



RESEARCH REPORT WRITING: GENERAL

This handout outlines how to write a report for subject areas other than business and science.

Check your course materials to see if you need to use a specific structure for your report. Below is a typical structure.

1. Title Page
2. Table of Contents
3. Abstract
4. [Acknowledgments *optional*]
5. Introduction
6. Method
7. Results
8. Discussion
9. Conclusion
10. [Recommendations *optional*]
11. References
12. [Appendices/Appendices *optional*]

TITLE PAGE

Purpose: The title page has two purposes.

1. **It should have all the information needed for a report title page.**
 - A clear title that describes the research
 - Your name as registered with the university
2. **It should contain all the information your marker needs in addition to your name.**
 - Your student number
 - The course code
 - Due date for assignment
 - Possibly the assignment question you have answered
 - Possibly the name of the course co-ordinator and/or tutor
 - Possibly the time of your tutorial session
 - Possibly word count



Related resources:

[Structure of an essay](#)

[Structure of a paragraph](#)



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Purpose: To lay out the contents of the report as a list of headings and sub-headings that you have used. This is usually a numbered list.

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	<i>I</i>
<i>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</i>	<i>II¹</i>
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What does each of these sections do?

ABSTRACT

Purpose: Give your reader a clear, concise summary of the contents of the report.

The abstract appears first in the report but should be written last. It briefly tells the reader what issue the report investigates (it may mention why the issue is important), how the investigation was conducted, what the findings are and what conclusions the findings led to. An abstract is usually about 150 – 250 words long. Your course co-ordinator may specify how long your abstract should be.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS [optional]

Purpose: Thank people or organisations who have helped you conduct the research.

For example, you might thank an organisation for funding the research, or your workplace for giving you time off work, or an individual who provided access to relevant people or situations.

¹ *Italics* indicate the section is optional

INTRODUCTION

Purpose: Provide some context, define the problem or issue, possibly outline the aims of the report.

Context: Give some idea of how the situation or question that the report deals with arose and why it requires further investigation.

Definition: Define the nature of the problem or area of interest and clarify the research boundaries (usually you cannot investigate every relevant factor).

Aims: Outline what the research aimed to achieve.

METHOD

Purpose: Lay out the method/s that you have used to conduct the research.

You may also wish to introduce and justify the theoretical framework you use to analyse the results of your findings.

RESULTS

Purpose: Describe the data that you gathered and the outcomes of the research you undertook.

This section will usually contain a written description of the findings of your research and may also contain graphs, tables and charts. The key findings will be highlighted in some way. If you have outlined the aims of the report in the introduction you can comment in the results or discussion section on how well your research findings relate to the aims of the report.

DISCUSSION

Purpose: Explain what the results mean and why they are important/relevant. In this section you can also mention possible future developments.

Describe how your research has added to our knowledge about the problem, issue or area of interest you are researching. You usually link to the wider literature (not just the literature you have used to design and undertake your research). You may wish to construct an argument about what the results tell us in the context of your academic field.

You may also discuss the limitations of your research and comment on why the results are still valid and/or useful despite these limitations. You may discuss how the research design could be improved. You can also make recommendations for future research related to the topic.

CONCLUSION

Purpose: Show clearly and concisely how the research undertaken addresses the issues raised in the introduction. Possibly give recommendations.

This section must show how the research has answered the questions raised in the introduction. The main points should be discussed in order of importance: most important first.

The conclusion may contain recommendations for further action. If there are a lot of separate recommendations, with a lot of detail, it may be better to have a separate section for them.

A conclusion can sometimes take the form of a numbered or bulleted list of main points.

RECOMMENDATIONS [optional]

Purpose: List the recommendations for action that you advise, based on the research that you have conducted and then documented in the report.

Recommendations should be brief and focus on the action that needs to occur. All the arguments and rationales for the action should be in the discussion section.

REFERENCES

Purpose: List all the sources you used in your research.

The reference list will be a standard reference list in a recognised format (APA, Chicago, Harvard, JPS, MLA etc). You may be asked to use a specific format.

APPENDIX/APPENDICES [optional]

Purpose: An appendix provides extra information.

This information will help the reader's understanding of the issue but is not actually part of your research process. You can have more than one appendix (the plural is appendices). An appendix has the head **Appendix** and if there is more than one appendix, they are numbered: **Appendix 1, Appendix 2** etc.