Bachelor of Global Business and Digital Arts

GBDA403

Internship Report Manual

Chapter 1

Last revised February 2015
How to Write Your Internship Report

Chapter 1
Definition of a Report

Let’s take a look at the definition of a report:

A report is a systematic presentation of factual information for a purpose.

Let’s look at each major word in the definition:

Systematic
Reports have a certain look—a predictable structure, many with ordained sections such as “Summary” and “Conclusions” that readers expect. A report’s sections depend on the kind of report. For example, think of weather reports: no matter what station you’re watching or listening to, the structure or format of the weather report is the same.

Presentation
Reports are created for one or more readers, and reports are presented in writing (especially longer reports) and sometimes orally (especially shorter reports). As you’ll see in a later chapter, knowing as much as possible about your reader and his or her needs is important when you create reports.

Factual
Many reports examine a problem, reach conclusions, and offer recommendations—based on the facts of the problem, not on the writer’s gut instincts. Impartiality is a key principle in credible reports.

Information
Reports often include many kinds of information presented in various ways. Reports have text, of course, but they can also present survey data, include references, display figures, tables, infographics, etc.

Purpose
Reports are almost always written upon request. You won’t wake up some morning and think, “Today I’ll write a report.” You might think of writing a note to your best friend, but you’ll write a report because you’ve been asked to: by your faculty, by your boss, perhaps by a client or funding agency. Some reports are written to inform; other reports are written to persuade.
The Purpose of a Report

Rhetorical Purpose

Communications are generally designed to inform, to persuade, or to entertain. Your reports will not be designed primarily to entertain—though writing them in a lively and interesting fashion can help you create a positive impression and outcome. That leaves you with the choice of either informing or persuading.

Informative reports are based on the “objective” presentation of information. They provide balanced, reliable information to the reader, and do not culminate in recommendations.

Persuasive reports are designed to lead your reader to do or to believe something. They typically culminate in recommendations.

Before you set out to write a report, it is crucial that you understand what your readers expect of you.

Please follow the links below to see examples of informative and persuasive writing.

Note how in this informative example the authors provide information about genetically modified foods without taking a position on whether or not we should eat them or grow them. In informative writing such as this, the author’s goal is to give a balanced, organized statement of facts.

Note how in this persuasive example the various groups being represented take positions (state opinions) and try to defend them; they encourage their readers to accept their propositions. In this kind of writing, as in informative writing, you need to be fair-minded, honest, and thorough (though you can assess the extent to which the various position-takers in this sample have or have not met this standard). In persuasive writing, you use evidence to fair-mindedly “make a case.”

Specific Purpose and Context

After determining who is likely to read your report and your general rhetorical purpose, you must consider the specific purpose and context of your report. In most academic communications, you do not need to think about specific purpose and context because they are almost always the same: impress the reader with your command of course content. However, in report writing, overt or excessive attempts to impress your readers can actually undermine the communication’s effectiveness and be interpreted as time-wasting filler or pretentiousness.

Reports are practical documents with specific purposes.

For example, in a report on choosing a piece of computer hardware, your goal is to help your readers make a decision. To achieve this goal, you need to present them with plenty of information, sound reasoning, and logical conclusions and recommendations. However, you would be ill-advised to spend much space merely demonstrating your knowledge of computer
hardware. Your goal is not to dazzle your readers with your brilliance but to achieve your specific purpose: to help your readers make a decision. In a report like this, you would need to provide only enough information about your computer expertise to convince them that you are qualified to assist in the decision. Remember what you are setting out to do (purpose) and in what situation you are being asked to do it (context), and you will be on your way to writing solid reports.

Qualities of a Good Report

Drawing on our definition of a report, we can identify the following desirable qualities of reports and the people who write them.

1. A report’s structure should follow conventions (for example, length, format, and section headings) that are appropriate for the kind and length of report and that meet the needs of the reader.
2. Reports should be clear and concise, checked carefully for grammar, punctuation, and the general principles of good writing.
3. The writer should strive to be—and appear to be—impartial, building the report on facts, not unsubstantiated opinions.
4. Reports should include figures, tables, infographics, and other information that help the reader understand the report; irrelevant or unhelpful material should be left out of the report.
5. Reports must “answer the question” and address the needs of the reader.
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Internship Report Manual

Chapter 2

Last revised February 2015
How to Write Your Internship Report

Chapter 2
Report Details and Requirements

Overview

- It is approximately 16–20 pages in length, including all peripheral material (figures, tables, infographics, references, etc.).
- It must contain at least one infographic.
- It is worth 30% of your course grade and the final report is due in Week 12 of the term (please refer to course syllabus for exact due date).

Report Components

Your report will be an exercise in critical reflection as well as demonstrate your understanding and mastery of key components of report writing, including the:

- summary (ensure that your one-page summary states your report’s topic, purpose, research methodology, conclusions, and recommendations),
- analysis (don’t just write about your topic: provide thoughtful analysis and demonstrate critical reflection, as discussed below),
- conclusions (provide findings—conclusions—that are based on your analysis), and
- recommendations (write recommendations that you will implement).
- visuals (at least one table, one figure/graph, one infographic)

Your report’s analysis (discussed in chapter 3) will be worth 60% of the report’s overall grade, so be careful to provide analysis—not just general information on your topic. Some reports fail because the writer only tells a story (“In Week 01 of my internship, I learned about …”); giving the reader a week-by-week account of the internship experience is not analysis. Other reports fail because the writer only describes a situation or event. “My employer has five offices in three cities. Its main business is …” Although interesting and perhaps appropriate in the report’s introduction, that information is not analysis either.

Your analysis may discuss why something happened (causes) or what happened as a result (effects). Your research will give you facts and data. Your analysis will find meaning in that information—your analysis will answer the question “so what?”

Sections and Formatting for Your Report

Requirements

The work report must look professional and excluding the title page, letter of submittal, table of contents, list of figures and tables, and appendices, not exceed 2,500 words.
**Page Design**

Successful reports impress their readers not just with their content but also with their appearance. Be sure to use attractive headings, plenty of white space, and a conventional serif font (such as Times New Roman). Serif fonts—those with little extensions on the ends of the shapes in most letters—have proven to be easier to read than non-serif fonts, such as Arial.

