HOW TO WRITE A REPORT

Report writing

Reports supply factual information about a topic; it may also give results of a test or experiment.

Title page

The title page identifies the report. It should contain the title, the author, the reader for whom the report is intended and the date of completion. The actual title should be short, and give an accurate description of the contents.

Table of contents - also known as an index

This is not usually necessary in a short report. Where used, it should give a list of the major sections, subsections and appendices, and the page number on which each begins.

Summary - also known as a synopsis

The summary is a brief statement of what the report is about. This is generally not needed for short reports.

Introduction

The introduction clearly states the problem that led to the writing of the report and explains the purpose or the objective of the report in relation to the problem. It serves mainly to give the reader enough background information to understand the body, conclusion and recommendations of the report.

Body of report

In the body of the report the information you have collected is presented, discussed and analysed. No attempt should be made to draw conclusions at this stage.
Conclusions

This is the drawing together of all the information you have discussed in the body of the report. The conclusions must follow logically from what has gone on before in the report. No new material should be introduced at this stage.

Recommendations

The writer of the report should put forward a solution (or solutions) based on the conclusions. If there is more than one possible solution, the writer should indicate the preferred solution giving reasons. The most common shortcoming in writing recommendations is to make them vague or indefinite. Instead of writing, I need more men to complete this work, you need to specify how many men, for how long. A phrase such as more co-operation from management is required might gain the intention to co-operate, but not the specific tasks performed that you need. Hence you must specify what sort of co-operation is required.

Appendix

The appendix contains important supplementary material, which, if inserted in the main body of the report, would impede the flow of the report. The appendix is usually made up of materials such as photographs, tables, charts, maps, diagrams, statistics, experimental results, graphs, etc.

Bibliography / References

The term bibliography means a list of books. If your report quotes from books, journals, articles and other references, you will need to include a bibliography. The entries in the bibliography are listed in alphabetical order of the authors name. Each reference should include the author, date published, book title (including edition number), where published, and the publisher.


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