

PROGRESS REPORT WRITING

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Progress Report:

A progress report can be defined as a report on how much work has been done successfully. It explains, in detail, about how far one has reached in the completion of a project. It outlines the activities carried out, the tasks completed and mainly, the step-by-step project plan. Writing a report is beneficial for the company as well as the project manager as they can get correct real-time information by this.

A progress report is an executive summary of the progress an individual (and his team) has made on a certain project over a certain time frame. An individual may report and explain the work that has been covered, resources spent, unexpected problems or instances that the project has undergone (if any), estimated time of completion, and other details concerning the project at hand.

A progress report is created to give the recipient (e.g. supervisors, managers, or office heads) an overview of the overall status report of a specific project. This gives them a chance to evaluate your performance, and request a few changes if necessary. They can also be informed of the problems which have affected and might affect the project.

What Is The Importance Of Using A Progress Report?

Progress reports are used to inform someone about the progress you have made in the project over a certain timeframe given to you. The project can be the design, construction or repair of something, a study or research of an issue, etc. Progress reports help you keep track of all the activities done.

Contents And Functions Of Progress Reports:

In the progress report, you explain any or all of the following:

- How much of the work is completed
- What part of the work is currently in progress
- What work remains to be done
- What problems or unexpected things, if any, have arisen
- How the project is going in general

Progress reports have several important functions:

- Reassure recipients that you are making progress, that the project is going smoothly, and that it will be complete by the expected date.
- Provide recipients with a brief look at some of the findings or some of the work of the project.

- Give recipients a chance to evaluate your work on the project and to request changes.
- Give you a chance to discuss problems in the project and thus to forewarn recipients.
- Project a sense of professionalism to your work and your organization.

What Are The Types/ Formats Of A Progress Report?

In a year-long project, there are customarily three progress reports, one after three, six, and nine months. Depending on the size of the progress report, the length and importance of the project, and the recipient, the progress report can take the following forms:

- **Memo:** A progress report can be written in the form of a brief memo that can be shared within a company. For example, you can submit a progress report to your boss, and he'll distribute copies of the same to other project members. So, if your progress report will go out to your boss and coworkers, you can probably write it as a memo. Given that all of them are working at the same office, you can choose to write the report as a note.
- **E-mail or Letter:** You can also choose to write progress reports in the form of an e-mail or as letters. These reports are also short, just like memos. However, the difference between a memo and an e-mail is that you can share the latter with people outside of the organization too. So if you want to submit your report to your boss and also share it with the company's client, you can send the report in the form of an email. Email is a convenient format and everyone can save an electronic copy for future use.
- **Official Report:** Though they both serve the purpose, memos and emails are informal reports. A more formal format is writing an official report. This report is

long and often presented in a folder or a binder. Official reports are generally used when the progress reports need to be shared with people outside of the organization. For example, if you were sending a progress report to the client, you might choose to do so in an official report.

Writing A Progress Report:

When a company initiates a new project, it needs to be aware of how the project is progressing, what findings and decisions are being made by the project team, and what needs to be improved. In order to provide the company's supervisors with such information, progress reports are usually written. Generally speaking, a progress report is an update on a project's status.

Steps For Writing A Progress Report:

1. Write the heading of your progress report. This usually contains the date, when the report was submitted, the name and the position of the recipient, the writer's name and position, and the subject of the report.
2. Compose the introductory section. In this part, you must brief about the project. Then, you should provide readers with information about the project's purpose, clarify its timescale, and remind readers about other important details.
3. Write the "work completed" section. In this section, you must describe what work has already been done. One of the best ways to do this is to order the completed tasks chronologically. Make two columns. In one of them, specify dates and in another one, specify tasks you and your team were working on. Information about key findings should also be included in the "work completed" section.

4. In the next section, specify the problems your team encountered while working on the project. Provide explanations of how you solved them or how you are planning to do it. Also, describe any changes caused by these problems and state whether any assistance on the project is required.
5. Provide your supervisors with information about how you are planning to move forward with the project. Make an outline of future tasks that need to be accomplished during a certain period. Specify dates that will be deadlines for the tasks.
6. Summarize your progress report. In the summary section, you should only give the most essential details about the completed and to-do work. Also include a short description of problems your team encountered and recommendations for their correction.

Common Mistakes When Writing A Progress Report:

- Using expressive words and phrases to characterize the situation. Describing a project's status as a "complete catastrophe" or a "giddy success" is too vague and won't be of use for supervisors.
- Being irregular with sending progress reports to supervisors. Most likely, they will expect you to send reports in equal time intervals.
- Glossing over problems and understating their prevalence, hoping to solve them secretly. Always provide adequate and honest information about all issues that occur during the work on the project.
- Turning a progress report into a lengthy document. Don't fill the document with excessive details, calculations, and so on.

