
UNIT 6 WRITING REPORTS -1

REPORTING EVENTS

Structure

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6.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit we shall introduce you to the subject of report writing and show you how to report an event — for example, an accident.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

What is a report? Though we use the term to refer to a number of different kinds of written communication, we usually define it as an organized, factual, and objective presentation of information. By 'organized' we mean that its parts should form a whole and by 'objective' we mean that it should not be influenced by your personal feelings. When you write a report, you try to convey some information to others. You may wish to give an account of some event that you have come to know of. You may like to describe your personal experiences or state the results of your investigation.

A report may contain opinions, but these opinions should be supported by factual evidence. News stories are typical reports, but so are scientific articles, research papers, survey reports and business reports. In other words, any composition based on factual information is a report.

Exercise 1

Write a letter to your father or some other near relative, giving a brief report on your studies, your hostel life, and your friends. (about 100 words.)

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Stage 4 Having prepared your outline, you must think of the language to be used. Of course, it will depend on the kind of topic and the kind of reader you have in mind. Remember that you are writing to communicate with others, not to impress or mystify them. The following rules will be useful:

1 **Be clear.** To be clear your writing must be definite and not vague. You must also avoid ambiguity. By 'ambiguity' we mean that a word or sentence may be understood in more than one way and even the context does not make the meaning clear.

Example

An ambiguous sentence : The neighbours avoided the Johnsons because they were snobs.

A clear sentence : Because the neighbours were snobs, they avoided the Johnsons. (or Because the Johnsons were snobs, the neighbours avoided them.)

2 **Be simple and brief.** Try to say one thing at a time and say it briefly and directly. Do not overload your sentence by trying to say too much. Use short sentences as far as possible. In a sentence do not use more words than are necessary.

Example 1

Overloaded sentence : I prefer a large university because there you can meet many kinds of people with different interests from many parts of the country, where there are different ideas, and a wide experience with many kinds of people is an important part of education.

Improved version : Experience with many kinds of people is an important part of education. In a large university you can meet people from many parts of the country and people with different interests. I prefer a large university because it provides this important part of education.

Example 2

A sentence with unnecessary words : We thought we had an adequate supply of food with enough for everyone to eat.

Improved version : We thought we had an adequate supply of food for everyone.

3 **Avoid repetition.** A word may not sound well if it is repeated too often. In such cases you should replace it by a synonym or a substitute word. Sometimes awkward repetition can be corrected by rewriting the sentence.

Example 1

Awkward repetition : I have chosen a *topic* that is a frequent *topic* of conversation today. My *topic* is : developing our own natural resources.

Improved version : I have chosen a topic frequently heard in conversation today — developing our own natural resources.

Example 2

Awkward repetition : My point is that too much emphasis is placed on college education, and this emphasis on college education makes many people go to college who don't need or want a college education.

Improved version : My point is that too much emphasis on college education makes many people go to college for education they don't need or want.

Example 3

Awkward repetition : Nehru and Ambedkar had entirely different ideas about government, but Nehru and Ambedkar both contributed much to our government.

Improved version : Nehru and Ambedkar had entirely different ideas about government, but they both contributed much to our country.

- 4 **Avoid jargon.** Jargon is language that is hard to understand because it is full of special words known only to the members of a certain group. If your report is for circulation only among fellow experts, you can use this kind of technical language, but if the report is for a non-specialized group, avoid the use of technical language.

Example

Jargon : In non-exceptional structures the coordinates that constitute multiple units exhibit essential similitude in grammatical functioning and usually in parallelism of semantic qualities in addition.

Improved version : Ordinarily elements in a series in a sentence are alike in grammatical form and usually have some similarity of meaning too.

Self-check Exercise 3

Point out the faults in the following sentences :

- i) Children often anger parents; they won't talk to them.

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- ii) This narration is narrated by a narrator whom we cannot completely believe.

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- iii) I want to go to college because going to college will satisfy my long-felt desire.

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6.3 TYPES OF REPORTS

Though it is difficult to give a rigid classification of reports, we can say that some of the common types of reports are : (i) reports on events; (ii) reports on meetings and speeches; (iii) reports on interviews; (iv) reports of surveys, (v) reports on experiments.

In this unit we shall discuss the reporting of events. The other types of reports will be taken up in later units.

6.4 REPORTING AN EVENT

You come to know of various incidents in your day-to-day life. For example, whatever kind of work you do, accidents and equipment failures may occur in your place of work. You may have to write reports on such accidents so that the causes can be determined and necessary steps taken to prevent their taking place again. The report on an accident can even be used by the police or a court of law inquiring into the matter. So the report — an accident report, as it is usually called — should be prepared as promptly, objectively and accurately as possible.

