



Research Report

A report is a document that investigates a topic or issue. It often recommends action to solve a problem and usually makes recommendations.

Process

1. Analyse the task

- Identify the purpose and the audience.
- The purpose statement contains words like ‘The aim of this research task is to investigate/analyse/...’
- The audience is the person who has commissioned the research e.g. client or manager.
- Be clear about what the task is – it might help to rephrase the task as a question.
- Decide on the section of the report. (See the sample headings over the page. You may not need all these headings or you may need to create your own. If you are not sure what the report requires, speak to your lecturer.)

2. Brainstorm

- Bring all your ideas together on one page to:
 - ✓ Identify what you already know.
 - ✓ Identify any gaps and the focus of your research.
 - ✓ Give you the beginnings of a plan.
 - ✓ Mind maps are very useful at this stage.

3. Start your research

- Make notes on the reading – use recommended texts and library material first.
- If required, conduct any tests, surveys or other research tasks. Make notes on findings.
- Organise your material into heading and topics.
- Look for ways to structure the sections of the report in order to integrate your results and research.
- Record all bibliographic details of texts and websites to save time, ensure accuracy and avoid plagiarism.

4. Plan the report

- Organise the information – make headings and connections. Your plan should include:
 - Findings – main points with headings to indicate the topic.
 - Discussion points – their relationship to the findings.
 - References.

- Brief outlines of the introduction and conclusion.
- A diagram or mind map is useful here too.

5. Continue your research

- This is focused research, providing evidence from research to expand on the main points.
- Use efficient reading strategies to locate the information you need.
- Use search terms from your earlier research to locate precise information and evidence in databases.

6. Write

- Write up your findings section first and then your discussion. Review your plan and decide on a logical order for your points and evidence. Give each point a heading.
- Then write the other sections: conclusion, recommendations, methodology (if applicable) and the introduction.
- Remember: a paragraph must contain one main idea—stated in the topic sentence. Other sentences explain, support and give evidence from research and/or examples. Refer to diagrams etc. in the paragraphs. Expect to write several drafts.
- Reference carefully. You must always acknowledge your source—whether quoting directly or paraphrasing (content rewritten in your own words).

Below is a list of the sections in a report and what they contain:

Title page:

- Title: states the purpose of the report.
- Details of the person(s) for whom the report was prepared.
- Details of the person(s) who prepared the report (student name and ID). Due date.

Table of contents:

- Shows the sections of the report.
- Created automatically if headings are in the correct heading styles.

Executive Summary/ Abstract:

- Gives a summary of the whole report.
- Outlines: purpose, research method, findings, main conclusions and recommendations.
- The reader / audience can easily identify what, how and why. Written last.



Introduction:

- Outlines purpose, context, background and rationale.
- Defines terms and sets limits of the research.
- Identifies the existing situation and refers to relevant literature.
- Although presented first, can be written later.

Methodology:

- Explains how the research was conducted, and outlines how the data was collected and analysed.

Results / Findings (may be combined with discussion):

- Presents findings of the research in paragraphs.
- Facts only – no interpretations.
- Uses graphic forms (e.g. tables and graphs) with captions.
- Contains headings and sub-headings.

Discussion:

- Presents an interpretation and evaluation of the results.
- Analyses results – draws together different aspects of the findings, findings of other studies and refers to the literature.

Conclusions (may be combined with recommendations):

- Brief statement of what was found (no new information).

Recommendations:

- Suggests suitable changes/solutions.

Appendix:

- Attachments of additional information (e.g. surveys, questionnaires, detailed statistics, a glossary etc.).

References:

- Full bibliographic details of all references used in the report.

Note: Additional headings and sub-headings to those listed are content based, specific to the report.

Headings and sub-headings need to be in heading styles in order to create a table of contents.

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