

Components of Report Writing



Introduction

An essential element of any report is its introduction- make sure you are clear on its real purpose and contents. Generally, an introduction consists of:

- specific topic of the report
- the knowledge or background information that readers need to understand the report
- purpose of the report
- Contents of the report- usually a numbered list of the key topics covered

Here are some key phrases that are regularly used at the beginning of this part.

- a. The purpose of this report is.....
- b. The aim of this report is.....
- c. In this report the author intends to show.....
- d. This report will show....
- e. This report will examine....
- f. This report will discuss.....
- g. Our survey research indicates.....

The body of the report

The body of the report is of course the main text of the report, the sections between the introduction and conclusion. For a survey report, in the body part, you need to show graphs and figures and describe them. You need to explain what the numbers or percentages mean.

Headings

In all but the shortest reports (two pages or less), use headings to mark off the different topics and subtopics covered. This will enable readers to skim your report and dip down at those points where you present information that they want.

Lists

In the body of your report, you'll also want to use the various kinds of lists where appropriate. Lists help readers by emphasizing key points and by making information easier to follow.

Symbols, numbers and abbreviations

Technical-report discussions often contain lots of symbols, numbers, and abbreviations. Make sure that the readers understand the symbols and abbreviations that you use.

Graphics and figure titles

In your report, you're likely to need drawings, diagrams, tables, and charts. They not only convey certain kinds of information more effectively but also give your report an added look of professionalism and authority.

Conclusions

For most reports, you'll need to include a final section, usually called a "conclusion." When you plan and write final sections of engineering reports, think about the functions they can perform in relation to the rest of the report:

- They *conclude*- that is, they draw logical conclusions from the discussion that has preceded; they make inferences upon what has preceded.
- They *summarize*- that is, they review the key points, key facts, and so on from what has been discussed. Summaries present nothing new- they leave the reader with a perspective on what has been discussed, the perspective that the writer wants them to have.
- And finally they *generalize* by moving away from the specific topic to a discussion of such things as implications, applications, and future developments- but only in general terms.

Appendixes

Appendixes are those extra sections following the conclusion. The appendix is commonly used for large tables of data, big chunks of sample code, foldout maps, or large illustrations that just do not fit in the body of the report.