



Report

What is a Report?

Reports are documents which present detailed interpretation and content, and critical analysis of the results of an experiment, investigation and project on a particular topic. A report usually contains different sections, such as introduction, methods, results, discussion and conclusion. There may be a specific writing style and format for the report. Each discipline may have its specific format. There are various types of reports across different subjects, such as analytical reports in business field, and practical reports in some sciences subjects. Report writing is an important skill for students, as it is often used in all work fields.

Structure of Report Writing

In general, a report is made up of different sections with specific information.

Abstract: A brief summary (sometimes known as executive summary) of the report which is approximately 100 to 150 words. It includes the aim of the report, a brief research methodology used, summary of key findings, a short discussion, and conclusion.

Introduction: The objective, rationale and background information of the research/experiment/project. It could cover some aspects such as the theoretical perspectives, a brief review on previous and existing knowledge, limitations of previous work, hypotheses and expected outcomes.

Method: Outline the approaches and procedures that were used to carry out the research/experiment/project. This section also mentions the specific materials and equipments used for the experiment/research. In some scientific reports, instructions of the experiments and some labeled diagrams are included to give more information of the practical work.

Results: Describe the findings and observations. Data can be presented in tables, graphs and even through calculation. In some scientific reports, the results section also shows if the hypothesis of a theory is supported or not. This section is a summary of the key findings. However, it would not cover any explanation of the findings and observations.

Discussion: Provide the interpretations and evaluations of the findings and observations; analyze the findings in relation to the theoretical background and objective of the study; comment on any unexpected outcomes; acknowledge any problems and limitations with possible reasons; give suggestions for future studies.

Conclusion: It can be either a separate section or integrated with the discussion (always at the end of the discussion). It is usually made up of a few sentences to summarize the key findings relating to the aim of the research/ project.



Appendix: Provides extra supporting information in relation to the report, such as diagrams, charts, sample questionnaire, calculations, and raw data (e.g. raw SPSS data).

References: A list of all the sources referred to in the report. It is presented in alphabetical order with full bibliographical details of the sources used in the report.

	Declarative	CHARACTERISTICS
Y	Functioning	
	Take Time to Set	
	Take Time to Answer	
	Take Time to Correct	
	Take Time to provide Feedback	
Y	Suitable for Large Class	
Y	Can substitute with Computers	
Y	Passive	
	Active	
Y	Process Oriented Method	
Y	Product Oriented Method	

P = Possibly Y =Yes

Advantages of Report Writing

- Develop techniques in data collection, analysis and reporting
- Develop judgments about experiment procedures, results and limitations
- Enhance writing skills in presenting practical work
- Report writing can assess different levels of cognitive knowledge

Disadvantages of Report Writing

- It is a time-consuming assessment for both students and teachers.

How to design a good Report Writing Assessment?

- If you require students to follow a specific report format, it must be clearly specified. Different disciplines may have their own style of format. For example, psychology report has to follow the APA format.
- Remind students to be aware of the use of technical terms and symbols. People from the discipline can understand the meaning of these jargons. However, readers who are not from the discipline may not be familiar with those terms. Therefore, students are required to provide definitions of the technical terms.
- Again, if English grammar and language are part of the marking criteria, this must be clearly specified.
- Provide some guidelines on reporting numbers, units of measurement and scientific diagrams for students.



- Provide a report checklist for students. There are different sections in a report format, and each section has its specific content in it. A checklist would help students include all the essential content in each section.
- Make sure students understand the assessment criteria. Students have to be aware what aspects are going to be assessed, such as the writing style, analysis, diagrams and referencing.

Marking Rubrics

Here is an example of the marking rubrics for Report.

