

Report Writing

What is the purpose of a report?

Reports are written to present and discuss research findings. They provide the reader with the rationale for the research, a description of the method used to conduct the research, the findings, results, a logical discussion, and conclusions/recommendations. A report should provide enough detail to enable others to repeat the research.

1. **Science reports** usually focus on testing a hypothesis (such as in a lab report) or investigating research questions (such as in a master thesis).
2. **Business reports** investigate a research topic or question, with the view to advising clients or reporting to others within an organisation. There are different types of reports, for example, feasibility studies, informational reports, or analytical reports.
3. **Case studies** are a type of report that exemplify a particular point. A case study may relate to a person, organisation, phenomenon, or a specific event.

What are the types of reports?

The process of writing a report

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| 1. Analyse the assignment task | 7. Analyse the results |
| 2. Establish the purpose and scope of the report and identify audience | 8. Write first draft |
| 3. Prepare a draft plan using headings | 9. Redraft as many times as needed |
| 4. Investigate prior research | 10. Proofread |
| 5. Design and plan your research | 11. Submit |
| 6. Conduct your research | 12. Reflect on feedback |

The process of writing a report

Not all elements are needed for every report type.

Check with your tutor which of the following elements your assignment requires.

| Elements of a report | Notes |
|--|---|
| Title | Clearly identify the topic of the report. You may be required to include a title page. |
| Acknowledgements | Briefly thank those who assisted in compiling the information. |
| Executive Summary (business) or Abstract (science) | Summarise the entire report. Include the report's purpose; an outline of your approach to research; theories applied; and the most important findings, results, and conclusions/recommendations. Abstracts are read by researchers to decide if they hold relevance for their own research. |
| Table of Contents | List the main sections or headings and the page number. |
| List of Tables and Illustrations | List any illustrations, graphs, tables, charts etc. and the page number. |
| Introduction | Provide background and context to the research. Define the purpose, and scope of the report, how the data was obtained, specific terms or concepts used. Include a hypothesis statement if relevant. |
| Literature Review | Summarise the literature relevant to your research to show how your research fits with current literature. |
| Method | State the method used for your investigation. Identify the design of your research and explain why this method was chosen. Provide enough detail so that someone else can replicate your research. |
| Results/Findings | Objectively report the findings or results. This may include collated results and statistical analysis. You may append raw data if required. |
| Discussion | Interpret and explain the results and indicate how these results fit with current literature. State if your hypothesis was supported or not and provide explanations. Acknowledge any limitations of your research. End the discussion with justified comments on the importance of the findings. |
| Conclusion/s | State conclusions which you have logically drawn given the evidence of your results and findings. |
| Recommendation/s | State recommendations. These should relate directly to the conclusions and provide possible solutions to problems identified in the report. |
| Reference List | Use APA formatting. |
| Appendices | Identify these as Appendix A, Appendix B, etc., and only include if they are referred to in the report. |
| Glossary | Alphabetically list key terms and abbreviations, and their definitions. |
| Index | Alphabetically list report topics and the relevant page number. |

Material adapted from the following sources

American Psychological Association. (2020). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th ed.). <https://doi.org/10.1037/0000165-000>

Greasley, P. (2011). *Doing essays & assignments: Essential tips for students*. SAGE Publications.

Rountree, K. (1998). *Writing for success: A practical guide for New Zealand students*. Longman.

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