
UNIT 10 WRITING REPORTS-2

REPORTING MEETINGS AND SPEECHES

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10.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit we shall show you how to report (i) a meeting, and (ii) a speech.

After you have worked through the unit you should be able to prepare reports on
i) meetings and ii) speeches.

10.1 INTRODUCTION

In every organization meetings are held periodically to discuss important issues related to the organization, and speeches are made by important officials. As an employee of your organization, you may be required to report such meetings and speeches.

10.2 REPORTING A MEETING

In the beginning you should give precise information about the following:

- i) Name of the organization
- ii) Venue and time of the meeting
- iii) Agenda or programme
- iv) A brief history of the organization

You should know something about each item of business and include all the important items in your report. You should report not only the final decisions, but also the arguments presented by various speakers.

The report of a meeting should not read like the secretary's minutes. For example, in your report the items of business will be taken up in the order of their importance rather than the order in which they were considered at the meeting. It will be a good thing if you can get the exact words of the resolutions adopted and quote some of the statements made by participants. You can use a tape-recorder, but do not depend on it entirely.

You may include statistics, tables, or charts — wherever necessary. You should give the names of all the participants, but report only the important speeches.

10.3 REPORTING A SPEECH

When you have to report a speech, you should start by paying attention to the following:

- i) Adequate identification of the speaker
- ii) The occasion for the speech
- iii) The exact time and place
- iv) The title of the speech, if any.

The experience of taking notes during lectures will help you in reporting a speech. Take down your notes carefully while you listen to the speech. If you wish to quote the exact words of a speaker, you must take down complete sentences, whenever possible. Use a tape-recorder, if you like, but do not always depend on it. Even if you use a tape-recorder, it is a good practice to take sufficient notes to follow the thread of the speaker's argument.

There are occasions when copies of a speech may be supplied in advance. If this has been done, you should start working on the copy immediately. You should go through it carefully and mark what you consider important. You should carefully check the copy when the speech is made and see if there are any major deviations from the text supplied. Sometimes what the speaker says outside the prepared text is more important than what is given in the text itself.

After the speech has been made, you should carefully organize your notes. The first and the most important step is to select a focal point for the report—that is, the most striking and significant point the speaker made. You should construct the lead paragraph around this point. Sometimes this decision is easy because the speaker discusses one theme so emphatically that it almost automatically becomes the lead. Another speaker may present greater difficulty because he makes several points of approximately equal weight, thus forcing the reporter to make his own choice.

You should organize the other main points also in the order of importance. Now you can write the lead as well as the body of the report. Try to limit direct quotations to a maximum of 100 words at a time and alternate direct quotations with paragraphs containing your paraphrase of the speeches made. You should also include background information about the speaker.

Sometimes several speeches form part of a report. In such cases, the most important speech, usually from the most important speaker, gets prominence. You should also mention the most important things said by the other speakers, and the different opinions expressed by them. You may quote the persons representing different schools of thought.

Example

The following is a report of the President's address to Parliament. It was published in *The Times of India* (New Delhi Edition), 20 Feb. 1986.

OPPOSITION BOYCOTTS ADDRESS Isolate terrorists, says President

The Times of India News Service

New Delhi, February 20. The President in his traditional address to the joint session of Parliament outlining the agenda of the government today pointed to the "inevitability of hard decisions without which forward movement will not be possible."

The address promised a comprehensive agriculture plan to promote an optimal cropping pattern, a more effective strategy for family planning, and sharpening of the anti-poverty programme.

Technology missions will be mounted to ensure drinking water for all villages, eradication of illiteracy, immunisation, oil-seeds production and improved

communication. New initiatives will be made for promotion of exports and tourism with a view to maintaining a viable balance of payments position.

There will be wide ranging discussions to formulate concrete proposals for changing electoral and other laws. Administrative reforms calculated to improve efficiency and enforce accountability will be introduced.

The joint session, with its usual ceremonial, was still shorn of the excitement and rapture which featured in the function only a year ago. Most non-Congress groups stayed away as announced, leaving gaps in rows.

Not since 1973 have so many groups joined in such a boycott. Even Congress members did not find any cause to cheer during the entire reading of the address. They thumped the desks only at the end as the President resumed his seat.

There was a moment of suspense when the President paused at the beginning. It was then noticed that he was looking for his reading glasses.

At the same time the President's address made it plain that "hard decisions" were inevitable in the pursuit of self-reliance, economic independence and eradication of poverty. "Sooner or later we have to face the realities of the situation. No one should be under the delusion that growth, social justice, price stability and self-reliance are achievable without efficiency, discipline and sharing of burden," Mr. Zail Singh said.

The President began his speech with a reference to the "triumph of democratic process over terrorism in Punjab" and held that the supreme task now was to isolate those resorting to violence.

He reiterated the government's commitment to the fullest implementation of the Punjab and the Assam accords.

