

A Guide to Business Report Writing

What is Report Writing?

The purpose of a report is to inform someone (usually your boss) about a particular subject. Reports are made up of facts and arguments on a specific subject. Reports allow information to be presented in an ordered way, so they help the reader to make decisions. There are three types of business report: extended formal report, short formal report and informal report.

How are reports different from essays?

Reports present findings and make recommendations rather than a critique of a subject.

How are reports different from letters?

Definitely in their layout. Below you can see the layout specific to short formal reports.

Short Formal Report

A Short Formal Report is for internal use in companies. The structure of a Short Formal Report is as follows:

- Terms of reference
- Procedure
- Findings
- Conclusions
- Recommendations

The Terms of Reference

This is an introductory part of the report, and includes the statement of aims and objectives. It should clearly say:

- Who the report is for (e.g. *OCR Certificate in Administration Group*)
- What the report is about (e.g. *Following office procedures*)
- When the report needs to be presented by (e.g. *to be presented to Certificate in Administration Group 20 January*)

Procedure

This is where you explain how the information was gathered. You also need to say exactly where you got your information from, and how you got the information. This is where you would also include your methodology if relevant.

Findings

This section of the report should contain the information that you found out as a result of your procedure. You will need to include the facts and figures that have been collected during your report.

Conclusions

The conclusion is made up of the main findings. This is where you show what you think of the information you have found. Make sure that you clearly show how you came to your conclusions, and that they are based on your findings. Everything in this section is based on the findings and you should not introduce new points at this time.

Recommendations

This is where you must say how the problem can be solved. This must be based on the findings of the report. You can have short-term and long-term recommendations; you need to be aware of the implication of your recommendations (financial, etc).

Things to remember when writing your report:

Language and Style

- Your writing must be clear and precise in meaning. Use full sentences.
- The style of writing should be factual and objective. (Do not use '*I think*', '*I believe*'.)
- The language must be formal. Do not use slang.
- Do not use '*I*', '*you*' or '*me*' in a formal report. Use the passive and third person language such as '*The personnel committee requested a report on...*'

Layout/ Headings

- The main parts of your report should have **headings**.
- (• Important points inside these main areas should carry **sub-headings**.
- If you want to draw attention to a specific word or section, underline that word or heading.
- Numbers can be used to help list points of importance in order.)

So you will have to write the paragraphs about the content points according to the headings in the following structure.

- 1. TERMS OF REFERENCE**
- 2. PROCEDURES**
- 3. FINDINGS**
- 4. CONCLUSION**
- 5. RECOMMENDATIONS**