MARKING RUBRICS	Excellent	Proficient	Average	Poor
Introduction	The purposes and aim of the study were clearly stated; an in-depth coverage of the background; showed the previous and recent knowledge of the topic to support the aims of the study; hypothesis was clearly stated in a testable form with detailed explanation	The purposes and aim of the study were clearly stated; some in-depth background was shown; Previous and recent knowledge was showed in a descriptive way with little support to the aims of the study; hypothesis was clearly stated with basic explanation	The purposes and aim of the study were briefly stated; only covered the background at a basic level; only described the previous and recent knowledge; hypothesis was only described without explanation	The purpose and aim were not stated; briefly mentioned the background information and knowledge of the study; hypothesis was stated without explanation
Materials and Methods	Precisely and clearly outlined the method; reported the detailed procedures of the study/experiment; specified the use of particular materials and equipments in details; diagram was clear, simple, accurate, titled and labeled	Clearly outlined the method; reported the procedures of the study/experiment but a few points were not detailed enough; mentioned most of the materials and equipments; diagram was simple and clear but some labels were missed	Briefly outlined the method; briefly described the procedures; only mentioned some materials and equipments; diagram was not labeled in details	Briefly outlined the method; procedures of the study/experiment were described ambiguously; materials and equipments were briefly mentioned and some were missed
Results	Data were illustrated in a concise, clear and systematic way; clearly showed the formula and details of the calculations; tables and graphs were presented appropriately (including title, headings and units)	Data were showed in a clear way; showed most of the key steps of the calculations but a few steps missed; tables and graphs were presented with mirror errors	Data were shown in an ambiguous way with some non-significant findings included; calculations were not clear and detailed; tables and graphs were poorly presented	Data, calculations and tables were hard to follow; poor presentation of the results
Discussion	A detailed interpretation and evaluation of the data; identified and	An basic interpretation and evaluation of the data; identified and discussed some of the	Only described the data with a little explanation and evaluation; the	Only described the data without explanation



	discussed the significance and relationship among data and the aim of the study; recognized and discussed the limitations of the data and methods; provided practical suggestions for future studies	relationship among data and the aim of the study; identified a few limitations of the data and method; attempted to make a few suggestions but not practical enough	relationship among data and the aim of the study was discussed at a general level; limitations and suggestions for future studies were not stated	
Reference	Referencing and citation style was correct and consistent between the list and the text; reference list was completely concise without errors	Referencing citation style was consistent between the text and the list; reference list with only a few mirror mistakes	Some references were inconsistent between text and list; reference list with some mistakes	Many references were inconsistent between the text and the list; a number of mistakes in the reference list
Presentation	Writing was well organized and followed the specific report format; clear and concise explanations of the technical terms; number, specific symbols and units of measurements were accurately presented	Writing was organized and mostly followed the specific report format with a few mirror mistakes; clear explanations of the technical terms; specific symbols, number and units of measurements were presented with a few mirror mistakes	Writing lacked of an organized flow and not followed the specific report format; only described the technical terms without explanations; number and units measurements were presented not accurately presented	Chaotic in organization and presentation of technical terms, numbers and units of measurements

Web References and Resources

- Anathallee, Y. (2000) Writing practical reports. Medical Student Resources. http://www.suite101.com/article.cfm/medical_student/36286
- Differences between essays, reports and journals, Study & Learning Centre, RMIT University http://www.dlsweb.rmit.edu.au/lisu/content/2_AssessmentTasks/assess_pdf/diffbet_reportsessays.pdf
- Field, A. & Hole, G. (2003). How to design and report experiments. London: Sage. <http://www.psychology.nottingham.ac.uk/staff/jas/yr1pracs/c81mprpracs.htm>
- Poarch, M. (2000). Investigation written report rubrics, Accessed: 07 July 2010. http://www.science-class.net/Photosynthesis_Cell_Respiration/Project/Investigation%20Report%20Rubric.pdf
- Report Writing, Learning and Teaching Unit, The University of South Australia. <http://www.unisa.edu.au/ltu/students/study/assessment/reports.asp>
- Writing practical reports, Learning and Teaching Unit, The University of South Australia. <http://www.unisa.edu.au/ltu/students/study/assessment/practical.asp>

To Reference these pages

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Chan C.(2009) Assessment: Report, Assessment Resources@HKU, University of Hong Kong

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