**Preliminary Pages**

The first part of the report must be organized in the following sequence:

1. Front cover
2. Title page
3. Letter of submittal
4. Table of contents
5. List of figures, tables, infographics

1. **Front cover**

   The front cover must contain:

   - The title of the report
   - Student’s name and ID number
   - Most recent full-time academic term

Keep the report title shorter than 50 characters, including spaces. You can use graphic design to improve the appearance of the cover.
2. **Title page**

The title page presents an expanded version of the information contained on the front cover. Beginning at the top of the page, list the following:

- University of Waterloo
- Faculty of Arts – Stratford Campus
- Title of report
- Name and location of the employer
- Your name, ID number, previous academic term and program, and date when the report was prepared.

*Sample title page*

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**University of Waterloo**

Faculty of Arts
Stratford Campus

**Report Title**

**Name of employer**

Location of employer

Prepared by

**Student Name**

Student ID Number
Report Preparation Date

---
3. **Letter of Submittal**

The letter of submittal must follow the format of a standard business letter. Address letter to the Director, Stratford Campus.

Your letter must contain:

- report title
- employer
- previous academic term
- supervisor(s)
- department(s)
- main activity of employer and department
- purpose of report
- acknowledgments and explanation of assistance received and/or information provided
- statement of endorsement (shown below)
- name, ID number, and signature

The statement of endorsement shall read: “**This report was written entirely by me and has not received any previous academic credit at this or any other institution.**”

In the following sample, required items are shown in bold face for convenience. However, these items should **NOT** be in bold face in your letter of submittal. Although the letter of submittal is included in the report, it is not a component of the report. Consequently, a page number should not be assigned to the letter, and the letter should not be included in the table of contents.
Sample Letter of Submittal

491 Birchmount Cres.
Winnipeg, MB
R4V 1S5

(current date)

(name of the major department/school chair or director)
(name of major department)
Faculty of Arts
University of Waterloo
Waterloo, Ontario
N2L 3G1

Dear (name of Director, Stratford Campus):

This report, entitled “Hiring Professional Consultants in the Workplace,” was prepared for Creative Business Consultants Inc. as my work report. Its purpose is to discuss and evaluate the benefits of employing consultants to help ensure a company’s growth and productivity.

Creative Business Consultants provide their clients with expertise and proven methods of running a successful business, ranging from organizational structure, strategic planning, and marketing.

The Business section, in which I was employed, is managed by Ms. Jennifer Smith, and it is primarily involved in developing marketing initiatives for its clients.

This report was written entirely by me and has not received any previous academic credit at this or any other institution. I would like to thank Ms. Smith for providing me with valuable advice and resources, including documentation and leads to informative web sites. I also wish to thank Mr. Bill Jones for proofreading my report and improving its appearance. I received no other assistance.

Sincerely,

(Signature)

(Student’s name)
(Student’s Waterloo ID)
4. **Table of Contents**

The table of contents lists all main sections in the work report and any subsections with headings. Each entry should be connected to its page number with a dotted line. Align the page numbers on the right side of the page. Do not include the letter of submittal in the table of contents. Note the use of lowercase Roman numerals (e.g., ii, iii, iv, etc.) for the table of contents and list of figures and tables.

*Sample Table of Contents*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table of Contents</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures, Tables, Infographics</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Product</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of product</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product Launch Campaign</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing the product</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Success of Marketing Campaign</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product availability and awareness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer feedback</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A–Competitive Analysis Report</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B–Promotional Material</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. **List of figures, tables, infographics**

They are listed in the preliminary pages of the report, immediately after the Table of Contents page. However, if the report includes 10 or more figures and/or tables, a List of Tables, Figures, Infographics should be provided on separate pages. Each list identifies its components by number, title, and page number. Do not list any tables, infographics, or figures that appear in the appendices.

*Sample List of Figures, Tables, Infographics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>List of Figures, Tables, Infographics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1. Population Growth by Province ................................................................. 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2. Income Growth by Province .............................................................................. 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3. Employment Growth by Province ...................................................................... 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 1. Labour Force by Province ................................................................................ 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2. Unemployment by Province .............................................................................. 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infographic 1. Results of Survey ................................................................................. 9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Headings and Subheadings**

Make sure that each heading or sub-heading in the body of the document is followed by some text. In other words, do not include a heading and then immediately a sub-heading, with no writing in between.

The following is an example of an incorrect use of headings in the body of a report:

2.0 Costs
   2.1 Cost of Transportation

Note that there is no text between the headings.

Here is an example of a correct use of headings:

2.0 Costs
Our firm will face costs in several areas: transportation, manufacturing, labour, and energy. To maximize the return on our investment, we must pay particular attention to the costs of transportation and manufacturing.
   2.1 Cost of Transportation

Note that the headings are separated by some text.

If you are dividing sections into sub-sections, provide more than one sub-section. Each section that has been subdivided should contain at least two sub-sections. If you do not have room to
include both a heading and text at the end of a page, insert the section heading at the start of a new page. Do not end a page with a heading without any text underneath it.
How to Write Your Internship Report

Chapter 3
Finding a Topic for your Work Report

Overview

Regardless of the direction you choose to take with your topic, here are some important things to remember:

- Your report must include both an objective analytical and a reflective component.
- For the objective analytical component, you need to research topics in your workplace or conduct a literature review.
- For the reflective component, you need to consider how that topic relates to you, your previous experiences, and your future plans.

Possible Topics of Focus

The Internship as a Model of Learning

- Research other models of experiential learning and compare their relative merits with the internship model
- Examine connections that you have made between your work term and your academic courses
- Examine insights you have gained in your workplace as a result of reflection

Professional Skills

- Research what skills will be most important for a graduate of the Bachelor of Global Business and Digital Arts program
- Examine the research related to interpersonal skills (e.g., Emotional Intelligence)
- Poll co-workers to ask them to rank the most important interpersonal skills for their workplace
- Compare your ranking of your strengths and weaknesses to those of your peers
- Compare how your assessment of your strengths and weaknesses align with others’ perception of you (could be peers, co-workers, supervisor)
- Examine what limitations you will likely experience in your field if you don’t develop specific interpersonal skills
- Explore specific ways you can improve your interpersonal skills

Goal Setting

- Research goal setting models that you may have come in contact with during your internship
- Examine the research related to goal setting in the workplace and identify its constraints (e.g., when it is most/least beneficial)
- If goal setting is done by full-time employees at your workplace,
  - Is it a formal or informal process?
  - How regularly are goals revisited and updated?
  - Is it a process that is seen as positive or punitive?
Does it affect pay increases or bonuses?

