

Writing Reports in Trades and Tech

Each trade and technical area has a different way of writing down information for sharing and documentation. An informational or analytical report discusses a topic in a structured, easy-to-follow format. Longer reports are divided into sections with headings and subheadings, but for the most part, reports are short, concise documents which are written for a particular purpose and audience. They generally set out and analyze a specific situation or problem, often making recommendations for future action.

Informational reports (inventory reports, annual or monthly budget reports, and similar items) carry objective information from one area of an organization to another, perhaps larger system.

Analytical reports (equipment analysis, feasibility reports, and research) show analysis and solve existing problems. These analytical reports usually require suggestions at the end.

Start with an Outline

Reports are factual and need to be clear and well-structured. Use an outline to plan your writing. Creating an outline allows you to think as you do your research and before you start to write. The report outline is laid out in a visual way so that you can see how it is organized. Start with bullet points of your information. You do not have to write full sentences as an outline is only a map of what you plan to do. A test of a good outline is if you can look at the outline and orally summarize your report to someone who is unfamiliar with the topic. With an outline, you will be able to see if any of your sections are repetitive or redundant.

Introduction of Your Topic

Be clear and concise as to what you are wanting to get across. Think about your audience and what they want or need to know. Who, what, where, when, why, and how are the key elements about your topic. What background is relevant for your readers?

Goal Statement

Tell your readers, in summary, what you are going to tell them in more detail in the body of the report.

- What are you planning to prove or demonstrate in this report?
- List the factual elements that you have gathered on this topic.

Body of the Report

In short reports, your bullet points from the outline will become one or two sentences. In longer reports, they will be subheadings with supporting paragraphs of documented information below. All sections should be written in plain English, except for the technical information, which can be as detailed as is needed.

Conclusion

Restate the report goal. Summarize the most important points.

As appropriate, make recommendations based on the information that you have provided.