WRITING A FORMAL REPORT

A formal report provides information and presents recommendations. Examples include feasibility studies, position papers, research reports, problem solving reports, or proposals. Each type has its own specific requirements for effective preparation, but general guidelines can be applied to all formal reports.

COMPONENTS

The following components are found in most formal reports. They may be omitted or included as required:

Front Matter

Letter to introduce the report to the person who requested it and/or to whom the report is being sent

Title page

Abstract

Table of contents

Executive summary

List of figures

List of tables

Body

Introduction:
The purpose, problem statement, background information, research methods, limitations and preview of the report

Discussion:
Data, findings and results or recommendations

Conclusion:
Summary of purpose, problem statement, relevant background, research methods and findings, recommendations to the reader on the best course of action

Back Matter

Bibliography (e.g., APA references or MLA Works cited)

Appendix or appendices

Glossary

TIPS FOR FORMATTING A FORMAL REPORT:

Choose a title that gains your reader's attention.

Use headings and subheadings to divide your report into sections or main blocks of information.

Make headings and subheadings specific to the information provided below them.

Format headings and subheadings in the same way throughout the paper.

Use the correct format for reference citations and bibliography.

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PROCEDURES

A successful formal report requires task analysis, data collection, organization, structure, drafts, and revisions:

***Analyze the job*:** What is the purpose of the report? What are the nature, extent and causes of the problems addressed in the report? Who are the readers and what are their needs? What are the best possible solutions?

***Set a schedule*:** What tasks will be required to complete the report? How much time will each task take? How much time will the entire report take?

***Make a basic outline*:** What are the main points and sub-points in the report? What are the relationships between the points and sub-points?

***Gather Information*:** What kinds of information will you need? Where will you get it? Will you use primary or secondary sources or both?

***Make a detailed outline*:** How will you organize information to make it easy for readers to understand and follow your logic and to find the answers to the problem(s)? Will the organizational pattern be chronological, reverse chronological, topical, advantage/disadvantage, problem/solution, cause/effect or something entirely different? Which pattern will work best for your needs?

***Plan the use of tables and figures*:** What visuals will help your reader better understand your ideas and data? Will you use tables and figures in your report? If so, which would be most useful? Will they be in the body of the text, at the end of the report, or both?

***Write a first draft*:** What will you write and how will you present it?

***Revise*:** What is missing from the report? Are there repetitions or irrelevant data? Is your original problem statement addressed? Is the writing clear, concise and to the point?

SUCCESSFUL STEPS:

Think of questions the reader wants answered and answer them. Also make recommendations about those answers.

Organize your data in a logical and accessible manner.

Double check the needs of your audience and/or instructor, and make sure they have been met.

Use peer editors to help revise and edit your final draft.

Correct typos, misspellings and grammar and punctuation errors before submitting the report.

ABOUT THE BUSINESS COMMUNICATION CENTER:

The BCC provides one-on-one and small group coaching to undergraduate and graduate students, supports the instruction of communication content in other courses, and offers Isenberg faculty and staff expert communications-related resources and assistance. The BCC works with other Isenberg faculty, the Chase Career Center, and student groups to customize our services and meet the needs of the Isenberg community.