

Elements of a final report

[Sociology](#), [Communication](#)



Formal reports are written for specific purposes, and may have diverse subject matter. In writing this type of report, there are general points to follow. According to Dobrin, Keller, and Weisser in the “Technical Communication in the Twenty-First Century,” to compose a formal report, one must remember several guidelines (632 - 661). The writer should concentrate on the needs of the audience, meaning the text should contain information that the reader wants to know. Primary and secondary audiences should be considered, and the problem should be further sub-divided and investigated.

Secondly, the writer should research on the topic at hand to be able to discuss it fully and knowledgeably. For the report to be solid and credible, it should be backed by data gathered through a careful research process. Sources and methods for data collection must be described. The third thing to consider is including visual aids. As is well-known in the presentation of reports, it helps to have pictures, charts, or tables to better illustrate one's concepts and ideas. Visuals also tend to capture attention and maintain the reader's interest in the report.

Apart from the reader's benefit, visual aids can initially allow the writer to envision relationships and figure out meanings that would give structure and form to the text. Fourth, the writer is advised to work with other people for the exchange of ideas and feedback. More input means more creativity being contributed, and more opportunities for the textual improvement. The author must write a draft, and keep on revising the written work so that the final outcome accomplishes the goals set by the writer in doing his or her task.

The text should be revised to get rid of wordiness, vagueness, and excessive repetition. Readability could also be enhanced by enumerating items using bullets and numbers. The resulting report should be proofread thrice for content, grammar, and format or style. After the report is finished, it may be disseminated to colleagues for critique and appreciation. In following the above guidelines, one can be properly equipped to undertake the composition of formal reports (Dobrin et al 632 – 661). Formal reports have three principal components: 1) Front Matter, 2) Body, and 3) End Matter.

Before launching into the actual contents of the report, the front matter should be in place so that the topic is adequately introduced to the reader (Dobrin et al 632 – 661). At the beginning of a report are four sub-components: 1) Title Page, 2) Abstract, 3) Table of Contents, and 4) Introduction. In a fact sheet from the University of New England's Academic Skills Office, it says that the title page “ must include the subject of the report, who the report is for, who the report is by and the date of submission.

” After the title page comes the Abstract, which is typically composed of 100 to 200 words and covers the following points: purpose of the report, manner of conducting the study, the report findings and their significance. The abstract should be in the form of a single non-indented paragraph in a separate page, and it must give the reader an understanding of the text even without going through the entire report. On another page, the table of contents should show the topics covered in the report and help readers find the information they need.

If the report uses tables or figures, corresponding lists should be included in the table of contents. After this is the Introduction, which contains the headings “ Background,” “ Purpose,” and “ Scope. ” The background is supposed to provide an understanding of the events that took place and led to the present condition, as well as establish the necessity of the study. The purpose is designed to clarify the aims of the report and the terms of reference. The scope, which comes last in the introduction phase, reveals the limitations of the study (University of New England).

After the front matter, the report moves on to the body, or the main part. It is called the body because it comprises the biggest portion of the report, and gives shape to the various ideas put forward by the study. The body is where questions are answered, through the systematic presentation of facts and information. Here, the findings are shown in the same order by which they were initially presented in the outline. The headings and sub-headings should be effectively used to describe specific segments, and lend clear organization to the text as a whole.

The writer would do well to remember that only facts are to be presented, not opinions or feelings on the subject. Towards the end of the report, conclusions are made. In this section, the salient points raised throughout the text are concluded and presented from the most important to the least important. This segment should neither include the personal views of the author, nor conjecture on any ideas that cannot be proved. The report naturally progresses from conclusions to recommendations.

At this stage, the writer ultimately gets the chance to suggest new ways of thinking and of approaching things (University of New England). The report is

not considered to be properly finished without the end matter. Here, one can find the: 1) References, 2) Appendix or Appendices, 3) Tables and Figures. The references part is a list of all the sources to which the author referred in writing the report. Sources hail from different kinds of media: books, newspapers, magazines, theses, journals, surveys, audiotapes or CDs, Internet websites, and films.

The references should be accurately and alphabetically listed. After the references, one can find the appendix or appendices, which contain important explanations and illustrations that were excluded from the text. For reports that utilize tables and figures, there should be a list numbered in correct sequence that readers can consult to find the tables, images, and photos as they occur in the text. Sources of these tables and figures should also be acknowledged by the author (University of New England).

There are no fixed rules on how to write formal reports, but having knowledge on how to compose these reports and what elements compose them would surely aid a writer in many ways.

Works Cited

Dobrin, Sidney I. , Keller, Chirstopher J. , & Weisser, Christian R. Technical Communication in the Twenty-First Century. US: Prentice Hall, 2009. " Writing a formal report. " 2009. University of New England. 2 Paril 2009