

# Report writing: Formal

There are many different types of reports. This information is a basic outline only. Before you attempt to write a report, you should check the particular requirements for the subject.

A formal report should have the following arrangement.

**1. TITLE PAGE** — The Title Page must include the subject of the report, who the report is for, who the report is by and the date of submission.

**2. ABSTRACT** — An Abstract is usually 100 to 200 words and should include the following:

- why the report has been written (i.e. what question or problem is it addressing?)
- how the study was undertaken
- what the main findings were
- what the significance of the findings is.

Be specific and precise so that the reader can get a good understanding of the main points without having to read the whole report.

The abstract should be on a separate page with the centred heading **ABSTRACT** in capitals. It is usually written in a single paragraph with no indentation.

**3. TABLE OF CONTENTS** — The Table of Contents should be on a separate page. It helps the reader to find specific information and indicates how the information has been organised and what topics are covered. The table of contents should also include a **list of figures** and a **list of tables** if any are used in the report.

**4. INTRODUCTION** — The Introduction has three main components.

1. **The Background** which describes events leading up to the existing situation, what projects have been done previously, and why the project or study is necessary.
2. **The Purpose** which defines what the project or study is to achieve, who authorised it and the specific terms of reference.
3. **The Scope** which outlines any limitations imposed on the project such as cost, time etc.

**5. BODY** — The Body varies according to the type of report. Basically, it answers the questions — Who? Why? Where? When? What? How? In an investigative report, it would consist of all the information required to convince the reader that the conclusions and recommendations are valid/reliable. This information must be presented in a systematic way.