

# FORMAL REPORT FORMATS

## FORMAL REPORT USES

Various types of reports are employed in the engineering profession (e.g., memos, status reports, interim reports, final reports), but each category has a fairly standard format. This document presents a more formal report format. The *formal report* format might be used to report work performed on a long-term project, to present work performed for a client, or to present results for publication in technical journals. An example of a *formal report* is presented at this Web site (<http://wwweng.uwyo.edu/classes/meref/>). This example embodies many of the concepts discussed in other Web site Reference Materials. Note, all reports in Mechanical Engineering (ME) classes should be "sent" with a **Letter of Transmittal** and formal reports should contain an **Informative Abstract**. These two items are of singular importance because they are common across all professions and used throughout technical written communication. Each requires clarity and brevity, and the **Letter of Transmittal** is also an exercise in solid, person-to-person communication. The **Letter of Transmittal** gives a record of what was submitted and gives the recipient concise information on what is contained in the report and what action is required. The **Informative Abstract** is a concise description of the background, the results, the conclusions, and recommendations of the report. The **Informative Abstract** is commonly used in research and allows readers to judge the pertinence and value of the report without reading the entire report. Both the **Letter of Transmittal** and the **Informative Abstract** should be considered as separate from the *formal report*, i.e. the *formal report* should be complete without either of these two components.

### Letter of Transmittal

The **Letter of Transmittal**, in formal block format, sends the report, stating the report title, establishing the purpose of the report, informing or reminding the reader of who authorized the report, why and when the report was requested, what the main subject of the report is, who else contributed to the report, and what you want the reader to do. It is the first item the reader sees; therefore, it is placed *before* the enclosed report.

### Informative Abstract

An **Informative Abstract** must be a *self-contained synopsis* of the report which *concisely* summarizes the objectives, procedure, pertinent results, and the inferred conclusions. The **Informative Abstract** includes introductory material to give the context of the work, and it is the *last* item that is written since its emphasis is on the results and conclusions. Students often have difficulty comprehending what constitutes a reasonable **Informative Abstract**. Some examples are therefore presented in the **Informative Abstract Examples** section of these guidelines. Often the author is required to provide **Keywords** that describe the subject matter of the report and are used by search engines. It should be noted that the **Title**, the **Informative Abstract**, and **Keywords** are very important in these days of electronic retrieval of archival materials. Readers of archival material may vary widely in background and be from diverse cultures. Great care should be exercised to make your **Informative Abstract** as precise, concise, and clear as possible.

## FORMAL REPORT GUIDELINES

A formal report contains many of the same elements as the memo report, but includes more of the details as well as additional information. Informative abstracts, appendices and glossaries (Lists of Symbols) are not usually included in memo (short) reports, but are normally included in formal reports.