Before Drafting

Understand the Purpose

The purpose is why you’re writing a report in the first place, so a thorough understanding of the purpose is critical to you (the writer) and to your report. You can use some of the traditional journalist’s questions (i.e., Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How) to help you understand the purpose and its dimensions. For example,

- **Who** is your audience?
- **What** will they value when they read it?
- **What** will readers hope to learn?
- **What** is the purpose of the report for the writer (other than to obtain a good grade)?
- **How** does where you are working influence your choice of topic and the way in which you develop your content?

Planning Your Research

When you have explored the problem, you will discover what you know about the problem—and, just as importantly, what you don’t know. And what you don’t know about the problem will help you to plan your research so you can fill the gaps in your knowledge.

The needs of your reader, the scope of your report, and the time you have to write the report will determine the extent of your research plan. For your report, you are expected to write 6–10
pages (double-spaced) for the main body of the report. Please keep that information in mind as you plan the scope for your topic. If you appropriately limit the scope for your report, you won’t spend an unnecessarily excessive amount of time researching your topic.

At this stage of the report-writing process, you know what you don’t know. Or you think you do. (As you gather information, new questions will arise and new problems will emerge.)

**Brainstorming**

Some reports are easy to organize because the facts and ideas to include are straightforward. When the subject matter is not as clearly defined, however, getting started may require brainstorming, either on paper or on your computer. In a group setting, this process works well when people focus on an issue or problem by spontaneously offering questions or ideas recorded as they occur, perhaps written on a whiteboard or posted as sticky notes on the wall. You can follow a similar process in writing. Here are the general guidelines:

- focus on the problem or issue to be addressed
- list whatever ideas come to mind
- don’t criticize or reject any thoughts or questions
- keep writing until no new ideas occur

From this list, you can reject whatever seems irrelevant or redundant, pinpoint the key concepts, and consider a possible way to organize them within the sections of your report.

**Research Methods**

Now that you have completed your brainstorming, you will likely have developed some questions that need further investigating before you submit your final report. How will you find the answers to these questions? What personal experiences will you be able to include in the report to construct your reflections? What external resources do you have access to, and how will you narrow down your topic? You could access the UW library’s online journal database and conduct research using industry-specific journal articles (what keywords would you use?) or you could interview others about the topic to gain valuable perspective and insight. Get creative!
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Chapter 4

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How to Write Your Internship Report

Chapter 4
Drafting the Report and Making Your Case

Overview

Reports almost always include conclusions and sometimes make recommendations. You want your reader to accept your conclusions and recommendations. For that to happen, your reader will have to agree with the logic you displayed in reaching your conclusions.

How do you reach a conclusion? You discover evidence. You recognize a pattern or causal effect in that evidence. And you reach a conclusion. This process is called an argument.

For example, you wonder why your roommate is so healthy. You identify and consider relevant facts (evidence) about your roommate, and you reach a conclusion based on those facts.

Argument

1 + 2 + 3 + 4 Evidence → Conclusion

Evidence

Your roommate:
- gets one hour of aerobic exercise three times a week
- is careful about what she eats, foregoing fatty foods for vegetables
- doesn’t smoke
- manages her schedule so that she gets enough sleep

Conclusion

You conclude that your roommate’s habits of sufficient exercise and sleep, good diet, and nicotine abstinence explain her good health. Your conclusion is reinforced by the reading you’ve done on the subject.

However, your reader may disagree with your conclusion for various reasons:
- Your evidence may be faulty or incomplete: Citing questionable data or the experience of one individual or company will probably fail to convince your reader. Think of quality and quantity: Your evidence must be both reliable and sufficient to support your conclusion.
- The reader questions the relevance of your evidence: This logical fallacy of irrelevant evidence is often referred to by its Latin name, *non sequitur*, which means, “it does not follow.”
• The reader may not agree with your line of reasoning: The reader may accept your evidence but not your interpretation of what it points to. For example, you shouldn’t conclude that the evidence about your roommate explains her good marks. (The reader disagrees with your line of reasoning.) On the other hand, your evidence could be sound, but you simply failed to explain how it led to your conclusion. (The reader doesn’t understand your line of reasoning.)

Figures, Tables, Infographics

As you have learned, we communicate not only with words. Your reports will include text, certainly, but they will also include visuals—such as figures, tables, infographics. Your Report must include at least one table, one figure/graph, and one infographic, which you can include in either the body of your report or in the appendix. Remember your reader can read information in your figures or tables. If you include a figure or table, do not simply repeat the information in the text. Your job is to provide an analysis of that information in the text.

The Analytics Element

Many of the reports required on the job (tracking sales, describing the status of a project, etc.) are largely informative and routine. You write them to provide information according to a prescribed format. Because they are part of your regular duties, your readers may examine them thoroughly or barely read them at all. They are part of your company records and may be consulted at any time, so your primary responsibility lies in being accurate and thorough.

Occasionally, however, you may need to draw your readers’ attention to serious problems or positive developments, especially if you don’t want to be held accountable for overlooking a potential disaster or denied credit for recognizing a promising initiative.

Analytical reports, on the other hand, require information and some kind of critical judgment from you as a writer. You are frequently writing for readers who want and need to hear what you have to say in order to make a decision. Your role as a writer is to

• gather all the required data
• explain the data’s relevance or significance
• draw reasonable conclusions
• provide practical recommendations

In short, you interpret, you evaluate, and you advise.

