# **Writing a technical report**

Writing a technical report can be a challenging task, especially for university students who are new to the format and structure of technical writing. Remember to check the specific requirements and guidelines provided by your lecturer, as they may vary depending on the field of study and the level of the course. Following these guidelines will help you write a well-structured and effective technical report.

## **Technical report – understanding the purpose of the report**

The main purpose of a technical report is to present research findings, propose a solution to a problem, or provide a technical analysis of a system or process. Knowing the purpose will help you structure your report and determine the appropriate content.

## **Conduct thorough research**

Technical reports are based on solid research and evidence. Conduct thorough research on the topic of your report using reputable sources such as scholarly journals, textbooks, and reliable websites. Collect all the relevant information you need for your report. This may include data, research papers, case studies, and technical specifications. Make sure you use credible sources and keep track of where you found each piece of information.

## **How do I structure a technical report?**

Once you have a clear understanding of the purpose and have gathered all the necessary information, plan the structure of your report. Always check your lecturer’s requirements but technical reports typically follow a standard structure that includes:

* **Title page**

Include title, your name, the course name and student number, school and university, date of the submission

* **Summary**

A technical report summary (or executive summary, or abstract) should include a brief overview of your investigation, results, and recommendations. It must include all the key information your reader needs to make a decision without having to read your full report. Don’t treat your summary as an introduction; it should act as a stand-alone document.

* Purpose - a short version of the report and a guide to the report
* Length - short, typically not more than 100-300 words
* Content - provide information, not just a description of the report

*Tip: Write your Summary last*

* **Table of contents**

Help your reader quickly and easily find what they are looking for by using informative headings, subheadings and careful numbering of your sections and sub-sections.

* **Introduction**

In your introduction, you must present readers the following information

* Define the problem
* Discuss relevant previous research
* Objectives and goals (what are you trying to achieve?)
* Motivation (why is it interesting and important?)
* Describe the key features of your approach and results
* Any constraints you faced
* **Literature Review**

It is important to carry out a review of the literature to allow you to acquire an understanding of your topic. Writing a literature review you can become aware of the key issues, and relevant research that has already been done relating to your topic and find out the latest information.

A literature review is a piece of academic writing (or part of another report/dissertation) that critically evaluates material relevant to the research project. It demonstrates subject knowledge and an understanding of your position in relation to other academic work. A literature review examines a whole group of scholarly journal articles or books rather than just one book or one journal article

Writing a literature review you are expected to show that:

* You can recognise the relevant and important research in your field
* You can understand this research, by organising and evaluating it
* You can see where there is a gap in the research which your study will attempt to fill

Writing a literature review requires you to establish relationships among findings from other researchers and to condense many pages of published material into shorter segments. Therefore, your ability to assimilate material and, in effect, tell your own story, becomes critical.

* **The body of the report**

In that part you should:

* Present the information from your research logically under appropriate headings
* Describe interesting and important observations
* Highlight the originality of your research
* Divide into numbered and headed sections. These sections separate the different main ideas in a logical order

Tip: *look at other technical reports in your discipline*

Use diagrams, tables, figures and formulae to illustrate your point and make your report more visually appealing. Integrate them into the main body. Consider how you can present the information best for your reader. Would a table or figure help to convey your ideas more effectively than a paragraph describing the same data?

Figures, tables, equations, and formulae should:

* Be numbered
* Be referred to in-text, e.g. *In Table 1*…,
* Centred on the page
* Equations and formulae should be on a separate line
* Include a simple descriptive label
* **Conclusion**

Conclusion should be a strong, effective, and brief summing up of the essential features of your research including:

* Whether you have achieved your main goal
* Summarise your key findings
* Focus on the most important outcomes of your research and their significance
* **Recommendations**

In this section you will include the results of tests and experiments, specific design problems, and practical problem solutions. When giving an answer to your problem, be sure to include any limitations to your findings.

Your recommendations can be presented in two ways:

* Action statements  
  e.g. *Type approval should be issued for tunnel ventilation fans.*
* Conditional statements  
  e.g. *If fan blades are painted with an anti-corrosion coating system, it is likely that…*  
  e.g. *The research has found that the fan hub should be constructed from forged steel and the fan housing should be constructed from hot dipped galvanised steel, but future research…*
* **References**

Acknowledge all the information and ideas you’ve incorporated from other sources into your report using a consistent referencing style (Harvard Cite Them Right). This includes data, tables and figures.

*Remember:* Our [Cite Them Right](https://sp.sams-sigma.com/Shibboleth.sso/Login?entityID=https%3A//idp.uwl.ac.uk/idp/shibboleth&target=https%3A//sp.sams-sigma.com/shib%3Fdest%3Dhttps%3A//www.citethemrightonline.com/SHIBBOLETH%3Fdest%3Dhttps%3A//www.citethemrightonline.com) online is a comprehensive referencing guide that helps you cite and reference resources you use in your assignments. It includes examples of how to reference many different types of resources, and also provides numerous tips and frequently asked questions, covering different referencing scenarios.

* **Appendices**

You can include any further material which is essential for full understanding of your report in appendices. If you have data that is too detailed or lengthy to include (e.g. raw data, diagrams, comprehensive drawings, specifications) in the report itself, include it in the appendix. Your reader can then choose to refer to it if they are interested. Label your appendix with a number or a letter, a title, and refer to it the text, e.g. *For a full list of construction phases, see Appendix A.*

## **Some useful tips when writing a technical report**

* Begin writing the main text (body), not the Introduction. Follow your outline in terms of headings and subheadings. Let the ideas flow; do not worry at this stage about style, spelling or word processing. If you get stuck, go back to your outline plan, and make more detailed preparatory notes to get the writing flowing again.
* Reference ideas and each source (tables, graphs, picture, etc.) as you go. Follow Harvard style in Cite Them Right online guidelines.
* Write the Conclusion next, followed by the Introduction.
* Write the Summary at this stage.
* Table of content would be the last to create.
* Once you have completed your report, review and edit it for clarity, coherence, and accuracy. Check for grammatical errors, inconsistencies, and logical flow. Consider seeking feedback from peers, your lecturer, or [Study Support](https://www.uwl.ac.uk/current-students/support-current-students/study-support) team for further improvements.