

Writing reports

Writing reports

Reports are written for a range of purposes and the requirements can differ depending on the type and context of the report.

Reports usually have a particular purpose, context and audience.

Students in Certificate IV in Disability could be given an assignment like this:

Assignment example 1:

Research opportunities for young people with a disability in the Geelong region and present your results in report form.

Include in your report :

- An introduction to your document and its purpose.
- Details on the activities available, including location and contact details.
- Comments on suitability for client groups.
- A comment on gaps in provision/ recommendations.

Your final document should be an accessible guide for parents, carers and disability workers.

Students studying a module in Occupational Health and Safety might be given a report like this:

Assignment example 2:

Choose an area of Occupational Health and Safety which is relevant to your workplace eg confined spaces, safe food handling.

Research the current Occupational Health and Safety laws which apply to this situation.

Write a report, including:

- A brief outline of your workplace/industry and the purpose of your report.
- A discussion of the relevant health and safety risks.
- The areas of legislation that apply.
- A summary of the relevant policies and procedures in your workplace.
- Any recommendations on improving health and safety practices.

You can see that these assignments are asking you to:

- State the purpose of your document.
- Relate your information to a particular context/audience.
- Gather and organise information on a topic.
- Draw conclusions/make recommendations.

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Formatting your report

The format of your report will depend on its purpose and audience. Your assignment may specify a particular report structure.

It may also direct you on the areas of content required, which will become the main headings in the body of your report.

Some features of a report:

- Introductions or opening statements
- Well organised facts and information
- Analysis/critique of information gathered
- Headings and sub-headings
- Diagrams/ illustrations/charts/tables
- Use of dot points
- Use of present tense/passive voice
- Language specific to the context
- List of references

This can be adapted to the requirements of your assignment task

TIPS

Headings and subheadings are very important to clearly present your report.

The use of dot points makes the text clear and makes it easy for the reader to grasp the main points.

Diagrams, and illustrations always make a report look interesting!

Report writing - A standard format

Title page

This is the front page of your report.

It includes:

- the title of your report
- your name as the author
- clear and attractive layout
- the due date

Contents page

This will list the various sections of your report.

Contents	
Title Page	
Opportunities for Young people with a Disability A report by Jane Brown 12 March 2020.	
Introduction	
Purpose and scope	p. 1
Body	
1. Sporting activities	p. 2
1.1 Netball	
1.2 Bowling	
1.3 Swimming	
2. Education and training	p. 4
2.1 Gordon TAFE	
2.2 DAL	
2.3 GATE	
3. Leisure activities p.7	
3.1 Leisure networks	
3.2 Riding for the Disabled	
3.3 Other	
4. Accommodation and respite	p. 9
Conclusion/recommendations	p. 11
References	p. 12
Appendices	p. 13-15

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Introduction

This section includes information such as:

- rationale for your report
- purpose and direction of your research
- background information
- intended audience
- a comment on your methods

This section is usually quite brief. The requirements may vary. Follow your teacher's directions.

Body of the report

This is the main section of your report. Its purpose is to present the information you have gathered.

Divide your information into headings and sub-headings. Use a numbering system. Use different size fonts to indicate the organisation of the ideas.

You must acknowledge the sources of your information in-text, using the referencing system required, which will usually be the Harvard author/date system.

This section may also have labelled pictures or diagrams and/or graphs.

The length will depend on the scope of your report.

Conclusion

This is your chance to analyse/reflect on your findings and their implications. It could include your judgement on the information and perhaps recommendations about what should or could be done by government, community or individuals.

Reference list

This should be compiled according to the standards of the referencing system required.

If you need help with referencing, visit the [Library Website](#) for some great resources or chat to an online Studiosity tutor via Gordon Online.

Appendix/appendices

This section is for additional information from your research, such as questionnaires/statistics from a survey not presented elsewhere, additional photos and so on. Often this material can be included within your report so is not required as an appendix.

Revising and editing your work

Writing is a process. Nobody can produce a well written essay or report in one session, so it's important to leave yourself enough time for all these parts of the writing process:

1. understanding the task
2. doing the research
3. planning the assignment
4. writing a first draft
5. revising and editing the first draft
6. producing a second draft
7. revising and editing the second draft

The second draft may be your final draft, but don't be surprised if you go through the process of revising and editing drafts a few times. The number of times is often related to the length and complexity of the assignment.

Word processing your assignment means that the revising, editing and production of drafts is quicker than in the past, but there are some things you should be careful about:

- save your document frequently,
- Make sure that you have a back up of your document. Do not just rely on a USB stick that can be easily lost or damaged, save your document to your computer or the Cloud as well.

Some teachers will advise you at different stages of the assignment writing process, but you can't expect to hand in an unrevised and unedited text as your final draft. It is not your teacher's job to do this part of the process for you!

Handing in work with a lot of written errors gives the impression that you haven't taken the assignment seriously and you will be marked down for this.

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Tips for revising your work

Revising means looking at the draft as a whole and checking that all the information and arguments are relevant to the topic and cohesively presented.

- Have you covered every requirement? Check against your analysis of the task and your plan of the assignment.
- Is the information in the most logical order, or would it be more effective if you rearranged it?
- Could some expressions be clearer or stronger?
- Have you included any unnecessary information?
- Have you given the sources of all the researched information?
- Did you add a list of references so that your readers can check these sources?

Tips for editing your work

Editing means checking for spelling, grammatical and punctuation errors.

Spelling and vocabulary

- The spelling check in Word can be useful, however it doesn't pick up words that might be spelled correctly but have a different meaning from the one you want.
- Common examples are there/their, here/hear, know/no and principal/principle. You need to check for words like this yourself.
- Make sure all sentences begin with a capital letter, as well as the specific names of places, people and titles of books, movies and so on.
- Beware of repeating words or expressions too much. Use a thesaurus to find alternatives, or right-click in an overused word and try the 'Synonyms' function.
- Try not to use expressions like 'exactly identical' and 'small in size' where you're just repeating an idea. 'Identical' and 'small' would be enough.
- Don't use cliches like 'at this point in time' and 'few and far between.'
- Don't use slang. Keep expressions like 'Awesome!' for discussions.

Grammar

- Beware of the grammar check in any word processing program!
- Grammar checkers can pick up some problems in simple sentences but the advice can actually be incorrect in complex sentences.
- Reading your work aloud can sometimes help you to pick up ungrammatical or awkward sentences.
- Don't use long sentences just because you think they sound impressive. Be clear and concise.
- Make sure all your sentences have the 2 basic parts of the subject (who or what) and the predicate (what's happening).
- Use words like 'but', 'however', 'additionally' and so on to link ideas together.
- Use words like 'first', 'then' and 'after' to make the order of ideas or processes clear.

Punctuation

- Don't use exclamation marks (!) in academic assignments except in direct quotations.
- If you're writing a long sentence with a lot of commas, see if you can separate the ideas into shorter sentences.
- Use hyphens rarely, except for giving the source of any information.

General tips for revising and editing

- Sleep on it! Leave some time after writing a draft before you revise and edit it.
- Ask someone else to read through your work. Of course, they shouldn't tell you what to write, but other people can often help by letting you know if any sections are unnecessary, unclear or unconvincing.
- Submit your report to Studiosity for online writing feedback. Studiosity is free 24/7 online study support that can be accessed via Gordon Online.