
UNIT 4 WRITING REPORTS

Structure

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4.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- explain the different stages in writing a report;
- list the different types of reports;
- develop skills in report writing; and
- write effective and informal reports.

4.1 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 *organised*, factual, and objective presentation of information. By '*organised*' 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 or the other. 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.

4.2 DIFFERENT STAGES IN WRITING A REPORT

How does one write a report? As is the case with any other serious task, you have to plan your report also.

Stage 1: You have to ask yourself a number of relevant questions. For example; what information is to be conveyed? What is its purpose? Who is it for?

Stage 2: At the next stage you gather relevant material from different sources. While doing so, you will have to take down notes. The advantage of taking notes is that you will not have to depend on your memory to recall every detail whenever you require it.

Stage 3: You have now to write an outline of the report. The outline makes the writing of your report easier and more effective, as it enables you to attend to one part of the report at a time. Most reports contain *three* main parts: *the introduction, the body, and the*

conclusion. In the introduction, you should state the subject and the purpose of the report. You may also give the background information, if necessary. In the body of the report, you should present a detailed and organised account of the subject of the report. You may also include figures, tables, graphs, and charts as supporting evidence. In the conclusion, you should summarize your observations, and give your suggestions or recommendations.

Example

The outline of a report on a fire accident can be written as follow:

Introduction : A major fire accident took place in New Delhi.

Body : Exact time and place at which the fire started- cause of the accident— casualties — loss of property, etc.

Conclusion : The reason for the continuation of the fire for a long time. Precautions to be taken to prevent such accidents.

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.
- 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 you can meet many kinds of people with different interests from different 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 aspect 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.

- 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

Hyperaldosteronism can be defined as excessive secretion of aldosterone, a potent hormone secreted by the adrenal gland cortex which regulates the metabolism of sodium and potassium and of electrolytes which conduct electric currents.

Check Your Progress 1

Point out the faults in the following sentence:

- i) Children often anger parents; they don't talk to them.
.....
.....
- ii) This narration is narrated by a narrator whom we cannot completely believe.
.....
.....
- iii) I want to go to college because going to college will satisfy my long felt desire.
.....
.....

4.3 TYPES OF REPORT

In this unit, we shall discuss the informal and formal reporting of patient history.

A report has factual and objective information systematically presented by the person who has collected it. Reports may be classified in many ways, but we often group them in terms of formal reports and informal reports. Formal reports prepared by firms are generally based on projects that may require many months of work and large sums of money. These reports may run to several hundred pages. Informal reports are brief — from a few paragraphs to a few pages.

Usually prepared for internal consumption. Both formal and informal reports may be informational or analytic. An Informational report, as the term implies, presents a situation without evaluation or recommendations. It gives a detailed account of activities or conditions, making no attempt to suggest solutions to the problems, but confining itself to passing on information.

An 'analytic' report, like an informational one, describes a situation, but it also contains an analysis of the situation, and the writer's conclusions and recommendations. The analytic report is often a basis for an important decision. Thus, the writer shares a greater responsibility. Analytic reports may include reports on the potential of a new medicine that a company is researching or reasons for the loss incurred on a contract, suggestions for improving the sales of a product, and so on. In this unit, we shall give you examples of both informal and formal reports.

Doctor's 2932 Injections per hour save man's life in Nagpur

A local hospital here have claimed a world record by administering 20,530 ampules of Atropine to a patient in seven days, in order to neutralize the effect of insecticide he had consumed. The doctors said that it might sound absurd, but the patient was now out of danger.

N—Normal CP—Colour Pattern

2 BD—2 Tablets twice a day

1 td—One tablet thrice a day.

Now let us look at the structure and the style of the report. The style is straightforward and crisp. Not a single word is wasted and yet the case of the patient is clear. You have the following information.

- | | | |
|---|---------|----------------------------|
| 1) Name | Age/Sex | Identification/Case Number |
| 2) Complaints and history | | |
| 3) Symptoms as elicited from patient examination. | | |
| 4) A detailed investigation for diagnosis. | | |
| 5) Treatment adopted. | | |
| 6) Medicine with dosage prescribed. | | |

You may have to write these kinds of reports for proper patient care by other colleagues or sister-in-charge. You may need to write such detailed reports for your own learning. Note how the purpose and the audience of the report has decided your style.

Check Your Progress 2

Read the report given below and answer the following questions.

Mukesh	35/M	19th September 2000 I.P. No. : 2828833
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C/o Burning pain and redness over LE since yesterday.
H/o Fall of Sodium Silicate (cement) over LE at work yesterday
H/o No history of application of any medicine.

O/E		
RE	Lids	LE
N		N
Full	Ocular	
	Movement	Full
	Conjunctiva	-congestion++
Clear	Cornea	-clear, no evidence of limbal ischemia
ND	AC	ND
3m. acting to light	Pupil	3 m. acting to light
CPN	Iris	CPN
N	Lens	N
Diagnosis	- Alkali Burns LE	

Rx

- 1) Double Eversion and Irrigation.
- 2) Chloram Phenicol eyedrops 2 drops tds
- 3) Zoxam Eye Ointment (to be applied at bedtime)
- 4) Tablet Brufen 1td (6)
- 5) Tablet Antacid 1td (12)
- 6) Tablet MVT 1td (12)

Review tomorrow at O.D.

