Report Writing 1: The Purpose
Purpose of report writing

• “A report is the formal method of communicating the results of a project or research assignment.” (Cottrell, 2019, p.363)

• May cover:
  • what you did
  • how you did it
  • what you found out
  • why your findings are important
  • who it is for
Report writing vs essay writing
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reports</th>
<th>Essays</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A report is written for a specific audience</td>
<td>Essays are not usually written for a specific audience (apart from your lecturer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reports</td>
<td>Essays</td>
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<tr>
<td>A report focuses on a specific brief</td>
<td>Essays may have a broad scope so you will need to interpret and define the question</td>
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<td>Essays</td>
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<td>A report makes recommendations supported by appropriate (referenced) evidence</td>
<td>Essays make a coherent argument supported by appropriate (referenced) evidence</td>
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</table>
Reports
Reports can contain diagrams, tables and figures

Essays
Essays shouldn’t contain diagrams etc.
<table>
<thead>
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<th>Reports</th>
<th>Essays</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reports are formally structured with headings and sub-headings</td>
<td>Essays shouldn’t use headings and sub-headings</td>
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<td>Essays</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reports are written in an appropriate style for each section (e.g. may use a different style for methods than for discussion)</td>
<td>Essays are written in a single style throughout</td>
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</table>
Questions to ask yourself
What am I being asked to do?

Check the project brief and module guide. Ensure you know whether the purpose of the report is to inform, test, persuade, advise, recommend etc.
Who am I writing for?

You need to know who your audience are (e.g. a professional body), what they already know and what they want to know.
Why am I being asked to do it?

You will need to make recommendations based on your findings.
How does my audience want the information presented?

Check guidance on structure, format and layout, including the word count.
When does my audience want the report?

Check the assignment deadline.
References and resources


Found this useful?
Why not look at the Learning Hub’s guidance on other learning topics...

- Academic skills
- Advanced skills
- Presentations
- Referencing
- Researching
- Writing