

Gold Coast Institute of TAFE



Report Writing

your pathway to Greater possibilities

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WRITING A REPORT

INTRODUCTION

Writing a report has been one of the important skills students are required to develop.

Writing a report is a definite skill which requires focus on the task in hand so that the reader is able to quickly be aware of the topic being researched, how the research was undertaken and what findings the research revealed. The reader also needs to know what sources the writer used to support the findings. Report writing also requires organisational skills.

WHAT IS A REPORT?

A report is an investigation or inquiry into a topic of some significance. It differs from an essay in two significant areas.

1. A report has a different structure to an essay.

An essay basically consists of an introduction to the topic, a body which consists of a number of paragraphs developing the theme of the essay and finally a conclusion which draws the threads of the essay together.

A report consists of sections and subsections – each with numbered headings. One of these sections will be the bibliography which includes the sources of information relevant to the text, both references and extra reading.

Reports may include support materials including maps, diagrams, statistics and photos which are specifically numbered and referred to in the text.

2. A report is often based on primary data.

Primary data is first-hand data. The writer of the report often bases the report on information which has not been written or spoken about in another source.

Primary data is the equivalent of primary evidence to the historian. It has to be the real thing.

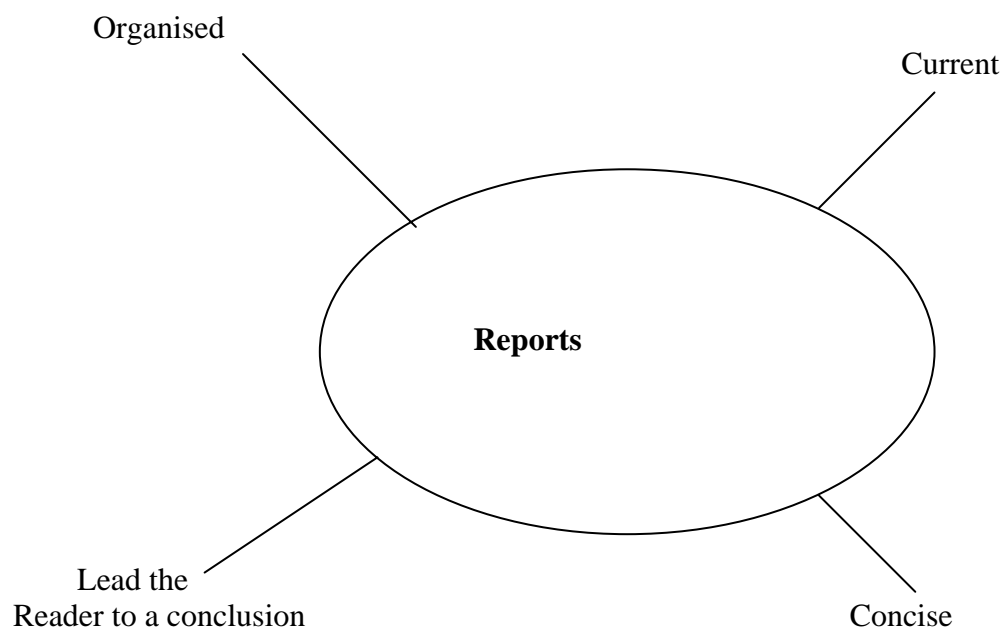
Primary data is best obtained in the field with the student actually going into the field and collecting information whether it be taking actual measurements or developing and administering a questionnaire and reporting on the results of that questionnaire. Unfortunately it is not always possible for ATP students to undertake data collection on all relevant topics in this way. In fact, time constraints limit this for many topics. (If you want to conduct a survey please check with your teacher first.) To assist, the definition of primary data is extended to take in maps, statistics such as ABS statistics and photographs.

REFERENCES:

Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology (CPIT) 2001. *Definition of Instructional Words* Christchurch: Library & Learning Services

Effective Report Writing. 1994. ABC Videotrain [Videorecording: VHS] PE.1478.E33.1994

University of Surrey. 1999. *Communications Report Writing*. Unis Skills Material www.surrey.ac.uk/Skills/pack/report.html.



Note: boxes below indicate separate pages

ASSIGNMENT TITLE PAGE

This is the cover of your report. Include the following details:

- * student name
- * student number
- * subject
- * assignment title
- * teacher's name
- * due date

SUMMARY/SYNOPSIS

- * A paragraph summarising your report
- * Includes aims, scope, methods, findings, conclusions, and recommendations.
- * Approximately 100 words

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Include

- * section titles (according to decimal format)
- * page numbers
- * start page numbering on this page

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Background Information** - provides impetus for report
 - * provides description, significance and history of topic
- 1.2 Aims** - identifies purpose of the report
 - * Use an introductory line followed by a series of aims
 - * Using decimal format, with one aim per decimal number.
 - * Use operational terms such as “identify”, list describe, examine, evaluate..
 - * If necessary, use words such as “some” to narrow the scope.
 - * Do not write as questions

2. METHOD

- * State clearly and concisely how you carried out your investigation and gathered your information.
- * Differentiate between published documents, experiments, observations, and personal communications.
- * Use decimal format to separate methods.
- * Use operational terms such as researched, examined, interviewed, observed, viewed. eg. Interviewed Dr Smith, pediatrician at Gold Coast Hospital about side effects of immunization on children.