In other words, although analytical reports take many forms according to their function, another way of classifying them involves establishing what they require from you as the writer. Here are some general categories (some of which may overlap).
Reports Examining Causes and Effects

- explain why a problem or problems occurred
- assess how a problem has affected the company internally or externally
- may compare alternative solutions against desired criteria
- may recommend the best course of action

Reports Examining What’s Been Done

- assess how policies, projects or other initiatives have worked
- may compare present results with expected results
- may suggest improvements or recommend discontinuation

Reports Assessing What Might Work

- examine the feasibility of adopting new procedures, equipment, software, etc.
- base conclusions on advantages and disadvantages
- may recommend the best method of implementation

Reports Promoting What You or Your Company Can Do (Proposals)

- stress the need for an internal change or addition
- may respond formally to an external request for proposal (RFP)
- may present different options based on reader’s realities
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Internship Report Manual

Chapter 5

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The front and back materials of a report—including the summary (sometimes called “executive summary”), table of contents, introduction, conclusions, and recommendations—are often the last sections to be written. They are written last because they incorporate aspects of the body of the report, which will already have been composed. These materials reflect a report’s purpose, shape, and content.

Front and back materials can be crucial because they set the tone for many readers’ experiences of the whole report. Almost every reader will read some of the front materials first. If the opening sections of your document are poorly written, the reader’s first impression will be negative, and you will need to use your discussion section to make up for the faults of early sections. In addition, some readers will read only the front and back materials, assuming that they accurately summarize the whole report.

These sections also provide organizational assistance to the reader and enhance the usability of a report. An effective summary, for instance, can provide readers with much information in a few sentences.
Each section of the front and back materials of a report should be composed with certain conventions (or standard writing practices) in mind. Please read the guidelines and follow the links in this section to see how to write these parts of a report effectively.

1. **Summary**

The *summary* (sometimes called *executive summary*) is designed to do precisely what its name suggests: summarize the report’s content. Sometimes the summary is sent to an executive who wants to know what the report is about but might not have time to read the whole document. In cases in which the summary remains with the rest of the report, readers often use it as a quick description of the whole document.

Because this part of the report performs the functions described above, it must be thorough. The summary should summarize your report’s purpose, methods, analysis, primary conclusions, and recommendations. **Take special note that the summary, unlike some reports’ introductions, includes conclusions and recommendations.** Often, these are the sections of your report that would most interest an executive.

Though this section of your report must be thorough, it will typically be short. In a document the length of the typical work term report, your summary will normally be no longer than one double-spaced page.

The summary typically takes a lower case Roman numeral as its page number. The summary for your Report will be page iv and follow your list of tables and figures on page iii. Do not include an abstract in your Report.

Follow the links below for more information on how to write summaries:

- “*Good and Poor Examples of Executive Summaries*” (University of Wollongong, Australia)
- “*How to Write a Summary*” (Oregon State University)
- ”*Executive Summaries Complete the Report*” (G. Jay Christensen)
- “*Writing Executive Summaries*” (James C. Morrison, MIT) (PDF)

2. **Introduction**

**Overview**

Like the summary, your introduction should contain summaries of most sections of your report. The introduction differs from the summary, however, in that it does not always contain summaries of your conclusions and (where applicable) recommendations. This is because the introduction is rarely separated from the rest of the report, which should contain concise conclusions and recommendations. Conclusions and recommendations are addressed later in this chapter. You may include summaries of conclusions and recommendations in your introduction, however, if you feel that they would contribute to your reader’s understanding. In addition, the introduction may contain information about limitations in the report’s scope or
applicability. Please note that the introduction should not repeat parts of the summary word for word.

The introduction is one of the first sections many readers encounter and helps to set the tone for your report, so you should write this section carefully. In the introduction, you describe the report’s purpose (a problem to be solved), your methods, and what you discuss in the body of the report. Your introduction indicates to readers why they should proceed to the more detailed discussion to follow, gives readers a sense of the shape and content of the report, and provides necessary background information. The introduction in work term reports is typically no longer than one double-spaced page. The introduction typically takes a normal page number.

Sample Report Introduction

1.0 Introduction

“For the past eighteen months, the Satellite Products Laboratory has been developing a system that will permit companies with large nationwide fleets of trucks to communicate directly to their drivers at any time through a satellite link. Several trucking lines and supermarket chains have expressed an interest in such a service. At present, they can communicate with their long-distance drivers only when the drivers pull off the road to phone in, meaning that all contacts are originated by the drivers, not the central dispatching service. The potential market for such a satellite service also includes many other companies and government agencies (such as the National Forest Service) that desire to communicate with trucks, cars, boats, or trains that regularly operate outside the very limited range of urban cellular telephone systems. [background and purpose]

This report describes the first operational test of the system we have developed. Such tests were particularly important to conduct before continuing further with the development of this system because our system is much different from those currently being used with commercial satellites. Specifically, our system will transmit to mobile ground stations by using the short antennas and the low power provided by conventional terrestrial broadcasting systems. [what has been done]

In particular, we wanted to test whether we could achieve accurate data transmissions and good-quality voice transmissions in the variety of terrains typically encountered in long-haul trucking. We wanted also to see what factors might affect the quality of transmissions. [specific goals]

The test results indicate that our design is basically sound, although a new mobile antenna needs to be designed and the satellite configuration needs to be examined. [key findings: one conclusion and two recommendations]


3. Conclusions
Overview

Your report’s body should prepare your reader for your conclusions, which should represent the logical extension of the thinking embodied in earlier sections of the report. Do not add new information in your conclusions that was not mentioned in the body.

Avoid general statements that would be difficult to disagree with, such as, “The goal setting model is very important for attaining goals.” It is clear that the goal setting model is important for attaining goals. What type of goal setting model is it? How does it help one attain goals? What are the pros and cons of the goal setting model?

Each conclusion and recommendation should be concise. You should not provide excess explanation because you should have already made your case convincingly in the body of your report. Please also keep in mind that each conclusion should be presented in its own paragraph and express a different idea. In other words, do not make more than one conclusion within a conclusion.

The conclusions section should not exceed one page. You will provide at least three conclusions that highlight your main findings in the body of your report with clear, concise statements. Please note: Reports contain conclusions (with an “s”), not a conclusion, as it would appear in an essay.

