

Reports use features such as tables, graphics, pictures, voice, or specialized vocabulary in order to persuade a specific audience to undertake an action or inform the reader of the subject at hand.

Some common elements of written reports include headings to indicate topics and help the reader locate relevant information quickly, and visual elements such as charts, tables and figures, which are useful for breaking up large sections of text and making complex issues more accessible. Lengthy written reports will almost always contain a table of contents, appendices, footnotes, and references. A bibliography or list of references will appear at the end of any credible report and citations are often included within the text itself. Complex terms are explained within the body of the report or listed as footnotes in order to make the report easier to follow. A short summary of the report's contents, called an [abstract](#), may appear in the beginning so that the audience knows what the report will cover. Online reports often contain hyperlinks to internal or external sources as well.

Verbal reports differ from written reports in the minutiae of their format, but they still educate or advocate for a course of action. Quality reports will be well researched and the speaker will list their sources if at all possible.