

Report writing

A report is an organised, factual and systematic presentation of facts and findings of an event that has already taken place somewhere. Reports are used as a form of written assessment to find out what one has learned from research or experience. It is a formal communication written for a specific purpose that includes a description of procedures followed i.e. methodology adopted for data collection and data analysis, their significance, the conclusion drawn from them and any recommendations or suggestions if required.

The necessity of report writing generally arises because in some assignment one need to do an analysis of the situation and detailed information for arriving at a decision. Therefore necessity arises to investigate and draw conclusion on findings and its recommendation after the investigation in a report form. Report should be written in past tense and passive voice.

Meaning

- A means to convey some information to others.
- An organised, factual, objective presentation of information.

(Organised since it follows some systematic pattern and structural format.)

Objective means it should not be influenced by own personal feelings. A personal judgement and subjective bias should be avoided. (Explanation only)

- It is based on observation and analysis of facts.
- A report gives an explanation of any circumstances.
- A report discusses a particular problem in detail.
- A report is required for judging the performance of various departments of an organization.
- A good report writing is always fault finding not fault finding. It should be prepared in an impartial manner.

Factors

1. Target audience : Report should be written for a specific audience for whom investigation is done.
2. Purpose / motive : Report should be written for a definite purpose in mind.
3. Availability of resource and time : With the available resource and time period investigation should be performed.
4. Avoid using jargon, cliches and unknown abbreviations. In report writing uncommon and unfamiliar words should be avoided for better understanding.

Quality of Report Writing

1. Brief : Report writing should be brief. Descriptive analysis of the investigation is performed ~~back~~ to find facts and information of the event. But detailed explanation is not required to conclude the summary. Only a brief assessment part is written in the report.
2. Well sequenced : Report should be written in a structural format organising all the information chronologically.
3. Complete : Incomplete report do not convey any information. Complete and organised report is useful in delivering the message.
4. Appropriate language : Inappropriate language is harmful for the progress of the organisation as well as for the individual.

5. Purpose and scope :

A statement of the purpose is made in the introduction to the report. It enables the reader to determine what the investigation is about and what the report have attempted to accomplish. The purpose of the investigation is to recommend a suitable method for the control and

removal of unwanted materials. It is to develop a suitable method, adopted for the investigation.

1. To acquire information for decision making.
2. To direct how the problem is to be sought out.
3. To prepare the list of activities in advance.
4. To compare and ~~gaining~~ ^{drawn} ~~reach~~ draw conclusion from the already available data.
5. To help express the accurate planning and execution stage.
6. To explain the important and complex matters relevant to the problem.

Scope determines boundaries of geographical region to be covered up. What are the considerations that need to be included and excluded. It ^{draws} defines the limitations in the investigation of an event. It indicates the main topics that it should be covered during the investigation. It must be clear and easy to understand.

Characteristics

1. Complete : A good report need to be complete and precise. It should furnish all necessary information to accomplish its purpose and answers all questions that may arise in the course of investigation.

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2. Concise : It includes only the essential facts and information and express them in the least number of words. It eliminates all irrelevant details and unnecessary repetitions.

3. clarity : To achieve clarity it arranges all facts in proper sequence and captures the readers interest.

4. Accurate : All factual information presented in the report should be accurate and appropriate means to bring out the desired response.

5. Attractively displayed : Attractive presentation of report to draw readers interest to go through the whole report physical appearance of the report should create a favourable impression to the readers.

Length and format

The length of the report will depend on its subject and scope. Reports may be weighted in volume and may also be just a few paragraph long. A short report may be submitted in the form of official letter.

In case of longer report, it is necessary to have chapters and sections followed by summary of findings and observations. Technical data, map, graph, table, references, sample questionnaires are often given in the appendices to the main text.

General Principle

The report follows some general principles of arrangement.

1. The introduction should indicate the scope and purpose of the report; method adopted to collect data. Technical details about the method adopted may be put it in the appendix.
2. The data should be set out and analysed in an orderly sequence under section heading.
3. Conclusion should be derived from the analysis and observations. Suggestions which would help future work or help the appointing authority take practical measures.

Types of report writing

1. Informal report

2. Formal Report

1. Informal report : Such reports function to inform, analyse and recommend. This report differs from the formal report in length and formality. It usually takes the form of memo, letter or short financial report, monthly activities report, research and development report etc. It is written according to organisation style and rules. Typically deals with everyday problems and issues addressed to a narrow readership inside the organisation.

1. Progress report 2. Personal evaluation
3. financial report 4. Literature review

Foreval report: It is the collection and interpretation of data and information. It is complex and used at a official level. It is often a written account of a major project.

e.g. new technologies, the advisability of launching a new project line, result of an experiment or study, an annual report, or a year old review of development in the field.

1. Information report 2. Analytical report
3. Recommendation report.

Report writing : formal (structure)

Title page - subject of the report, who the report is for, the report is written by and the date of submission.

