

## Characteristics of Reports

What is a report?

A report is the formal writing up of a piece of research or project work. Reports are usually written in a concise style, giving precise detail. Although there are many different kinds of reports, they are usually structured in similar ways so that readers can find information quickly. Reports are not the same as essays.

Reports

1. Reports originate from outside an educational context: they are typical of writing required for the world of work.
2. Reports present data and research findings that you have collected yourself – through a laboratory experiment, a survey, a questionnaire or a case study, or by applying theory to your work placement or some other situation.
3. A report is divided into separate sections.
4. A report contains tables, charts and appendices.
5. Each section of the report is given a heading. Each point is numbered.
6. Reports contain a mixture of writing styles, depending on the section.
7. Reports contain descriptions of the methods used.
8. The description in a report should include brief comments on how the research could have been improved, and what gaps remain for further research.
9. Reports often include recommendations for action.

Different Goals

The style and content of your report should be appropriate to the readers for whom you write.

- If you make recommendations for action, evaluate different options.
- For business reports, include details of costs, losses and potential profits for each option.
- For a report based on an experiment, describe the experiment and the conditions under which it took place.
- If you are writing for a client (such as work placement employer), tailor your report to the client's own requirements.

Cottrell, S. 2008, *The study skills handbook*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan Ltd.