

# Comparing assessment tasks



Essays, reports and reflective journals are common forms of academic writing. They generally differ in these respects:

- Purpose
- Topic
- Audience
- Format
- Style
- Assessment

	Essay	Report	Reflective journal
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To write a well-argued response to a question or proposition, using an analysis and discussion of the relevant literature.</li> <li>• To establish a proposition or contention (thesis).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To investigate, present and analyse information thoroughly and logically.</li> <li>• Often to recommend action to solve a problem.</li> <li>• Usually to make proposals.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To record the development of your ideas and insights.</li> <li>• To reflect on the content of the subject and on your own learning process.</li> <li>• To analyse and discuss key issues covered by class work and/or readings.</li> </ul>
Topic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Usually a question or proposition.</li> <li>• Requires reading, sometimes fieldwork.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Often a problem or case study based on a hypothetical real-life scenario.</li> <li>• Requires reading, fieldwork or practical work.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Often a response to the subject content, including lectures, tutorials, set readings or practical placement.</li> <li>• May be broadly based, or focus on a particular issue or aspect covered in the subject content.</li> </ul>
Audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written for the lecturer.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written for the audience established in the topic (e.g. client, manager), but in reality your lecturer is also the audience.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As a learning experience you're writing for yourself, although when it's assessed your lecturer is also the audience.</li> </ul>

	Essay	Report	Reflective journal
Format	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three parts: introduction, body, conclusion.</li> <li>• No headings or subheadings.*</li> </ul> <p>*Some lecturers require headings – refer to your Subject Outline.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Divided into sections. Sections will vary depending on type and length of report.</li> <li>• Uses heading and subheadings; the order of the report elements is often shown by numbers or a combination of letters and numbers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are no formal format requirements but often it is dated so that you can trace the development of your ideas and learning.</li> <li>• Frequently no headings or subheadings, but you may choose to use sections if you wish.</li> </ul>
Style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formal English, using paragraphs and complete sentences.</li> <li>• Must be objective.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Must be objective.</li> <li>• Point form is sometimes used.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can be subjective and informal to reflect your own thinking.</li> </ul>
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Success depends on the argument, how one point is related to the next and how well you use the evidence from the literature to support your ideas.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Success depends on the demonstration of good research skills and the objective presentation and analysis of relevant information.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Success depends on development of your insights into the topic.</li> <li>• Your ideas may change during the subject as you gain new understanding of the inter-relationships between different aspects of the content.</li> </ul>

## Reach out for help

The Charles Sturt Academic Skills team is here to help you develop your learning skills. You can also:

- ask a question on our [Ask an Academic Skills Adviser forum](#),
- join one of our [Academic Skills workshops](#), or
- access further information about all of our available services and learning resources, including assignment writing feedback, at [csu.edu.au/academicskills](http://csu.edu.au/academicskills).

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