

Guide to Writing Assignments



Components:

- Structure
- Layout
- Grammar, spelling & punctuation
- Content
- Numbers
- Visual Aids

Structure

- **Introduction**: Set the scene & expectations.
- What did you do and how did you do it? Did it work? Communicate your findings in the most suitable form (tables, graphs, pictures..) Things which don't work can sometimes be even more interesting, *if* you investigate *why*. Organise this section by topic, and **not** by time.
- **Conclusion**: Round things off, don't leave any topics dangling.

Layout

- Some essentials:
 - Name, ID, title.
 - Suitable section headings.
 - Page numbers.
 - Readable font sizes (e.g. 12pt)
- Use your allotted space wisely:
 - Avoid copious white-space.
 - Don't include huge figures.
 - Screen-shots can be wasteful—transcribe into your own format.

Grammar, Spelling & Punctuation

- ***These all matter!***
- The big picture: Reports and presentations are for communicating & influencing (e.g. your tutor to give you a high mark!).
- Your reader will become distracted and your message will be lost if these details are not correct.
- Proof-read your work before submitting.

Content

- You have limited space—use it wisely!
- ***Don't*** bore your reader with facts and details that he/she already knows.
- ***Do*** excite & enthrall your reader with a gripping narrative full of interesting facts and fascinating insights into the topic at hand.
- You'll need to perform many experiments to assemble enough data to do this.

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Visual Aids

- “A picture can be worth a thousand words.”
- Tables are good for communicating exact values.
 - 21.2 s is more readable than 21156 ms.
- Graphs are good for trends.
 - Always label your axes and include units.
 - Choose appropriate scales.
- Pictures can be compelling, but only if they tell a story.

Good luck!