Consider the following basic example of conclusions:

**Information or facts from the discussion section** (The highlighted sections contain key findings used for the conclusions.)
I have noticed during my internship that teams in the workplace differ quite a bit from teams on which I have worked for academic projects. There is some interesting research on this topic. As an example, Koppi et. al (2009) found that some universities "were not fully effective in developing (teamwork) skills for a variety of reasons including differences in ability, experience, attitude, and behaviours amongst the students within an environment that is different from that of the workplace" (p. 3).

**Conclusions**

Workplace teams are different from academic teams with respect to ability, attitude, and behaviours.

Academic teams may not fully prepare students to be effective team members in the workplace. Below are a few key points to remember:

**Conclusions Checklist**
- Each conclusion is concise without excess explanation already provided in the body.
- Each conclusion is about a key finding of the report with no new information added.
- Each conclusion is specific without generalized statements.
Three separate conclusions have been made.

How to Make Good Conclusions

Key Questions to Ask Yourself

In the process of writing your conclusions, ask yourself the following questions to make sure that your conclusions are clear and effective.

- Do my conclusions provide key findings from the analysis of my report in a short, easily understandable form?
- Do my conclusions act as summaries of broader thinking?
- Do my conclusions clarify for readers the key aspects of my thinking, not just repeat an earlier analysis?
- Do my conclusions reflect thought about facts, not just repeat facts, descriptions, or explanations (which belong in earlier sections of the report)?
- Are my conclusions reasonable; are they based on sound evidence and thinking?

Process You Might Undertake to Make Conclusions

Below are a few steps that you could take to help you come to and make good conclusions.

Step 1: Having written the discussion section, ask yourself (without consulting the report), "What are my key findings based on my thinking (not just my research)?" The answers might end up as conclusions.

Step 2: Check to see if you have left anything important out of your conclusions.

Step 3: Summarize your key findings to friends or family members; are your conclusions clear, concise, and thoughtful?

Step 4: Can you summarize each conclusion into a single sentence? If not, revise for clarity. Even if your final conclusions are longer than one sentence, try to write them in a single sentence first for clarity and conciseness.

Step 5: Check to make sure that each conclusion contains only one idea. If you have multiple ideas in a single conclusion, either split the ideas into two conclusions or pick the most important idea.

Step 6: Check to see that you have provided only reasonable conclusions that are supported by the analysis of your report.

Signs of Poor Conclusions

Below is a list of a few things that you want to avoid in your conclusions.
• Your conclusions merely state facts or provide a general statement. Try to avoid very general statements that would be hard to disagree with.
• Your conclusions provoke the response, "Who cares?"
• Your conclusions do not reflect the analysis from the rest of the report.

4. Recommendations

Overview

Your recommendations should be logically drawn from the previous conclusions you made. You should focus your recommendations on areas of improvement that emerged from your analysis and conclusions. Finally, check your recommendations to ensure that they are specific, measurable, and attainable.

Recommendations Checklist

☐ Each recommendation is specific, measurable, and attainable.
☐ Each recommendation is based on a conclusion.
☐ Two separate recommendations have been made.

How to Make Good Recommendations

Key Questions to Ask Yourself

In the process of writing your recommendations, ask yourself the following questions to make sure that your recommendations are clear and effective.

• Are my recommendations relevant and are they based on the conclusions that I made?
• Are my recommendations reader- and stakeholder-centred? The stakeholder is the person or group of people to whom you are making the recommendations (depending on the topic of your Report, this can include yourself).
• Do my recommendations provide advice about future actions for those who care about the content of my report?
• Do my recommendations reflect thoughtful engagement with the evidence I have uncovered and discussed in earlier sections?
• Are my recommendations a complete surprise to the reader? If so, revise your recommendations to reflect earlier findings instead of new information.

Process You Might Undertake to Make Recommendations

Below are a few steps that you could take to help you come to and make good recommendations.
Step 1: Having written the discussion section, ask yourself (without consulting the report), “What, in light of my research and thinking, should stakeholders do?” The answers might end up as recommendations.

Step 2: Check that recommendations stem from the conclusions you have previously made.

Step 3: Check the report to see that the recommendations have not left out anything important.

Step 4: Summarize your recommendations for friends or family members; are your recommendations clear, concise and thoughtful?

Step 5: Can you summarize each recommendation into 1–2 sentences? If not, revise for clarity. Even if your final recommendations are longer than 1–2 sentences, try to write them in only 1–2 sentences first for clarity.

Step 6: Check to see that you have provided only reasonable recommendations (keep the stakeholder in mind; is this recommendation reasonable for them to do?).

Signs of Poor Recommendations

Below is a list of a few things that you want to avoid in your recommendations.

- Your recommendations are unreasonable.
- Your recommendations are trivial or not meaningful to the stakeholder.
- Your recommendations do not clearly reflect the conclusions.
Establishing Your Credibility

Overview

Routine informative reports probably do not require you to worry very much about your role as a writer. However, if your report conveys bad news or attempts to persuade your reader, in a proposal, for example, you should consider some issues that might undermine your credibility. Answering some of the questions below will help you make decisions not only about the language, format, and organization of your report but also the amount and kind of evidence you present.

What is my relationship with the primary reader?

If you are not in a supervisory position, you may lack the automatic authority that would make your main message or proposal easier to accept. Logic and evidence should dominate any appeal you make to the reader.
If you are new to a company, you may need to find ways to be candid yet constructive about any feedback you offer.
If you are writing from a supervisory position, you need to avoid abusing your authority, especially in any reports that involve changes to attitudes or working procedure and therefore require co-operation from your readers. To avoid appearing authoritarian or unreasonable, you need to acknowledge what these changes will mean to those involved and to stress the benefits that will arise for both them and the company.
How will my knowledge be perceived?

Some readers are willing to accept advice and proposals, especially if you have knowledge in a key area that they do not. Other readers may be less willing to accept your ideas, so you may need to rely strongly on more recognized authorities in making your case. A few readers may even resent or be intimidated by your expertise, so you need to make your report as readable as possible and to rely on a logical, step-by-step presentation of your argument.

Do I appear reliable?