- 1) What is the subject of the report?
-

2) When and how did the problem begin?

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.....
.....

3) What did the patient complain about?

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.....

4) Has the patient used any medicine before coming to the hospital?

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5) What problem has been identified on detailed investigation?

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6) What is the diagnosis?

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.....

7) What treatment has been recommended?

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.....

8) How many times does the patient have to take Tablet Brufen? For how many days is it prescribed?

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.....

9) Discuss the meaning of the two words eversion, irrigation (in this particular context).

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.....

4.5 REPORTING CASE HISTORY: FORMAL REPORTS

You must have noticed that these case histories are written in bare outlines. You can write a report of such cases in paragraphs which can be distinctly divided into three parts mentioned earlier — the introduction, the body and the conclusion.

Let us write the first case history in paragraphs as a report of one of the interesting cases that you have come across during your period of study.

Eye Lid Abscess — Diagnosis and Remedy

On 20th August 2000, Ramesh, a 27 year old young man reported to the out-patient-department IP No. 2872833 with complaints of severe pain on his right upper eyelid. The patient said that he was suffering from swelling and pain of the upper eyelid for the last seven days and had come to the hospital when he could no longer bear the pain. He said that the swelling was very small to begin with but had gradually increased in size and the throbbing pain had gradually become unbearable and relentless. The patient did not have fever.

On examination, the doctor found that the swelling over the upper eyelid extended from the upper eyebrow to the upper palpebral fissure. The doctor also found the swelling warm and tender to touch. A detailed examination of both the eyes indicated that the patient's ocular movements were full and the conjunctiva cornea of both eyes were clear. The anterior chambers were of normal depth in both the eyes and the colour patent and lens were normal.

The doctor diagnosed the swelling as an eye-lid abscess and recommended incision and drainage of the abscess under local anaesthesia with 4% Xylocaine.

The draining of the abscess was to be followed up with medicines to be taken orally for the next 2-3 days.

Eyelid abscesses are uncommon and hence make interesting study.

You will notice that the information remains the same and there is no place for personal opinions. The report is written in the past tense as the event had already taken place and the objective account of what had happened is given in a sequential manner. The introductory paragraph tell us who the patient is, what his complaint is; the body deals with the detailed examination and treatment conducted while the conclusion sums up the case.

Sometimes medical cases can be a matter of great interest to others and hence find a place in the newspapers. Given below is a news item which appeared in the newspapers. Read it and answer the questions that follow.

2932 INJECTIONS PER HOUR SAVE MAN'S LIFE
Nagpur, August 26, 2000

Dr. R.G. Chandak, Director of the hospital said that Anil Rathore, a residence of Pusad, was involved in a family dispute. He tried to commit suicide by consuming a large quantity of insecticide. He was brought to Nagpur in a critical condition. Medical officer Dr. Dilip Deshpandey and anaesthesiologist Rajendra Pasadkar administered 500 ampoules of the injection on their way to the hospital, while constantly keeping him on lifeline support. He received 3.3 mg of Atropine within a minute of his arrival at the hospital. He was given 7920 ampoules of the injection on the first day. The doctors said that then be received 2932 injections per hour.

The doctors agreed that this might have some side effects on the patient, but they said that it was the last resort. It was the only thing they could do to save his life at that time. Dr. Chandak said that such a large quantity of Atropine could be given to a patient only when there was enough lifeline support and experts were present on the spot.

(From *Times of India*, August 27, 2000)

- 1) Why do you think the case has been reported in a newspaper?
- 2) Which paragraph in the report gives in brief the significance of the case in the medical world?
- 3) How many injections were given to the patient?
- 4) Why was the patient given such high dose of atropine?
- 5) Find sentences in the report which tell you that
 - a) The patient may suffer from some complications later.

Jargon	:	language often difficult to understand, because it is full of technical words
Objective (adj.)	:	not influenced by personal feeling or opinions
Organised	:	arranged in a system
Relevant	:	connected with what is being discussed
Report	:	an account of something heard, seen, done, etc.

4.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- 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.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Patient case study.
- 2) The problem started on 18th Sept, 2000 when cement fell on the left eye of the patient.
- 3) Burning pain and redness in the left eye.
- 4) No.
- 5) Congestion of conjunctiva.
- 6) Alkali burns.
- 7) Double eversion and Irrigation; use of eye drops, eye ointment and different tablets.
- 8) One tablet three times a day for 2 days.
- 9) Eversion — grasping the lashes of the upper lid, gently pull the lid forward and down over the lower lid. If that doesn't work, use a matchstick or similar object, placing it horizontally on top of upper lid, gently pull upward on the lid to evert (turn it inside out) against the stick.

Irrigation—wash gently with water or medicine solution.

4.9 FURTHER READINGS

Hamp-Lyons and Ben Heasley, *Study Writing*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Raimes, Ann, *Exploring through Writing*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.