

Library Helpsheet

Report Writing

The following guidelines provide a brief introduction to writing your report but ask your teacher for more detailed guidance.

What is a report?

A report is a formal written piece of work which details and analyses a topic in a structured and logical way. It is focused, fact based, and to the point. It may use tables, charts or diagrams to illustrate points.



Structure

Your report should follow this structure:

Title Page	Front cover with your name, class, teacher's name and the title of the report
Contents page	List of each section of your report and the page where the section starts
Terms of reference	Outlines the reason for the report; paraphrase the question you have been set
Introduction	Sets out the scope of the report and provides a preview of what you are going to discuss
Main body	Contains the findings, observations, arguments and facts, main points – the evidence – which is the largest part of the report. Make your points one at a time using separate paragraphs for each topic/point. Use section headings if you like
Conclusion	From the evidence you have provided in the main body of the report, present your opinion and link it back to your terms of reference.
Appendices	Usually information too detailed for the main body of the report e.g. diagrams, statistical information, charts
Bibliography	A list of all the resources you used for research
References	A list of sources you have quoted or cited.

Well written reports

What do we mean when we say a report is well written? We can expect the report to:

- Be concise
- Be easy to understand
- Be written in sentences
- Be written in paragraphs
- Use correct standard grammar
- Use accurate spelling
- Use correct punctuation
- Use appropriate vocabulary
- Be in a formal style
- Be in a formal tone.



Formal Style

Reports are written using **formal language** and a **formal tone**. There are a variety of ways of achieving the formality needed in your reports:



- Use correct **vocabulary**; not slang e.g. do not instead of don't
- Use a business-like style when expressing yourself; use **direct** words
- Present information **concisely and clearly** – leave out unnecessary information
- **Plan** your report so it flows in a logical manner.

Hints and tips

- Remember to write in **clear sentences** and use **paragraphs**
- Link points to each other. Use **linking words and phrases** such as moreover, as I have pointed out, although, evidence to support this
- Use plain English where possible and technical terms when necessary
- Use diagrams, charts and tables only where they support your evidence
- Don't forget to check your **spelling, grammar and punctuation**
- If you are unsure about a sentence, read it aloud to see if it makes sense
- If you use abbreviations or acronyms, remember to use it in the full form first time, with the abbreviation or acronym in brackets. You can then use the shortened version thereafter e.g. three dimensional (3D); or British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)
- Try to use **politically correct terms** e.g. police officer rather than policeman to avoid gender bias; or disabled person rather than the disabled which is offensive
- Never hand in your first draft of a report; always **redraft**
- Get someone to read your report and comment on it
- Always leave a bit of time between writing and editing your first draft – to look at it with **fresh eyes**. The same is true before finalising your report – you will be able to spot where you need to reword or edit the report before handing it into your teacher.



In conclusion...

In short, your report should tell the reader what you are going to say (introduction), say it (evidence/main body), and then remind the reader what you've said (conclusion). You then insert any appendices, a list of references (autoed sources), and a bibliography (a list of the resources you used for your research).

Remember to keep a **note of the sources** you use for your research as you go along. Information sources you use for research should be listed in a **bibliography** (a list of the books, magazines, websites, etc. you used for research – See the **Bibliography Helpsheet** for more details) at the end of your essay/assessment. It is a good idea to have an open Word document when you are searching online. That way you can copy and paste the URL into the document and make a note of the information from the website which you found useful.

