

Writing a Case Study

Tips for Success

What is a case study?

A case study investigates a single unit or multiple units known as 'the case', such as:

- A person or a group of people
- An event or series of events
- An organisation
- A particular problem.

The case can be hypothetical or based on a real-world scenario. For example, in Nursing, the case may be how a patient with diabetes has been treated at an outpatient clinic in a hospital. In Education, the case may be how a particular problem (e.g. bullying) is managed in a class of students. In Community Development, the case may be on how a micro-greening project improved an aspect of life in a particular community.

Essentially, through a case study, you may:

- Present decisions that can be made to improve or avoid a situation
- Provide possible solutions or recommendations to problems identified
- Develop a new design/program.

There are different types of case studies, and these vary according to subject area and the researcher's purpose. An **illustrative** case study can be used to show how a theory can be applied to the real world. An **investigative** case study can serve to develop new theories, solutions or recommendations for future action.

Check your unit guide to ensure that you write the type of case study required by the assignment instructions.

Writing a case study

Conducting your own research about a case will usually involve reading official documents and academic articles about the case. Depending on the case study, you may also need to gather additional information by observing activities and behaviours, and by interviewing people involved in the case.

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How to write a case study

1. **Check the exact requirements** of the task (e.g., type of case study, word count, number of references).
2. **Identify and define the case** and the specific context of the case.
3. **Identify the kind of data** you need and the **methods you will use** to collect and analyse them e.g., government/community documents, journal articles, and, in some cases, interviews and observations.
4. Collect and **analyse the data** on the case and the context in which the case is situated.
5. **Write up your case study** using an appropriate structure (see suggested structure below).
6. **Edit and proofread** your organisation of ideas, use of language, punctuation, and referencing of sources.
7. Submit your case study.

How should I structure my case study?

This information may be found in your unit guide. If your tutor or unit guide do not specify the requirements, you can adopt the following structure.

| Section | Purpose |
|--------------------------|---|
| Executive Summary | Summarises the main points from each section of the case study. |
| Introduction | Introduces the case, the background history, current context and issue/s (if any). Summarises previous studies from reliable sources relevant to the current situation |
| Aims | Identifies the aims and objectives of the case study (e.g., to identify and solve a problem; to illustrate how a theory has been implemented in an organisation) |

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| | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Method | <p>Identifies how the data was collected (e.g., from documents, interviews, questionnaires, observations).</p> <p>Identifies how the data was analysed (e.g., thematic analysis of text, statistical analysis of numbers).</p> |
| Results and findings | <p>Presents the major themes revealed through analysis of the data.</p> |
| Discussion | <p>Explains and comments on the findings, their significance, and how they can be used to benefit the stakeholders in the study.</p> |
| Recommendations | <p>Suggest practical ways in which the findings can be used to improve the situation investigated in the case study.</p> |
| References | <p>List the academic and other sources of information that were used to inform this case study.</p> <p>Check the unit guide for details on the referencing style expected (e.g., APA, Chicago etc.).</p> |
| Appendices (only if necessary) | <p>Include any extra materials (e.g., questionnaire, graphs, tables) considered too long or detailed to include in the main body of the case study.</p> |

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