Abstract - abstract is written within 100-200 words and

include the following :

- Why the report has been written (ie. what question or problem is it addressing?)
- how the study was undertaken? (methodology)
- what the main finding were?
- what the significance of the finding is?

[specific and precise report writing can get a good understanding of the main report & points without reading the whole report. Abstract should be on a separate page with the centred heading ABSTRACT in a single paragraph.]

3. Table of contents - It should be on a separate page. It helps the reader to find specific information and indicates how the information has been organised and what topics are covered. It also include a list of figures and list of tables if any are used in the report.

4. Introduction - It has 3 main components.

i) Background which describes events leading up to the existing situation, what projects have been done previously and why the project or study is important.

ii) Purpose defines what the project or study is to achieve, who authorised it and specific terms and conditions.

iii) The scope which outlines any limitations imposed on project such as cost, time etc.

5. Body - It varies according to the type of report. Basically, it answers the questions - (5W + H) who, why, where, when, what and how. In an investigation report, it would consist of all the information required to convince the report that the conclusions and recommendations are valid. The information must be presented in a systematic way.

6. Conclusion - It should be as brief as possible. They should be free from speculation (ie ideas for which one has no evidence), have no new thought or references introduced and contain no further discussion of point raised.

Technical Report Writing (structure)

Executive summary - It should be able to understand the main body of the report. It is easy to write after the completion of the report.

1. Introduction - Background to the report, including discussion of previous studies in the area or related studies. The introduction should also clearly define outline the reason for the study or project, including objectives and hypothesis.

2. Methodology -

i) Experimental / sampling design - a description of the study area or study design such as equipment used in the field or laboratory work, methodology for selecting

sampling sites, field work undertaken and methods for laboratory analysis. Detailed analysis of what were tested and any standards and protocols used in the laboratory analysis of samples.

ii) Data analysis - An outline of how the data obtained from sampling and laboratory analysis were analysed, including details of any statistical tests undertaken and their assumptions and limitations.

3. Results - A description of the result obtained from without any explanation of interpretation of them. Visual elements eg. graphs, charts, tables, maps may be used to summarise the results. Raw data is to be included in the appendix not in the result.

4. Discussion - The results of the study are interpreted and implications of these results in terms of the project objectives are discussed. An evaluation of the methodology may also be undertaken.

Recommendation - Suggestions are made after the conclusion is drawn.

Science report writing (structure)

Reports can be divided into three main parts:

I. Preliminary part :

1. Cover page : carries title, name of author, submission date, name of organisation or a person to whom the report is to be submitted.

2. Title page : contains detailed information: full title and subtitle, name and address of the author, name of authority, project number, date of publication.

3. Acknowledgement : name of the persons or organisation that helped the author producing the report.

4. Table of content (Index) : Reader can identify a specific topic easily. Entries in the alphabetical order and page number should be mentioned.

5. Synopsis or executive summary or abstract : an informative summary of what was carried out and what is the finding. It includes :

i) Objective and necessity of the investigation.

ii) A brief reference to the variables and methods.

iii) A summary of the results and conclusions. A brief and thorough statement of the outcome of the experiment.

6. Introduction & detailed description of about the background about the analysis to be carried out. Reason(s) why the research was undertaken, scope & purpose, ~~most~~ of the study, specifying its relevance and limitations.

Statement of the hypothesis, research question if any, statement of the objective. Defining universe sample, methodology for data collection, stepwise procedure followed during the investigation, explanation of different techniques and tools used.

Introduction part answers the following questions pertaining to research -

- i) what was the purpose or objective of the experiment?
- ii) why was the experiment conducted in a particular manner?
- iii) why was it important in a broader context?

6.1 Methodology - It is the description of the procedure used in collecting data on information, variables used. choosing universe, preparing sample elements, specifications of instrument^{tool} used and techniques developed. It includes sample size, sampling techniques, equipment used, experimental conditions, time period etc.

7. Body Text & Present data in an organised form. Use footnote of the terms used in the study.

Data should be presented in a tabular format and analysis of data, statistical tests performance, etc. draw inference also be conducted in body of the study.

8. Summary of finding : Summary of the tabular form of data and also of the statistical tests should be written in (step by step) chronological order. Summary of the analysis of data and interpretation of data should be done systematically.

9. Conclusion - Brief summary of the whole report on study, main idea or concept, data analysis part and drawing inferences from statistical tests. All conclusions should be written from the report. Nothing new should be incorporated. It is the brief findings from the whole report.

9.1 Recommendation - suggests future course of action, how to improve the procedure, and what additional experiment would be helpful.

10. Appendix - All the large tables and illustrations are put in the appendix. e.g. questionnaire, posters.

11. Glossary - List of technical words used in the report giving brief explanation of these key words.

2. Reference and Bibliography -

Reference : name of the author, name of the source,
name of the press, edition, year, page no.

Alan Warner, A short guide to English style, Oxford
University Press London, ELBS edition, pp. 40-44.

Bibliography :

Warner, Alan,

Warner, Alan. (1964). A short guide to English style.
ELBS edition. London: Oxford University Press. pp. 40-4

[APA style book]