WRITING SKILLS
REPORT WRITING

WHAT IS A REPORT?

* A report is a systematic, well organised document which defines and analyses a subject or problem, and which may include:
  * The record of a sequence of events
  * Interpretation of the significance of these events or facts
  * Evaluation of the facts or results of research presented
  * Discussion of the outcomes of a decision or course of action
  * Conclusions
  * Recommendations

INITIAL PREPARATION

- When you are researching, planning and eventually writing, continually ask yourself
  - what the main purpose of the report is
  - what your objective is in writing it
    - is it to inform
    - to argue
    - to persuade
    - to evaluate?
  - What does your reader want to see in the report and what will they do with it

PLANNING AND RESEARCH

- You first need to decide your basic framework. With your main topic or question as a central focus, jot down your initial thoughts and start to group these together

- Ask yourself what you need to find out, maybe in the form of questions that need to be answered, then approach your reading from this starting point

- If you have specific information to look for, it will make your reading easier and less time consuming

TITLE PAGE

- This should normally include the title, your name and the name of the tutor to whom it is being submitted, date of submission, your course/department, and if applicable, the name of the person and/or organisation who has commissioned the report

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- A list of people and organisations both within and outside the University who have helped you

CONTENTS PAGE

* A clear, well-formatted list of all the sections and sub-sections of the report

* Don't forget to put the page numbers! If applicable, there should be a separate list of tables, figures, illustrations and/or appendices after the main index

* Make sure that the headings in this list correspond exactly with those in your main body

* It is best to do your list of contents right at the end

TERMS OF REFERENCE

* A definition of the task; your specific objective and purpose of writing
* Even if you don't include this as a heading, it is a vital process to go through in your planning
  + What exactly is your report going to be about?
  + If it is group work, who exactly is responsible for what?
  + How long have you got?
  + What is your task timescale?
    Why are you writing the report?
  + What exactly are the assessment criteria?
  + Who are you writing the report for? Are you actually playing a role?
  + What does your reader want to see?

PROCEDURE

- List the equipment used and draw anything that requires description

- State the conditions of the experiment and the procedure, with any precautions necessary to ensure accuracy and safety

- Write the stages in any new procedure in the right order and describe in detail any new technique

- Describe your controls adequately

- Include information on the purity and structure of the materials used, and on the source of the material and the method of preparation.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY, ABSTRACT OR SYNOPSIS

* This is a very brief outline of the report to give the potential reader a general idea of what it's about.

* A statement of: overall aims and specific objectives (unless included in terms of reference

* Method/procedure used (unless included in separate section)

* Key findings main conclusions and recommendations

INTRODUCTION

- This should show that you have fully understood the task/brief and that you are going to cover everything required

- Indicate the basic structure of the report

- You should include just a little background /context and indicate the reasons for writing the report

- Your introduction will often give an indication of the conclusion to the report

MAIN BODY/FINDINGS

- This is the substance of your report. The structure will vary according to the nature of the material being presented, with headings and sub-headings used to clearly indicate the different sections

- A "situation>problem>solution>evaluation" approach may be appropriate

- Charts, diagrams and tables can be used to reinforce your arguments

RESULTS & CONCLUSION

- This section records your observations (in the past tense) and would normally include statistics, tables or graphs

- Your conclusion should draw out the implications of your findings, with deductions based on the facts described in your main body. Don't include any new material here

RECOMMENDATIONS

- These should follow on logically from your conclusion and be specific, measurable and achievable
- They should propose how the situation/problem could be improved by suggesting action to be taken
- A "statement of cost" should be included if you are recommending changes that have financial implications
- Recommendations can be numbered if you wish

APPENDICES

- An appendix (plural=appendices) is detailed documentation of points you outline in your findings, for example, technical data, questionnaires, letters sent, tables, sketches, charts, leaflets etc

- It is supplementary information which you consider to be too long or complicated or not quite relevant enough to include in your main body, but which still should be of interest to your reader

- Each appendix should be referred to in your text

REFERENCES

- This is either a separate list of sources which you have used during your research, but have not actually made reference to in your writing, or this list together with your list of references

BIBLIOGRAPHY & GLOSSARY

- This is either a separate list of sources which you have used during your research, but have not actually made reference to in your writing
- Include a glossary if the report includes a lot of specialised vocabulary or acronyms which may not be familiar to the reader

CHECK EVERYTHING CAREFULLY

- Careful checking of your report before you print off the final version can make a big difference
- Check:
  - General layout
  - Text organisation
  - Coherence
  - Grammar, spelling and punctuation
  - Referencing
  - Style

IN FINALITY

- And finally overall, does the report fulfil its purpose?

- Does it do what you're being asked to do and what you say you're going to do in your introduction?

- Are you pleased with it?

- If you can't confidently answer "yes" to these questions, then you may need to do some major editing and rewriting.

REFERENCES

- *www.kent.ac.uk/careers/cv/cvexamples.*
- *Professional Writing. Purdue University College of Liberal Arts. Retrieved November 7, 2014.*
- *Garay, Mary Sue, Bernhardt, Stephen. Expand Literacies: English teaching and the new workplace. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990. Print. Terk, Natasha (2010). Professional Writing Skills. Write it well.*