essential
- justify arguments & conclusions with substantiated facts

It is a good idea to determine the purpose of your report before you start to write it. Basically there are three types:

- **Factual:** a statement of facts
- **Instructional:** explaining procedures, ideas, methods
- **Persuasive:** recommending, e.g. purchasing equipment, cost cutting

Think about the principal reader of your report and aim the report at him/her. This is the main recipient who will have the authority to implement or support your ideas. Don't worry about other readers - some people are only on the distribution list for courtesy. Get a clearer picture of your reader by asking these questions:

### **What does the reader know of the subject?**

Find out how much is known already so you can write using appropriate vocabulary and technical levels.

### **What are the reader's attitudes?**

Find out the reader's interests, likes and dislikes - then couch your ideas to elicit a positive response.

### **What does the reader want?**

Your reader may not be totally swayed by your arguments, so find out about his/her hopes and expectations, e.g. improved profits, better quality assurance. Ensure your first recommendation addresses the reader's hopes, even though you might consider your other recommendations of more importance.

### **Will the reader readily accept my ideas?**

It is worthwhile considering this question. It may also help to anticipate what problems may be encountered and ways to overcome them.

**It is very important to have accurate knowledge of your main reader. All your hard work could be wasted because you have not dispelled anxieties or built a logical and solid case which gives the reader confidence to accept your recommendations.**

## **Layout**

Here is a useful guide to help you structure your report:

### **1.0 Title Page**

Include: title, date, author's name and position, distribution list.

### **2.0 Summary**

A succinct overview including objectives, key conclusions, recommendations and implications.

### **3.0 Contents list**

Include: section headings, subsections, appendices, etc. together with page numbers.

### **4.0 Terms of reference**

Include: the background to the report; explain why it has been written. There is usually a statement identifying the scope of the research - who asked for it to be written, constraints and any special considerations.

### **5.0 Main body of report**

Headings and sub-headings should be numbered; similarly, so should any charts, diagrams, photos, etc. Sub-headings should be indented and written in smaller writing.

### **6.0 Conclusions**

Include: a brief summary of the main ideas, emphasising significance and implications.

### **7.0 Recommendations**

Each one is written separately and numbered.

### **8.0 Appendices**

Should be called Appendix 1, Appendix 2, etc.