

An Easy Path to an Effective Report

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Step 1

- Analyze the assignment description:
 - Scope
 - Due dates
 - Format and documentation
 - Collaboration
 - Key words



Exercise

- Read the *Common Exam Terms* handout.
- Underline the terms from the list that you have come across in your assignments.
- Write down two examples of possible report topics that would use these terms.

Step 2

- Determine why you are writing
 - To discuss planned work
 - A proposal
 - A feasibility report
 - To discuss completed work
 - An empirical report (experiment description)
 - A progress report
 - A case study
- Think about the contrast between **displaying knowledge** and **persuading your readers**



Step 3

- Determine your audience
 - Teachers
 - Engineers
 - Production workers
 - Salepeople
 - Journalists
 - Environmentalists
- Determine the content and language

Step 4

- Structure your report
 - Clear and hierarchical
 - Headings, subheadings, bullet lists
 - White space



Title

- Subject
- Type of study (experiment, comparison, survey)
- Scope (limiting details)



Abstract or Summary

- Background
- Purpose and scope of paper
- Method
- Results
- Conclusions



Table of Contents

- Reflect the structure of the whole report
- Clearly indicate the content
- Reflect the type of study



Introduction

- A broad overview of the technology in question, to show its importance, or
- A brief account of the main facts in a chain of events
- A **problem** statement
- The **purpose** of your paper

Main Body

- Varies depending on report
- Logical system:
 - Past-to-present,
 - General to specific
 - Theoretical to practical
- Ends with a *Conclusions* section



References

- Last name and initials of all authors
- Year of publication
- Title of book or article
- Publisher or journal
- Internet sources: look for author name, title of document, date of last revision, include full URL and date of visit.



Step 5

- Test your organization
 - Underline the topic idea
 - Highlight just the first sentence in each subsequent paragraph
 - Read the underlined sentences straight as if they formed an essay in themselves
 - If some underlined sentences do not work, reexamine those paragraphs
 - Test your conclusion against your introduction



Step 6

- Check the format
 - Are you using the correct format (Chicago, Harvard, APA, MLA)?
 - Are the figures and tables titled correctly?
 - Are the headings consistent?
 - Are all sections present?



Good luck!