Main part of the report

3. FINDINGS

- * Present the information gathered from research to reflect the aims of your report. Do not explain or discuss this information.
- * Use headings and sub-headings according to decimal format to reflect the aims you have identified.
- * Include in-text references for **all** information taken from research.
- * Relevant tables/figures/plates:
 - integrate
 - add number, title/caption, source (including page number if appropriate)
- * Refer to appendices if used.

4. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

- * Using cross-referencing, write a series of linked paragraphs explaining or interpreting your findings.
- * Use a series of logically organized paragraphs using OESC structure.
- * Show relationships between findings.
- * Avoid simply restating your findings.
- * If appropriate, draw on related research to develop the findings.
- * Add in-text references as necessary.
- * Mention any methodological flaws or problems encountered and discuss the impact they had on your results.
- * Some terms for interpretation and explanation: demonstrate, shows, indicates, represents, as a result, accordingly, consequently.

5. CONCLUSIONS

- * Provides answers to issue identified in aims.
- * Summarise your findings.
- * All conclusions should follow logically from the report. Do not introduce new information.
- * Draws a conclusion from your findings and analysis.
- * Write in paragraph format.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- * Use introductory line then list recommendations.
- * Recommend possible actions pertinent to the aims and conclusions of the report.
- * Specify WHAT should be done, by WHOM, WHEN, WHERE and HOW.
- * Use decimal format as appropriate.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- * Finish page numbering here
- * No other numbering is included here.
- * Refer to referencing guidelines for format.
- * Consists of:

References

List the references cited in your report.

Extra Reading

Itemise extra sources consulted during the compilation of your report but not referred to in your text.

APPENDICES

- * Appendices are not essential.
- * They contain extra information or graphic material that is pertinent, but not directly related to, your report. This extra information gives the reader a broader understanding of the topic.
- * Refer to appendices in the appropriate section/s of the report.
- * Use a separate page for each appendix.
- * Use Roman numerals to number appendices – eg Appendix (i) – and pages.
- * Annotate and source each appendix.
- * Transcripts of interviews may be included

And now, for a little light reliefsome translations of common phrases used in Proper Research!

"We chose to conduct a longitudinal study."

Our time got so out of hand it ended up being 5 years from start to finish.

"It has long been known "

I didn't look up the original reference but hope you've read it.

"Three of the samples were chosen for detailed study."

The others made no sense.

"I made a careful analysis of obtainable data."

I had to rely on what was left after 3 pages of notes were obliterated when I knocked over my cup of coffee.

"We took the most objective approach."

We couldn't think of anything quicker.

"It should be possible to improve the method."

This method didn't work.

"Various techniques have been used to palliate these deleterious factors."

We tried everything.

"It is believed that"

I think.

"It is generally believed that ..."

A couple of other people think so too.

"It is of interest to compare "

It's not really, but I'm not going to waste the data.

"Some reservations must be placed on these figures."

These figures are pretty useless.

Wadsworth, T. (1984) *Do It Yourself*

"Correct within an order of magnitude."

Wrong.

"A statistically oriented projection of the findings "

A wild guess.

"It can be shown that "

You work it out; I haven't had time.

"It is generally acknowledged that "

I heard someone say.

"It is clear that "

It's not clear at all, but if I bluff, you might take it for granted.

"Of great theoretical and practical importance "

Interesting to me.

"There are still some fundamental issues to be resolved."

We actually haven't been able to work it out.

"It is clear that much additional work will be required before a complete understanding of the phenomenon is possible."

We still haven't been able to work it out.

"It is hoped the study will stimulate more work in the field."

We know it's a bit weak; others are bound to want to do better.

"The study was technically feasible but there were practical problems."

Our funds were cut off.

"The study may be seen as a pilot."

Our funds were cut off.

Social Research, North Sydney: Allen and Unwin

DEFINITIONS OF INSTRUCTIONAL WORDS

Analyse	To examine critically highlighting the most important parts showing how they are related and why they are important.
Compare	To look at similarities and differences
Contrast	To look at differences only
Critically evaluate	To make a judgement through a discussion of evidence
Define	Give a clear statement of meaning. Show how the thing being defined differed from other things.
Demonstrate	To make evident using examples and/or statistics
Describe	To write in detail the main points or characteristics in a logical sequence without interpreting the information
Discuss	To present a perspective using description and interpretation with evidence to support the discussion
Enumerate	To list the main ideas
Evaluate	To assess the argument or issue and make a judgement after looking at the advantages and disadvantages
Examine	To investigate or research a topic
Explain	To clarify the issue or situation looking in particular at reasons, causes and effects
Illustrate	Clarify by the use of diagrams or words and reference to specific examples
Justify	To show why decisions or conclusions were made given the evidence available
Outline	To summaries the main ideas using supporting evidence
Relate	Show how things are connected to each other and how one causes the other
Review	To summaries the main points, critiquing and evaluating where appropriate
State	Present in brief clear form
Summarise	To give a brief account of the main points leaving out detail and example
Trace	Describe the progress, development, flow or sequence of events from point of origin in space or time

Source: Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology (CPIT) 2001