# The Importance of Report Writing

## Is it really that essential?

Yes it is! Report Writing is an **indispensable tool for communicating details of executed work**. Explaining matters verbally, usually, reaches only a limited audience. Moreover, the human memory does not guarantee that all details are preserved in time. A written report, therefore, is a **lasting means for communicating with a larger audience and future reviewing of present work**. Moreover, when describing executed work, the **author is forced to rethink**. Often this leads to a **better understanding of one's work**, which consequently **may trigger new ideas** or ideas towards improvement.

## How should I report?

1. Keep in mind that you are not only writing for yourself
2. Writing must **facilitate the reader**, NOT the writer
3. NEVER take writing lightly
   - Regardless of whether the reader is known or unknown, **treat them with respect**
   - The **writing gives** the reader **an impression about the writer**, sometimes this is the first or even only impression the writer may give the reader
4. **NEVER cut and paste text from external resources WITHOUT explicit quoting.** Doing so is plagiarism and is regarded as a serious offence.
5. Limit quoting as much as possible. Summarise in your own words and **make proper references** instead.
6. **Write comprehensive and concise**. The number of pages or the thickness of the report is not what should impress. **Quality should take centre stage, not quantity.** Comprehensive is more important than concise though. As such, NEVER leave out essential information to shorten the writing. Keep in mind that a reader should be able to comprehend whilst spending as little time as possible in doing so. Having to read a lot costs time though having to figure out the meaning behind poor writing takes more time and annoys a great deal more.
7. Do not write a mystery novel. **Explain matters** right away, or make proper reference, and **in a logical order**
8. Present the writing in a neat, well-organised format. **Limit levels of heading and bullets.** Rule of thumb:
   - Within a chapter use no more than two, occasionally three, levels of heading
   - Use no more than two levels in a bulleted list.
9. Do not explain the obvious. Assume that the target audience has an interest in the subject area as well as certain background knowledge. **Do not explain theory that is commonly found in textbooks.**
10. Summarise essential results in easy to read graphs, figures or tables. **Do not include large amounts of pointless data.**

Dr. Karel L Sterckx
Bangkok University, School of Engineering
Email: karel.s@bu.ac.th