

Quick guide to Report Writing

What is a report?

A report requires research, critical thinking about the research, academic language and in-text citations as evidence for your points. This is broadly the same process as for an essay yet with the following differences:

- A report has a clear and easy to follow structure, with the inclusion of graphs, images, maps, tables where appropriate
- A report generally includes the results of an investigation rather than answering a specific essay question
- A report generally has a more defined focus as compared to an essay which requires you to interpret the question

Structure

Your assignment guidelines may specify what should be included within the report.

Some suggestions on what a report could include:

- Title page including name and date
- Table of contents indicates the structure of your report, showing the page number on which each section starts
- Executive summary is a detailed summary of your report. It provides the same purpose as an abstract in a research paper. Sometimes your audience will only read your executive summary so it needs to stand alone and fully represent your work within the report.
- Main body must have headings, for example Background, Discussion, Conclusion, Recommendations, and so on.
- References must be included to all academic work, and beyond. You are expected to acknowledge the sources used within your report using the appropriate referencing system
- Appendices should only be included when there is a requirement to enhance the information within the report. Referring to the appendix within your report is not meant to distract your reader; they may or may not choose to read the appendix.

NOTE: Scientific reports may differ in that they could include an abstract, methods and materials, and a results section.



Visual communication

Reports can include a range of visual sources:

- Tables
- Graphs (line, bar, histogram)
- Charts (bar, pie)
- Photographs
- Diagrams
- Info-graphics
- Maps and plans
- Interviews and observations

When using visual sources be mindful of copyright.

Research/Evidence

Ensure the evidence and tables/graphs/statistics used within the report are appropriate and are linked to the point you are making. Visual resources are meant to enhance the meaning of your sections and can be used to present complex information in an accessible format.

Tables and Figures

Consecutive numbers are required for tables and figures e.g.

Figure 1	"Title"	Page 5
Figure 2	"Title"	Page 8
Figure 3	"Title"	Page 10

Labels for each table go above the table. Labels for each figure go below. Both need to include a brief description e.g. 'Figure 2: Quarterly Administration Fees'

Language style

Concise, clear, accurate and formal language is required with appropriate technical terms when needed.

Generally, avoid first person. Instead use third person or the passive voice.

Reports are generally written in the past tense as you will be reporting on something that has already happened. However, the present tense may be required if discussing the findings and recommendations.

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Further advice and larger text guides
can be found online:

www.surrey.ac.uk/splash

Revised 30/03/18