To be both credible and ethical, you need to consider whether you have acknowledged and fairly dealt with any significant evidence or opinion that contradicts your main message. You may also need to mention any limitations in your investigation or analysis—if they are likely to affect the way the results are interpreted. In addition, if you have received substantial help from others in putting together your report, you may wish to thank them for their contribution—perhaps in the Letter of Submittal or on a separate page under the heading “Acknowledgments”. Finally, don’t forget to cite any secondary sources that you have relied on, including those for graphic material.

Do I seem reasonable?

The words that you choose reflect more than the level of formality expected; they also suggest something about your objectivity. Employers expect a certain enthusiasm from you in regard to their products or services, but outside readers may be suspicious of excessive or exaggerated language.

Establishing the Correct Tone

Overview

The term “tone” is often applied to music: it sometimes refers to the qualities of a note or sound. When writing, one can benefit from remembering how words “sound”: respectful, aggressive, arrogant, submissive, and so on. Have you ever heard a parent tell a child, “Don’t take that tone with me”? What the parent means in such cases is that the child has failed to demonstrate respect for the parent.

R-E-S-P-E-C-T

If you wish to show respect for your reader and for your task, you must choose the right tone. You want to signal that you take the reader seriously enough to write formally, clearly, and professionally, and that you consider the task important enough to warrant serious, rigorous attention.

Example
Think, for example, of all the tones taken when people speak or write about movies they have just seen. What is the tone of each of the following mini-reviews, and in what situations would these reviews be appropriate?

1. “That movie sucked.”
2. “I thought the movie was among the better films of the year.”
3. “While the film was visually impressive, it lacked strong characters.”
4. “The film participates in a postmodern, decentralizing discourse that is, however, disrupted by the cathartic dimensions of its third act.”

The word “sucked” used in the first example is colloquial and lacks analytical precision. Such an expression might be appropriate among close friends. However, in other contexts, such a sentence might be interpreted as disrespectful to your reader. For instance, can you imagine writing this way in a letter to a professor of film studies? Such a statement also demonstrates that the writer has dedicated little time or effort to the task of reviewing the film. As you move through the list of reviews, notice how the choice of language, sentence complexity, and detail in analysis make the tone ever more formal—more distant, objective, and analytical—to the point where the last example may even be too formal for any but the most specialized readers.

**Tone in Workplace Writing**

**Overview**

In workplace writing, you should usually write in a moderately to thoroughly formal tone. However, avoid using a “heightened” or artificially sophisticated tone. Demonstrate through the tone you establish that you take your topic seriously and understand its importance. However, also show your readers that you respect their intelligence and do not wish to waste their time with wordy, hard-to-understand sentences.

**Informal Tone: Conversational**

- Contains contractions, colloquial words, slang, etc.
- Standards for the reliability and reasonableness of content are relatively low. (“My boss is a great guy.”)

**Formal Tone: “Sounds like” something important (but not necessarily Shakespeare)**

- Serious, direct language: no slang, clichés, exaggeration, or insensitive language.
- Precise use of diction.
- In the following sentences, please note how the level of formality and precision increases with each wording option:
  - Poor: “When employees are crunching some numbers on a project…”
  - Improved: “When employees do calculations on a project…”
  - Best: “When employees are performing regression analysis on a project…”

In the above examples, “crunching some numbers” is a colloquial expression; it sounds casual. “Performing regression analysis” is precise and formal, and it sounds professional.
**Imprecise, Informal Language to Precise, Formal Language**

Please consider the difference in tone that might be established through the wording of the following examples.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colloquial</th>
<th>Formal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Take a shot</td>
<td>Attempt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ticked off</td>
<td>Angry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gave me the run around</td>
<td>Inconvenienced me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It hurt like crazy</td>
<td>It hurt a lot</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Factors to Take into Consideration**

1. **Wording:** use precise, mature (but not pretentious) words.
   - No: “The tech support guys in our office are alright”
   - Yes: “Our technical support team is efficient and courteous.”

2. **Degree of objectivity in language (“I” or not).**
   - Less formal (weaker): “I believe that the automotive industry is among the most important elements of the North American economy.”
   - More formal (stronger): “The automotive industry is among the most important elements of the North American economy.”
   - Notice how the second example seems to rely less on the writer’s opinion and more on facts. We will discuss the pronoun “I” in greater detail below.

3. **Avoid trying too hard to sound smart.** Such attempts will not impress most readers. Some readers find this kind of “over-writing” annoying.
   - Poor:
     According to the optimal quality-control practices in manufacturing any product, it is important that every component part that is constituent of the product be examined and checked individually after being received from its supplier or other source but before the final, finished product is assembled.
   - Revised:
     Effective quality-control requires that every component be checked individually before the final product is assembled.


Instead of pretentious or complex language, use simple language. Click here to see some examples of complex words and their simple replacements.

**Formal Transitions**

**Overview**
Though most good writers use the preceding transitional strategies all the time in their writing, sometimes they also require more formal transitions, especially when relationships between paragraphs need to be strengthened, or when the logical connections between ideas need clarification.

For a list of useful transitional words, see Purdue’s Online Writing Lab.

Writers use formal transitions to enhance coherence. Notice how the author of the following paragraph uses transitions to add coherence to his work. The transitional words are in italics.

I don’t wish to deny that the flattened, minuscule head of the large bodied “Stegosaurus” houses little brain from our subjective, top-heavy perspective, but I do wish to assert that we should not expect more of the beast. First of all, large animals have relatively smaller brains than related, small animals. The correlation of brain size with body size among kindred animals (all reptiles, all mammals, for example) is remarkably regular. As we move from small to large animals, from mice to elephants or small lizards, to Komodo dragons, brain size increases, but not so fast as body size. In other words, bodies grow faster than brains, and large animals have low ratios of brain weight to body weight. In fact, brains grow only about two-thirds as fast as bodies.

**Transitions between Paragraphs**

Often, transitions are needed between paragraphs. Generally they take the form of a sentence that links the first sentence of a new paragraph to the content of the previous paragraph. Notice how the following transitional sentences (which function as topic sentences, as well) link old ideas (those addressed in the previous paragraph) to new ideas (those to be addressed in the forthcoming paragraph):
While some sociologists have attributed some instances of violence to poverty (content of previous paragraph), other researchers have found substance abuse to be an equally important factor (about to be discussed in the current paragraph).