In the beginning of the accident report, state briefly the nature of the accident you are reporting on. Describe any physical injury or property damage caused by it. Be sure

to include the precise details of the time, the date, and the place of the accident, the names of witnesses or the sources of information, and any other important detail. Try to indicate the cause of the accident, if known. Finally, give your suggestions or recommendations for the prevention of a recurrence of the accident. While writing the report, be exact and objective and support your opinions with facts. Of course, all accident reports need not follow the same pattern.

Example of a Report

Here is a report on a fire accident that took place in New Delhi recently.

Major Fire in Multi-storeyed Building

A major fire broke out in Ansal Bhawan, a multi-storeyed building on Kasturba Gandhi Marg in New Delhi on the morning of 29th June. The fire was noticed at 10-45 a.m. on the fifth floor and in no time the fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth floors were gutted and thick smoke covered the entire building. While a large number of office workers rushed out of the building as the fire raged, nearly 300 persons were left on the terrace of the building.

Tenders from the Airport Fire Service and the Defence Institute for Fire Research helped the Delhi Fire Service to rescue the stranded people. The Army and the Navy personnel were also summoned to the building during the five-hour fire-fighting operation. Indian Air Force helicopters were also flown to the building to rescue people, but the operation had to be called off as it was found that they were in fact fanning the flames.

Some workers on another building managed to build a causeway between the two buildings by using ropes and wooden poles.

The fire was fully extinguished around 3.30 p.m. Three persons were killed in the blaze and about 55 persons were taken to a nearby hospital as they were overcome by smoke.

An electrical short-circuit on the fifth floor of the building is reported to be the cause of the trouble. Due to neglect of safety precautions and inadequacy of fire-fighting equipment, the building became a veritable death-trap for hundreds of people. So the Delhi Fire Force Officials have decided to issue statutory notices to the owners of about 200 high-rise buildings in the city asking them to provide the necessary fire safety measures.

(from *The Times of India* dated 30 June 1987)

Glossary

'causeway : a raised path

ex'tinguished : put out

'veritable : real

Self-check Exercise 4

Read the report given above and answer the following questions :

1 What is the subject of the report?

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2 When and where was the fire first noticed?

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3 How many persons were stranded on the terrace of the building?

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6.5 LET US SUM UP

A report is an account of events, experiences, etc. We have shown in this unit how a report should be planned. An outline has to be prepared first. The introduction, the body, and the conclusion are the three main parts of a report. Your language should be clear, concrete, and precise. Avoid jargon and roundabout ways of expression. Try to be simple.

There are many types of reports. In your report on accidents, you should give the precise time and place of the accident, and information about people killed or injured, the damage caused to property, and the cause of the accident.

6.6 KEY WORDS

com,muni'cation : passing on news, information, etc.

e'vent : happening

'jargon : language difficult to understand, because it is full of technical words

ob'jective (adj.) : not influenced by personal feelings or opinions

'organized : arranged in a system

'relevant : connected with what is being discussed

re'port : an account of something heard, seen, done, etc.

'short-'circuit : an accidental fault in wiring as a result of which the electric current flows without going through the resistance of the complete circuit

6.7 SUGGESTED READING

A good daily newspaper.

6.8 ANSWERS TO SELF-CHECK EXERCISES

Exercise 1

Suggestions : You may write about the courses you are taking, what you think of your teachers, your special interest in a particular course, the accommodation and the food provided at your hostel, the friends you have and the places they come from.

Exercise 2

Suggestions : You may write about the history of your association, the competitions held during the year in fields like music, dance, and literature, the names of the people who came to deliver lectures or give performances, and your views on the activities arranged during the year.

Exercise 3

- i) Ambiguity. It is not clear whether the pronoun 'they' refers to children or parents.
- ii) Repetition. Improved version: This story is told by a narrator whom we cannot completely believe.
- iii) Repetition. Improved version : I want to go to college because it will satisfy my long-felt desire.

Exercise 4

- 1 A recent fire accident in a multi-storeyed building in New Delhi.
- 2 At 10.45 on the morning of 29th June; on the 5th floor of Ansal Bhavan on Kasturba Gandhi Marg.
- 3 About 300.
- 4 A causeway was set up by some people working on a building close by.
- 5 An electrical short-circuit.
- 6 Fire safety measures should be taken in all high-rise buildings.

Exercise 5

Suggestions : You may point out how and when we achieved Independence, and refer to the great men who led the country in the freedom struggle. Give an account of the speeches and other cultural programmes arranged in your city.