



Writing a report

Reports are widely used in professional workplaces – so report-writing is an important skill to develop at university.

You may be tasked with writing a report in one or more of your units, especially if you are studying a professional degree such as Business.

Reports are usually written for a specific purpose (for example, a risk assessment) and for a specific audience (such as a client or stakeholders).

Examples of report titles

- Effects of heatwaves and air quality on ED presentations for children in WA. (Government of Western Australia Department of Health, 13 December 2024)
- Restoring Climate-resilient Mangroves and Communities: A case study from Djibouti. (United Nations Environment Programme, April 2024)
- Global status report on road safety 2018 (World Health Organisation, 17 June 2018)

Reports commonly outline a specific issue or problem, present findings, evaluate the evidence, suggest possible solutions and make recommendations to address the situation/issue/problem.

Writing a report requires you to research and evaluate the evidence relating to a given topic and to present your findings in a clear, logical format.

Report structure

Reports are structured to be read quickly, scanned and mined for information. To make their contents visible at a glance, reports use headings and sub-headings, numbered sections and tables and figures summarising the most important information. In addition, reports usually provide a *contents page* and an *executive summary* outlining the report's findings and recommendations.

Contents page example:

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The purpose of an executive summary is to provide a quick overview of the report so the reader can see the main information without needing to read the whole report. The executive summary should contain a brief summary of the report's aims, major findings, conclusions and any recommendations.

Executive summary example:

Effects of heatwaves and air quality on ED presentations for children in WA

Heatwaves (HWs) are known to be associated with increased mortality and morbidity, including a rise in emergency department (ED) presentations, across the world. It is anticipated that these events will become more frequent, longer in duration, and more severe in the future. Additionally, there has been a changing pattern of air pollution over time. However, there is currently a lack of studies that

evaluate the potential joint effect of HWs and air quality on ED presentations as well as the spatial variation of these two environmental factors on ED presentations.

This study aimed to assess the potential effects of HWs and air quality on ED presentations and their impact in different geographic areas with a specific focus on children. The study used machine learning approaches to predict ED presentations.

Government of Western Australia Department of Health, 13 December, 2024

[Effects of heatwaves and air quality on ED presentations for children in WA](#)

What to consider

The topic/problem/situation/issue you are addressing

- Outline your topic: what issue are you addressing?
- What is the situation/context for this issue?
- What is the scope of this issue? (how prevalent is it and where does it occur?)
- What methods will you use to investigate this issue? (what information will you need and how will you gather this – for example, through conducting research, reviewing the literature or conducting a survey?)

Your target audience

Who is the report being written for? Knowing this will help you decide how much context is needed and whether to use subject-specific/technical terms (for a specialist audience) or more general terms (for a non-specialist audience).

Your evidence

- What information do you need to collect?
- Where will you look for relevant information (for example, in [OneSearch](#))?
- What findings, conclusions and/or recommendations do the researchers make?
- Is there a consensus/broad agreement between the researchers or is there some disagreement?
- What is the quality of the evidence available? Look for any gaps/limitations in the research – for example, any important questions not addressed.

Your recommendations/solutions

- Based on your research and the evidence you have collected, what actions, approaches or solutions do you propose to address the issue?
- Are there any limitations of current approaches you want to draw attention to?
- Are there any limitations that might impact on how far your recommendations or solutions can be implemented (for example, financial constraints or other logistical difficulties)?

What to include

What you include in your report may vary, depending on your subject area and the specific instructions given by your Unit Coordinator, so check the instructions carefully before you start working on your report.

Reports generally include

- Title page: This is usually a separate page. Your title should clearly state the main aim of the report.
- Executive summary: Summarises the aims, main findings, conclusions and any recommendations stated in your report. Although this appears at the start of your report, it is usually the last section you write.
- Glossary: Provides an alphabetical list of technical terms used in your report, along with their definition.
- Table of contents: Lists all the headings and sub-headings in your report, with the page number where each section begins.
- Introduction: States the purpose of the report and outlines its scope and approach/methods. It generally provides some context or background to the issue being addressed and may also define important terms and concepts used in the report.
- Body: This section reports on the main findings of your research. Use short headings and sub-headings to structure your information and provide a logical sequence for your readers to follow.
- Recommendations: Suggests a course of action to address the issue, based on your research. Depending on how detailed your recommendations are, this can be a separate section of your report or part of your conclusion. Check the assignment details for any specific instructions for presenting your recommendations.
- Conclusion: Summarises your main findings and should not introduce any new information. Depending on the length of your report and any specific instructions from your Unit Coordinator, your recommendations may be included in your conclusion.
- Appendices: Any supporting documents relevant to your report can be included as appendices (Appendix A, B, etc).
- References: Lists the sources you have referred to in your report, in alphabetical order (by first author's name).

Checklist

Check that your report:

- clearly outlines the issue you are addressing
- defines the scope of the issue being addressed
- is structured to allow the reader to scan its contents quickly
- presents and evaluates the evidence available

- provides recommendations to address the issue
- summarises your main findings.