The de-emphasis on history in the curriculum causes a second problem, as well. (The word “second” signals the relationship between what has just been discussed—the “first” problem—and the focus of the new paragraph.)

Note: Strategies for making transitions between sentences can also work between paragraphs.

**Transitional Paragraphs**

Transitional paragraphs are useful when one part of a document ends and another begins; they can help keep your reader on track. Note how in this example, a whole paragraph summarizes the content of the previous section (“significant language skills”) and announces the focus on the next section (“grammar”):

Although the great apes have demonstrated significant language skills, one central question remains: Can they be taught to use that uniquely human language tool we call grammar, to learn the difference, for instance, between “ape bite human” and “human bite ape”? In other words, can an ape create a sentence?  

**Orienting Markers: Introductions and Conclusions**

Good writers guide their readers through their documents, indicating how sections fit together and what function each section is intended to perform. One of the best ways to guide your reader is to begin each major section with a short introduction that indicates a new section’s connection to the previous one. You might also close each major section with a short concluding statement or paragraph.

**Testing Coherence**

How can you be sure that your writing is coherent? Writing expert Lisa Ede recommends that, when editing, you first address large-scale issues (connections between sections) and then small-scale issues (sentence-to-sentence connections). Are all the necessary links present? Do you need additional formal or informal transitions?

**Strategies for Testing Overall Document Quality**

Here are some strategies you can use to make sure that your documents are coherent.

- Pretend to be the reader
  - Distance yourself from the draft before revising
  - Imagine objections to your logic
- Have a friend read your paper
  - Are all points expressed clearly?
  - Is the report unified?
Can your friend summarize the report’s main ideas easily?

Testing for coherence can take considerable time, but doing so may significantly improve your work.

Conciseness

One of the best ways to improve readability is to edit your sentences ruthlessly to eliminate wordiness and redundancy. Using more words than required means that your readers will have to work much harder than they should to get your message. Here are some suggestions for cutting out unnecessary words.

1. Check for redundant words, phrases, and clauses (in *italics* in the examples below).
   - necessary requirements
   - basic fundamentals
   - dangerous hazards
   - personal beliefs
   - this particular
   - general consensus
   - fully complete
   - join together
   - free gift
   - inadvertent mistake
   - future plans
   - period of time
   - large in size
   - few in number
   - green in colour
   - oblong in shape
   - crisis situation
   - conditions *that exist* in this region
   - activities *that take place* outside the company
   - the suggestions *that appear* in this section
   - a problem *that is found* in reports
   - the questions *that are asked* by callers

2. Use one-word alternatives for wordy verbs.
   - take into consideration (consider)
   - proceed to complete (complete)
   - have a tendency (tend)
   - conduct an investigation (investigate)
   - make an effort (try)
   - have an effect on (affect)
   - be in a position to do (do)
   - have an opportunity to do (do)
   - make a decision (decide)
   - have a need (need)
   - make a contribution (contribute)

3. Use short substitutes for longer phrases.
   - due to the fact that (because)
Coherence

Overview

As you revise your work, you should also pay attention to the coherence (or lack thereof) of your report.

Coherence

Smooth “flow” from sentence to sentence and paragraph to paragraph.

- No confusion
- No awkwardness
- Smooth transitions (either formal or informal)

Note: Readers will often be unconscious of the coherence strategies a writer has used in a document. These are the “signals or cues that enable readers to stay on track when they read; the writing just seems to flow” (Lisa Ede, Work in Progress). Writers commonly use subtle, informal transitions: pronouns, repeated words, and so on. Writers may also use more blatant, formal transitions: transitional words and phrases. Sometimes, whole sentences and paragraphs are transitional.

Coherence at the Sentence Level

- Do all sentences fit together in a clear and logical way?
- Do my sentences move from the “old” to the “new”?

Coherence at the Paragraph and Document Levels

- Do paragraphs flow logically into each other?
- Does each paragraph develop a single topic?
- Are claims supported by evidence and explanation?
- Is the report organized according to logical patterns?
- Does the report contain only relevant information?
Strategies for Creating Coherence

Repetition and Restatement

This is the most common strategy, one that most writers use intuitively. Notice how the famous astronomer Carl Sagan uses repetition to create coherence (and to emphasize his central point) in the following paragraph:

It is an astonishing fact that there are laws of nature, rules that summarize conveniently—not just qualitatively but quantitatively—how the world works. We might imagine a universe in which there are no such laws, in which all the elementary particles that make up a universe like our own behave with utter and uncompromising abandon. To understand such a universe, we would need a brain at least as massive as the universe. It seems unlikely that such a universe could have life and intelligence, because beings and brains require some degree of internal stability and order. But even if in a much more random universe there were such beings with an intelligence much greater than our own, there could not be much knowledge, passion, or joy.
(Carl Sagan, “Can We Know the Universe? Reflections on a Grain of Sand”)

Repeated nouns and pronouns

Note how in the following paragraph, pronouns (this, they) and other repeated ideas create coherence.

Many students find that they sometimes have trouble maintaining coherence. This problem may stem from the way in which they were trained while high school students. Most were encouraged to think of writing as a collection of big ideas, not as an amalgam of many smaller ones.

Movement from “old” to “new”

Most good writers drive their writing forward by moving from old ideas (those already known to the reader, often those that were introduced in the previous sentence) to new ideas. Notice how film critic Roger Ebert follows his topic sentence with several sentences that begin with information that refers to ideas that are already known to the reader (old ideas)—italicized in this example—and then moves on to present new ideas—presented in bold.

The film’s opening sequence, narrated by an uncredited Ricky Jay, tells stories of incredible coincidences. One has become a legend of forensic lore; it’s about the man who leaps off a roof and is struck by a fatal shotgun blast as he falls past a window before landing in a net that would have saved his life. The gun was fired by his mother, aiming at his father and missing. She didn’t know the shotgun was loaded; the son had loaded it some weeks earlier, hoping that eventually one of his parents would shoot the other.
(Roger Ebert’s Review of Magnolia)
Consistency in Tense, Number, and Person

Avoiding unnecessary or illogical switches in tense, number, and person will make your writing more coherent.