Communalism: He acknowledged that communalism continued to pose a serious threat to national unity. "It is being reinforced by religious fundamentalism and fanaticism. The reconstituted National Integration Council will have to act decisively and systematically to strengthen secularism," he said.

He recalled the policies and programmes of the government outlined in his address last year and claimed "these have been fulfilled in a substantial measure." He cited the anti-defection law, enunciation of a new national education policy, establishment of a central Ganga authority, creation of a waste land development board as cases in point.

As for trends in economy, agriculture made steady progress going up nearly 15 per cent. He described the investment climate as buoyant. Power generation, fertilizer production, steel output have all gone up.

Tax collection: He said tax collections have been buoyant, belying gloomy forebodings. The collection of direct taxes is up by about 23 per cent compared to the corresponding period last year. Indirect tax collection has increased by 22 per cent, which is the highest in the last decade.

Glossary

in^levitable: which cannot be prevented from happening

re^literated: repeated

fa^lnaticism: very great keenness for something, especially some religious or political belief

cite: mention as an example

^lbuoyant: going up

be^llie: show to be false

Self-check Exercise 1

Read the report given above and answer the following questions:

1 What is the title or the headline of the report?

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2 Which is the lead paragraph of the report?

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3 What did the President promise in his address?

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4 You must have noticed that the reporter refers to previous joint sessions of Parliament. What is the purpose of such references in a report?

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5 Have you noticed any observation of the reporter which is not directly connected with the content of the speech? What is the use of such observations?

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6 The same address of the President (given on Feb. 20, 1986) was reported in a different manner in *The Tribune*, Chandigarh. The headline and the lead paragraph of the report are given below:

PRESIDENT ASSURES AKALIS OF SUPPORT

New Delhi, February 20 (P.T.I.; U.N.I.). The President, Giani Zail Singh, today asked the Punjab Government to isolate "those who are resorting to violence to disturb communal harmony and peace" and assured the ruling Akali Dal that in its "supreme tasks it would have the support of all political forces committed to the unity and integrity of the country."

Compare and contrast the headlines and the lead paragraphs in the two reports.

Exercise 2

Examine a report on a recent speech published in a newspaper. Consider the writer's choice of headline and lead paragraph and how well he has supported the lead with direct quotations.

10.4 PUNCTUATION: QUOTATION MARKS

Punctuation is a device by which we can divide written matter into sentences and phrases and make our meaning clear to the reader. In this section we shall talk about quotation marks, also called inverted commas. We use a pair of these marks, either double (" ") or single (' '), to show the beginning and end of the actual words said or written by someone else, that is, when we report someone's speech directly.

Examples of Punctuation in Direct Speech

- 1 Anita said, "We're going to Madras tomorrow."
(narration) + (words actually said)
- 2 "We're going to Madras tomorrow," Anita said.
(words actually said) + (narration)
- 3 "Give me a red rose," she cried, "and I will sing you my sweetest song!"
(narration between two parts of the utterance)

Notice that

- i) in Examples 1 and 3 there is a comma after the narrative clause to separate it from the utterance coming after it,
- ii) in Example 2 there is a comma at the end of the utterance to mark the transition from the words actually said to the narrative clause,
- iii) the first word in 'direct speech' begins with a capital letter,
- iv) the quotation marks enclose both the words actually said and the punctuation mark that goes with them.

Quotation marks are used to show where direct speech begins and where it ends. Do not use them at the beginning and end of each sentence in that speech.

Example

She said, "We'll be in Madras tomorrow. How marvellous! I hope it won't rain."

When writing a dialogue, we find it convenient to begin each contribution by each speaker on a new line.

Example

"We'll be in Madras tomorrow," said Anita. "How marvellous it will be! I hope it won't rain."

Her brother Srikant mumbled, "The forecast seemed to indicate good weather."

"Have you heard the forecast then?"

"Yes."

"Why didn't you tell me before?" she demanded. "You must know how important it is to me."

Anita crossed the floor and stood in front of him.

"Tell me exactly what you heard."

Silence.

She pleaded, "Srikant, I must know."

It is for you to decide whether you use double (" ") or single (' ') quotation marks. Either form is correct, but you must be consistent. Some people use double quotation marks to enclose direct speech and single quotation marks to enclose a quotation within a quotation.

Example

Dinesh said slowly, "Did I hear you say, 'I have no intention of going to Calcutta'?"

We use quotation marks to enclose titles of stories, poems, articles, essays, etc.

Example

Did you ever watch the serial 'Buniyad' on T.V.?

Commas and full stops are always placed inside the quotation marks.

Example

"Yes," Sunita agreed, "it is too late to go to the theatre now."

Self-check Exercise 3

Examine the following sentences, add quotation marks and use capital letters where necessary.

- 1 She's always late, complained her mother.
- 2 Would anyone like a game of chess? asked Suresh.
- 3 Anita asked, are there any decent programmes on T.V. tonight?
- 4 Mrs. Rao said, hand in your homework on friday.
- 5 goal! yelled the delighted crowd.

