

# REPORTS

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## PURPOSE OF REPORTS

### *To inform or report*

- Define a concept
- Describe a situation or event
- Present findings from empirical research
- Review the literature on a topic
- Show the financial status of your organization
- Show how your organization complies with environmental or other standards
- Outline a marketing approach
- Define a policy
- Summarize what you found out on a trip

### *To analyze, examine, or evaluate (decision-making reports)*

- Examine the feasibility of an action
- Justify an action by providing good reasons
- Define the options and limitations in a situation
- Provide recommendations

### *To persuade*

- Consider an analysis
- Make recommendations

## TYPES OF REPORTS

- |                       |                   |        |
|-----------------------|-------------------|--------|
| Accident/incident     | Staff utilization | Lab    |
| Feasibility           | Progress/Activity | Travel |
| Inventory             | Justification     | Study  |
| Performance Appraisal |                   |        |

## THE RHETORICAL SITUATION

*(NOTE: Refer to the handout about the rhetorical situation to remind yourselves about its specific characteristics.)*

### **Situation**

What's going on? What is the problem?

### **Purpose**

Describe the discovery, analysis, and documentation of knowledge through some type of investigation  
Think about the content (e.g., environmental action): What kind of information will museum patrons want/need?

### **Audience**

What do you know about this audience?

## ORGANIZATION OF CONTENT IN A REPORT

*NOTE: the section categories described below are not the headings you should use in your report. Headings and subheadings should fit the content and scope of your report. Exception: abstract (abstracts and executive summaries are usually titled "abstract" and "executive summary.")*

<b>Section Category</b>	<b>Description of Section Category</b>
<b>Front Matter</b>	Includes the letter of transmittal, title page, table of contents, list of tables and figures, list of appendices, abstract or executive summary and is therefore numbered with roman numerals. Begin numbering pages after the title page.
<b>Title Page</b>	The title page identifies the author of the report, the audience (e.g., submitted to), and the date. Be sure the title of your report fits the tone of your report. Title pages sometimes include an abstract (especially if they do not have a cover memo or what can be called a letter of transmittal). A letter of transmittal is often submitted with a report and its purpose is to announce what the attached document is and what project it relates to. You use it primarily to orient your reader to the report's purpose and topic.
<b>Abstract or Executive Summary</b>	The abstract typically ranges from 100-300 words and summarizes the content and scope of the report. Writers present this information in one of two ways: a) in a cover memo or b) on the title page.
<b>Overview/ Introduction</b>	This overview/introduction states the purpose, explains the purpose, and defines the scope (limits) of the report. Start with the purpose statement, next state the problem that the report addresses (further explanation of the problem that expands the topic and gives a brief context for what the report investigates), and then define the scope/limit of the content (i.e., tell your reader what you are including in the report and why--the rationale for the report.
<b>Background/ Lit Review</b>	The background explains the appropriate theoretical and historical aspects of your topic. This section should provide adequate background information for the reader to understand the content. Depending on the context and the situation, background information is sometimes included in the introduction. The background should start with a brief discussion of the theory (if necessary) and/or a historical (overview) context for understanding the scope of the report.
<b>Discussion</b>	This section reports your findings, research, or data in terms of the scope and interprets the data in terms of the purpose. You should provide the reader with your findings, interpret what they mean, and explain why they are important.
<b>Conclusion/ Recommendation</b>	The conclusion section normally summarizes the report. Although the conclusion does include a summary of the main points, it is not a word-for-word repeat of all the points you just mentioned. It is a comment on the information provided (i.e., what is useful about this information for teachers of technical communication? What does this information tell them about the job application process for your field? How could they use this information? (HINT: to say that teachers can use it for assignments is not useful information.)
<b>Reference List</b>	This section lists <i>all</i> the references cited in your report (e.g., print and electronic sources, interviews, surveys, polls, etc.). If you do not know the particular publication style for your field, consult the Burnett text (pp. UH49-56).
<b>Back Matter</b>	This section includes any appendices that provide supplemental content that enhances the report content but is not necessarily essential to its completeness.