

# WRITING A BUSINESS REPORT

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## 1. What is a Business Report?

A business report is an evaluation or assessment of a particular issue or set of circumstances or financial operations that relate to the performance of a business. It is usually written in response to a request by a senior executive of the company, and often takes the form of a memo with the report attached. For example, a company manager who is concerned about undue wastage in the packaging department might request the OIC of the Packaging Department to look into the issue and to submit a report that highlights the problems and recommends solutions. While most business reports focus on existing issues, they can also be predictive in nature. For example, a manager might commission a report that evaluates the current use of computer technology in a company, and which recommends how the company might best position itself so that it can benefit from any future developments in computer technology.

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## 2. The Form of a Business Report

A business report is NOT written in essay format, but in an abbreviated style that allows the reader to navigate the report quickly and to identify key elements. **It uses appropriate headings and sub-headings and, if necessary, bullet points, diagrams and tables.** Remember that the main function of a business report is to communicate relevant information *quickly, clearly, and efficiently*. In essence it does three things:

- *Identifies the Issue*
  - *Explores the Issue*
  - *Lists key Findings and makes Recommendations*
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## 3. The Parts of a Business Report

Business reports can range from brief one-or-two-page reports, to reports of a hundred pages or more with several chapters and, quite possibly, a number of appendices. A lengthy report would include a table of contents and possibly an index. However, any business reports that you are asked to write for assignment purposes will not be lengthy affairs and will probably run to four or five pages, or less. They will usually include the following four elements:

- 1 *Executive Summary*
- 2 *Body*
- 3 *Key Findings/Recommendations*
- 4 *Conclusion*

If you are asked to write a business report of 1000 words, then you might apportion those words as follows:

<i>Executive Summary</i>	(about 100 words)
<i>Body</i>	(about 400 words)
<i>Findings/Recommendations</i>	(about 400 words)
<i>Conclusion</i>	(about 100 words)

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The ***Executive Summary*** acts like the Abstract of a regular essay. It will briefly state the purpose of the report, it will briefly describe the methodology used to investigate the issue (for example, you might have conducted interviews, or you might have circulated a questionnaire, or you might have carried out independent research) and it will list the key points and findings that are found in the report.

The ***Body*** gives details of the evaluation process. It will describe your methodology and identify particular issues that impacted on your evaluation. It might also allude to, or give a brief preview of, your findings. Relevant tables and/or diagrams will appear in the ***Body***.

In the ***Key Findings/Recommendations*** section you will identify and discuss/describe your key findings and make your recommendations.

Your ***Conclusion*** will neatly sum up your findings, and in doing so will ensure that these relate back to the original question or issue that has given rise to the report.

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Please understand that the above suggestions are just that — suggestions. They are presented to give you some idea of how to set out a Business Report. Your lecturer might have some specific ideas of what should or should not be included, and you will need to consult with your lecturer.