

Using a report structure.

Contents Page - this should always be included.

Executive Summary, Abstract or Synopsis

A very brief outline of the report to give the potential reader a general idea of what the report is about.

A statement of:

- overall aims and specific objectives (unless included in terms of reference)
- method/procedure used (unless included in separate section)
- key findings
- main conclusions and recommendations

Introduction (always included)

This should show that you have fully understood the task/brief and that you are going to cover everything required. Indicate the basic structure of the report.

You should include just a little background/context and indicate the reasons for writing the report.

Your introduction will often give an indication of the conclusion to the report.

Main body/findings (always included)

This is the substance of your report. The structure will vary according to the nature of the material being presented, with headings and sub-headings used to clearly indicate the different sections (unlike an essay). A "situation>problem>solution>evaluation" approach may be appropriate.

It is not sufficient to simply describe a situation. Analysis and critical evaluation should be included.

Charts, diagrams and tables can be used to reinforce your arguments, it may be better to include these as an appendix (particularly if they are long or complicated).

Do not include opinions, conclusions or recommendations in this section.

Conclusion (always included)

Your conclusion should draw out the implications of your findings, with deductions based on the facts described in your main body. Don't include any new material here.

Recommendations (sometimes included)

These should follow on logically from your conclusion and be specific, measurable and achievable. They should propose how the situation/problem could be improved by suggesting action to be taken.

Appendices (sometimes included)

An appendix (plural=appendices) is detailed documentation of points you outline in your findings, for example, technical data, questionnaires, letters sent, tables, sketches, charts, leaflets etc. It is supplementary information which you consider to be too long or complicated or not quite relevant enough to include in your main body, but which still should be of interest to your reader.

Each appendix should be referred to in your text. You should not include something as an appendix if it is not discussed in the main body.

References (always included)

This is a list giving the full details of all the sources to which you have made reference within your text

Style

Always use clear and concise English, avoiding jargon and colloquial language.

Write in fairly short sentences.

Make sure you develop each paragraph sufficiently (usually a minimum of 5/6 sentences).

Most of your report should be impersonal, although it may be appropriate in your conclusion or recommendations to include more personal language.

Check everything carefully

Careful checking of your report before you print off the final version can make a big difference.

Check:

- General layout
- Text organisation
- Coherence
- Grammar, spelling and punctuation
- Referencing
- Style

And finally overall, does the report fulfil its purpose? Does it do what you're being asked to do and what you say you're going to do in your introduction? Are you pleased with it? If you can't confidently answer "yes" to these questions, then you may need to proof read , edit and possibly consider some rewriting.