Self-check Exercise 4

Punctuate the following passage and use capital letters where required:

What do you feel are your main weaknesses pritam asked I know my spelling is very bad and i'm always making punctuation mistakes replied govind you need plenty of practice then his teacher said that can be arranged easily enough are you prepared to do extra homework yes certainly replied govind.

Self-check Exercise 5

Examine the following sentences and use quotation marks where necessary.

- 1 You must read *The Last Ride Together*.
- 2 Gandhi was a splendid film.
- 3 Do you read *The Times of India* or *Indian Express*?
- 4 *India Today* is very informative.
- 5 Is *Chunauti* a good programme?

10.5 LET US SUM UP

In your report on a meeting, you should give precise information about the organization, and the venue, time, and agenda of the meeting. You should report not only the final decisions but also the arguments of various speakers. You should take up the items of business in the order of their importance. You may quote some of the statements of the important participants and include statistics, tables, and charts where necessary.

When you report a speech, you should give precise information about the speaker and the occasion for the speech. While you listen to the speech, you should take down notes carefully. After the speech has been made, you should organize your notes. Then you should select the most significant point of the speech and arrange other points in the order of their importance. You should alternate direct quotations with your own paraphrase of the speeches. You may use a tape-recorder, but do not depend on it entirely.

10.6 KEY WORDS

ad'dress (noun): a speech

'boycott (verb): refuse to have relations with

chart: a sheet of tabulated or diagrammatic information

di'rect 'speech: words quoted as actually spoken

i,dentifi'cation: indication of who the persons are

'minutes: brief summary of the proceedings of an assembly, committee, etc.

opposi'tion: the parliamentary parties opposed to that in office

particip'ant: one who takes part in something

punctu'ation: the insertion of marks in writing to indicate stops

quo'tation 'marks: inverted commas and apostrophes, single (' ') or double (" "), used to mark the beginning and end of a quoted passage

sta'tistics: numerical facts systematically collected

'terrorist: one who inspires terror in the community

tra'ditional: based on custom handed down from earlier times

10.7 SUGGESTED READING

A good daily newspaper

10.8 ANSWERS TO SELF-CHECK EXERCISES

Exercise 1

- 1 The title of the headline of the report is: 'Opposition Boycotts Address'.
- 2 The paragraph which contains the most striking or the most significant point or points is called 'the lead' or 'the lead paragraph'. In this report the lead paragraph is: The President in his traditional address.....pointed to the "inevitability of hard decisions without which forward movement will not be possible."
- 3 The President promised i) a comprehensive agricultural plan to promote an optimal cropping pattern, ii) an effective strategy for family planning, iii) anti-poverty programmes, and iv) the use of modern technology in the fields of water supply, education, health, agriculture and transport.
- 4 Yes. The reporter mentions that this year's joint session was shorn of the excitement and rapture which had featured in the previous year's joint session. Such references and comparisons make the report more interesting.
- 5 Yes, there is one observation which is not directly connected with the content of the speech. The reporter mentions that there was a moment of suspense when the President paused at the beginning — looking for his reading glasses. Such observations make the report more interesting.
- 6 The headline of the report published in *The Tribune* is: 'President assures Akalis of Support.'

The lead paragraph is: "The President asked the Punjab government to isolate 'those who are resorting to violence to disturb communal harmony and peace' and assured the ruling Akali Dal that in its 'supreme task' it would have the support of all political forces committed to the unity and integrity of the country."

In the report published in *The Times of India*, the headline refers to the boycott of the address by the opposition parties and the President asking people to isolate the terrorists; the lead paragraph emphasizes the necessity of taking hard decisions to boost economic progress.

The Times of India, being a national daily with an all-India circulation, highlights national issues like the country's plans for economic development and the need for isolating terrorists.

The Tribune, being a regional paper, highlights local issues like the central government's support to the Akali government in Punjab in its fight against people who disturb communal harmony and peace.

Exercise 3

- 1 "She's always late," complained her mother.
- 2 "Would anyone like a game of chess?" asked Suresh.
- 3 Anita asked, "Are there any decent programmes on T.V. tonight?"
- 4 Mrs. Rao said, "Hand in your homework on Friday."
- 5 "Goal!" yelled the delighted crowd.

Exercise 4

"What do you feel are your main weaknesses?" Pritam asked.

"I know my spelling is very bad and I'm always making punctuation mistakes," replied Govind.

"You need plenty of practice then", his teacher said. "That can be arranged easily enough. Are you prepared to do extra homework?"

"Yes, certainly," replied Govind.

Exercise 5

- 1 You must read 'The Last Ride Together'.
- 2 'Gandhi' was a splendid film.
- 3
- 4 *India Today* is very informative.
- 5 Is 'Chunauti' a good programme?