Tense

Be sure that you have not switched tense unnecessarily. Notice how in the following example, the writer has needlessly—and distractingly—switched tenses in an assessment of a short story.

In “Guests of the Nation,” Frank O’Connor tells the story of two prisoners of war and their captors. All these men are friendly with one another—played cards, argued about religion, debated the roots of war. Their loyalty to one another is tested, however, when an order came for the captors to put their captives to death.

Number

Notice in the following example the many illogical and unnecessary changes in number. Note especially that the word “they” cannot be used to refer to a singular antecedent (the word it replaces). Such coherence errors distract and annoy readers.

An economist spends much of their time helping to establish rules that affect several facets of our lives. For instance, economists help banks set policies regarding interest rates. This policy affects how easily a person can borrow money to buy homes and cars. An average person, then, has more to do with economists than they might think.

Person

Unnecessary changes in person (from “I” to “you” to “we” to “they” and so on) can undermine coherence. Notice the illogical and distracting changes in person in the following paragraph.

Consider the challenges faced by many new immigrants to Canada. Many must quickly learn to function in a new language, for instance. If you arrive without family members, one is also likely to face great loneliness. When an immigrant arrives, one is also likely to face several invisible barriers to meaningful employment.

Variety

Once you are satisfied that your report is concise and grammatically correct, you can also edit your sentences to achieve some variety in sentence beginnings, length, and structure.

1. If too many of your sentences in a single paragraph begin in the same way—even with the same word—try altering the pattern. Consider the example below.

“Many of the sentences in your report will probably begin with the subject-verb pattern. Such sentences are clear, but overusing them can be tedious. You should try to vary your sentence beginnings, therefore, if you want to add some variety and emphasis to your writing.”
With a few changes to the way the sentences start, you can make your paragraph much more varied:

“Many of the sentences in your report will probably begin with the subject-verb pattern. Although such sentences are clear, overusing them can be tedious. Therefore, if you want to add some variety and emphasis to your writing, you should try to vary your sentence beginnings.”

2. If any of your sentences seem too long and complicated to be easily readable, divide them into shorter units. Many readability guidelines suggest that the ideal average sentence length for formal writing is fifteen to eighteen words. However, some sentences of well over eighteen words, like the one you are reading now, are relatively easy to read; other sentences of this length or longer are very difficult to read. The sentence below is an example of the latter:

“Because some readers are motivated by appeals to safety and security, and other readers are more concerned with status and self-actualization, if you wish your proposal to succeed, you must vary your persuasive tactics accordingly.”

Dividing the sentence in the way suggested below makes it much easier to read:

“Some readers are motivated by appeals to safety and security; others, by status and self-actualization. If you want your proposal to succeed, you must vary your persuasive tactics accordingly.”

3. If you have a series of three or more short sentences in any of your paragraphs, try combining them to relieve the sense of choppiness. One of the most economical ways to do so involves appositives and participial phrases.

Appositives (literally meaning “positioned next to”) are phrases that define or give more information about grammatical subjects or objects in a sentence. Usually following the nouns that they describe, appositives allow writers to combine ideas from two or three sentences into one. The following examples illustrate noun phrases used for this purpose:

“Johan Nodrav was once a shoe salesperson. He is now the president of Funky Footwear in Kitchener. He is planning a new career upon retirement. He will become a business consultant in Ottawa.”

“Johan Nodrav, once a shoe salesperson and now the president of Funky Footwear in Kitchener, is planning a new career upon retirement, a business consultant in Ottawa.”

“Positive reinforcement is a reward that experimenters provide for their subjects to ensure that a desired behaviour is repeated. This concept is critical to studies in the psychology of learning.”
“Positive reinforcement, a reward that experimenters provide for their subjects to ensure that a desired behaviour is repeated, is critical to studies in the psychology of learning.”

Adjective phrases can also act as appositives, as in the following examples.

“The board of directors was unwilling to accept the proposal on short notice. It voted to discuss the matter at its next meeting.”

“The board of directors, unwilling to accept the proposal on short notice, voted to discuss the matter at its next meeting.”

“Babelstop Communications’ new software system is capable of translating twenty-five languages into English. This system will be commercially available in September of 2007.”

“Babelstop Communications’ new software system, capable of translating twenty-five languages into English, will be commercially available in September of 2007.”

Most of the time, appositives come after nouns, but they sometimes come before them as in the following examples.

“Famous for developing a wide variety of hand-held electronic Devices, Obsolescence Enterprises has enjoyed unprecedented Success in its seven years of existence.

“One of the earliest and most popular computer games, Pong now seems simplistic and boring.”

“Participial phrases, formed from active and passive verbs, can also describe nouns. Often used to condense two or more actions into one sentence, participles allow for variety and conciseness. Note the examples below.

“Mary read over all the proposals that had been submitted. She chose the ones that best met the company’s criteria.”

“Reading over all the proposals that had been submitted, Mary chose the ones that best met the company’s criteria.”

“This bridge was built in 1979. It is now badly in need of repairs.”

“Built in 1979, this bridge is now badly in need of repairs.”

There are other ways to combine sentences, but effectively used participles and appositives make sentences more varied, more concise, and more dynamic—three
qualities that become especially useful in persuasive writing and sales proposals in particular.

Grading

Your report will be graded for
- content and analysis (60%),
- formatting and mechanics (10%),
- quality of visual materials (10%)
- quality of writing (20%).

Marking Rubric

INSERT RUBRICS

How to Submit Your Report and Due Dates

Your final report must be submitted in LEARN to the appropriate topic Dropbox by the deadline specified in the syllabus. You will submit a report outline during the first four weeks of the term. If you are unable to submit your report by the deadline, you must request an extension with eligible reasons. Decisions related to such requests will be made by the course instructor. In cases of dispute, Policy 70 applies. Please name your file as "YourUserName_Report".

Your assignment must be submitted in the following file type:
- Portable Document Format (PDF)

Additional Resources

Extra resources are included to encourage you to explore the content in a different way. The extra resources may offer an alternative perspective.
- Purdue’s Guidelines on Punctuation