

Academic Writing: Reports

Planning for an assignment

- Who plans for their assessments?
- What can you do to help yourself?
- What topics will you include?
- What information do you need?
- Where are you going to get this information?

Steps to planning the assessment

1. Identify main topic areas
2. Break down main topic areas
 - What is the topic about?
 - What do I already know about this area?
 - What do I need to find out about this area?
 - What are the main points I want to make?
 - What evidence do I have to support my main points?

3. List your topics and put them under the key headings
4. Decide the order of main topic areas?
 - What information does my reader need to make sense of later information (for instance, definitions before discussing an area)?
 - Am I discussing something that has happened in a sequence (such as a historical context or what happened during a placement experience)?
 - If the answer is yes, you will probably want to present this information in chronological (date/time) order.

Exercise

Compare and contrast study skills and employability skills and the ways these can be developed at University

- Make a skeleton plan for this assessment title
- Include what information you would need to include and what resources you would use

Reports vs. essays

| Reports | Essays |
|--|--|
| Practical, evaluative, analytical | Theoretical / discursive |
| More formal in structure | Structure less formal |
| Reader able to extract meaning quickly | Understanding requires careful reading |
| Focus on facts | Discuss ideas |
| Style may vary from section to section | Style consistent throughout (narrative) |
| Contains an abstract / executive summary | Rarely contains an abstract/ executive summary |
| Table of contents required | Table of contents not necessary |
| Headings, subheadings and bullet points appropriate | Headings, subheadings and bullet points rarely appropriate |
| Figures and tables appropriate | Figures and tables rare |
| Abbreviations more appropriate | Abbreviations less appropriate |
| Includes recommendations rather than just a conclusion | Includes a conclusion |

Types of reports

Factual (informative) reports

- Inform reader of a current situation / end result of a process

Instructional (exploratory) reports

- Explore the current situation
- Present a range of possible solutions / further steps

Persuasive (investigative) reports

- Explore the current situation
- Present solutions and advise which solution is most favourable

Before starting your report

- Know your audience; this will affect the focus of your writing and help make it more specific
- Make sure your sources of information are of high quality
- Reports are about presenting data in a structured, clear and easy to understand way
- You can use tables, figures and charts to illustrate the points you are making

Report sections

- Breaking the report into sections and subsections will aid structure and make it easy to navigate
- Each section should be titled appropriately and be numbered (1, 2, 3)
- Each section may have subsections which provide details about specific aspects of a main section
- You can also number each subsection (1.1, 1.2, 1.3 etc)

Example 1

1. Popular sports in the UK (Main section)
 - 1.1 Football (first level subsection)
 - 1.1.1 Premier League (second level subsection)
 - 1.2 Rugby
 - 1.3 Cricket

Example 2

1. The impacts of tourism on the environment

1.1 Positive

1.1.1 Protection

1.1.2 Conservation

1.2 Negative

1.2.1 Water use

1.2.2 Pollution

Formatting

| | |
|--|---|
| Font colour | Typically black |
| Font type | Usually assignments are written in either Arial or Times New Roman font. This is Arial Font This is Times New Roman Font |
| Font size | Assignments are usually written in font size 12 or 10. This is font size 12 This is font size 10 |
| Line spacing | Typically assignments are either double spaced or 1.5 line spaced |
| Spacing between paragraphs | Ensure that your spacing between paragraphs is consistent. It is common practice to leave a line between each paragraph |
| Page numbers | Number your pages using a document footer. Usually the page number will be right aligned. |
| Titles and subtitles | Titles and subtitles are used when writing reports (not essays). Some authors make titles stand out using bold / <u>underline</u> / <i>italics</i> . If you do this make sure that title formatting is consistent throughout your document |
| Labeling of diagrams / figures / charts / tables | Make sure that any diagrams / figures / charts / tables are clearly labeled (i.e. titles are used and formatted consistently). |

Report checklist

- Introduction: Purpose, explain key concepts, outline what will be done
- Make sure you address the research question
- Have you aimed your report at the right audience?
- Have you formatted the title page correctly?
- Are the pages numbered correctly?
- Are all figures and tables labelled correctly?

- Does the discussion link back to research questions AND use relevant literature?
- Does the conclusion bring together the main points?
- Have you proofread your work for irrelevant information?
- Is the writing style consistent?
- Have you proofread for spelling, punctuation and common mistakes?

Formal writing

Exercise:

Using academic verbs

Using academic nouns

Using academic adjectives

Common linking words and phrases

What words could we use for the following situations:

- To show agreement between sources
- To show disagreement between sources
- To introduce a specific example
- To elaborate on a point
- To introduce a list
- To draw a reasoned conclusion from evidence
- To introduce a conclusion section

Structuring a paragraph

Why are paragraphs important?

- 1) They are the building blocks of essays
- 2) They help the reader understand and follow your line of discussion
- 3) They enable you to link subtopics to the main topic
- 4) They help you address the main areas included in the marking criteria

What to include

1. Topic sentence
2. Supporting information (you may have several and include examples)
3. Interpretation/explanation
4. Reasoning /position

Topic sentence

- Serves as an introduction to the paragraph
- Presents the topic of the paragraph
- General statement in relation to the topic
- Does not contain specific details in relation to the topic

Supporting information

- Introduces relevant information related to the topic to support a position
- Alternatively, provides an different position or viewpoint
- Demonstrates your understanding of the literature
- Provides evidence to support your line of argument

| Part of paragraph | Form | Function |
|------------------------|--|---|
| Topic sentence | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General statement in relation to the topic • Does not contain specific details in relation to the topic | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presents the topic of the paragraph • Serves as an introduction to the paragraph |
| Supporting information | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be introduced as an in-text reference • Often introduced using verbs such as; suggests, claims, states, etc. • Can be a paraphrase or a summary of information from a source • Can be introduced using signpost words such as; <i>In addition, Similarly, however, whereas, in contrast</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduces relevant information related to the topic to support a position • Alternatively, provides an different position or viewpoint • Demonstrates your understanding of the literature • Provides evidence to support your line of argument |

| | | |
|--------------------------------|--|---|
| Explanation and interpretation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be introduced using expressions such as; <i>this might explain, what is suggested here, this author found.</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrates your understanding of the information presented Provides an opportunity to link the supporting information to the point of discussion |
| Reasoning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be introduced using expressions such as; <i>Collectively this suggests, therefore, based on this</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brings together the parts of the discussion Demonstrates the reasoning underpinning your work |

Poor behaviour in classrooms can have a negative impact on the quality of learning and teaching that takes place. Clarke and Davis (2007) demonstrated the relationship between types of learning and student behaviour. These authors found that behavioural issues were more evident around student centred activities. This is supported by Wilkins (2009) who suggests the organisation of tasks at certain times to avoid instances of poor behaviour. Collectively the evidence suggests that teachers need to strategically plan and time the type of activity and learning that takes place in the classroom.

- What is the topic sentence?
- What are the examples of supporting information/example?
- What about the Explanation/ Elaboration?
- What sentence represents reasoning?

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Topic sentence | Poor behaviour in classrooms can have a negative impact on the quality of learning and teaching that takes place |
| Supporting information/example | Clarke and Davis (2007) demonstrated the relationship between types of learning and student behaviour |
| Explanation/ Elaboration | These authors found that behavioural issues were more evident around student centred activities |
| Supporting information/example | This is supported by Wilkins (2009) who suggests the organisation of tasks at certain times to avoid instances of poor behaviour |
| Reasoning | Collectively the evidence suggests that teachers need to strategically plan and time the type of activity and learning that takes places in the classroom. |