A report is a formal, structured piece of writing that usually presents the findings of some research. It tells the reader: “This is what I did, and this is what I found”.

**Make sure your writing is concise and formal**

The style of reports should be concise, giving precise detail. Flowery language should not be used. Reports tend to be written in what is called the passive voice, which is more formal than standard English. When using the passive voice, the object of the sentence is placed first, rather than the subject:

**Passive:** Penicillin was discovered by Alexander Fleming in 1928.
**Active:** Alexander Fleming discovered penicillin in 1928.

**Present data visually**

Data should be presented as charts, graphs or tables, if appropriate.

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**Report structure**

Reports are usually arranged in sections, each with a clear heading. The main sections of a report can be numbered, and can have sub-sections with sub-headings, which are also numbered. A simple report is likely to include at least the following:

- **Introduction:** What are you writing about, why and for whom? What are your objectives?
- **Methods:** How did you conduct your research/enquiry and what methods did you use? Descriptions of methods should be sufficiently clear and detailed to allow someone else to replicate them exactly.
- **Results:** Give the results of your research. Do not, at this stage, try to interpret the results – simply report them.
- **Discussion:** Interpret your findings. What do they show and why is it significant?
- **Conclusions and recommendations:** Summarise the key points of your findings. If you have been asked to, you can make recommendations arising from your research.
- **References:** To acknowledge your sources and strengthen support for and assertions you make.

Reports may also have these sections:

- **Preliminaries:** Title page; Contents; List of tables and diagrams; Acknowledgements (thanks to those who helped with the report); Summary (key points of the report).
- **Supplementaries:** Appendices; Glossary.