Key Points To Consider:

- Progress reports come in different formats, such as a brief verbal report, a periodic email sent to your supervisors, a memo, or a formal written report with a clearly-defined structure. Internal progress reports can be submitted in memo format, while reports from one external organization to another can take the form of a business letter.
- Progress reports not only inform supervisors about a project's status, but they also affect the decision-making process. A company's management may revise, adjust or change their decisions according to a particular situation with the project.
- A progress report should be project-centered, which means it should refer to the work done by your team and not to the plans or expectations of your supervisors.
- A progress report should be simple and concise. Avoid writing lengthy, dense documents. In most cases, a progress report is submitted on 2-3 pages.
- A progress report not only provides decision-makers with necessary information, but it also shows them what kind of specialist you are.

Dos and Don'ts:

Dos	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Do be specific when writing a progress report. Making vague statements in the progress report is not what supervisors will appreciate.▪ Do use active voice in the “work completed” section. This will help you reinforce the impression that you and your team were busy and made significant efforts.▪ Do be consistent when writing progress reports. Once you've submitted a report in a specific format, stick to it in following reports.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Don't turn the “work completed” section into a narrative story of how the work on the research has been conducted. Stick to specifying only the most important information, such as the key findings and the outcomes.▪ Don't ever make excuses or try to shift blame on someone else when issues arise. There may be legitimate issues, such as a late delivery from a supplier or an equipment malfunction, but don't sound as if you are complaining or avoiding responsibility.

- Do use a variety of graphics such as charts, tables, or diagrams. Organize the information presented in your report in the way that can be easily perceived and comprehended.
- Do cite sources from which you have taken data and give credits to all photos included in the report.

- Don't report that the work is completed until you've finished it, even if you need to do one small activity to accomplish the task. Various unforeseen obstacles may prevent you from performing the task so that your supervisors will consider it finished when it's not.
- Don't forget to provide solutions to the problems described in the corresponding section.
- Don't be wordy in the summary section. Stress only key points and leave out unnecessary details.

PROGRESS REPORT SAMPLE

Student: Uni V. Student

Semester: Fall 2012

Employer: Alberta Human Resources and Employment Edmonton, AB

Position: Research Assistant

Supervisor: Mr. Benjamin Honor

Introduction

I began my Co-op work term with the Organizational Planning and Effectiveness Branch with Alberta Human Resources and Employment as a research assistant in Edmonton on September 5, 2006. During my first week I got to know some of the people around the department as well as understand more in-depth the mechanics of the place. I did a lot of reading, so much that my eyes hurt. However, the reading paid off as it has laid an excellent foundation for me to really grasp aspects associated with this job for the rest of the semester. Some of my reading materials included the Department business plan, looking through the wealth of information on the AHRE Intranet, reading through my orientation package and becoming familiarized with the computer system.

My first week also included getting to know my office co-workers. Most of the people working here are relatively young and new. I recognized immediately the potential opportunities within the branch I am working in. In fact, my coordinator has only been here three months. While there is usually another co-op student in my branch, during this placement I am the only one. Everyone has been very welcoming

and I am continually reminded that if I need help with anything I only need to knock on someone's door.

About the Organization

Alberta Human Resources and Employment (AHRE) is a leader and active partner with industry, employers, training providers and individuals in “Building Alberta’s Workforce. In order to help the continued prosperity of Alberta AHRE works hard to inform, attract, retain and develop people in Alberta’s labour force. I work with Organizational Planning and Effectiveness (OPE).

Typical Week (September 25-29)

Monday

- E-scanning
- Found and contacted key individuals regarding topics at Symposium
- Researched *Outward Bound Canada* and wrote an article for review and inclusion in a department wide newsletter.
- Researched The Interprovincial Standards “Red Seal” for the newsletter.
- E-mailed a representative of WorldSkills 2009 with questions regarding topics discussed at the Symposium.
- Read through and highlighted parts of quarterly housing affordability report put out by Royal Bank (RBC) for e-scanning.

Tuesday

- E-scanning
- Reread thoroughly Building and Educating Tomorrow’s Workforce Symposium presentations.
- Revised Outward Bound article/Found further details on Red Seal project.
- Began reading Industry and Employer Toolkit.

Wednesday

- E-scanning
- E-mailed contacts with thanks regarding information given on retired people in the workforce.
- Read through and highlighted more information concerning Symposium.

- Key Economic Indicators for Amar.

Thursday

- E-scanning
- Found interesting articles/newspaper clippings for “What Works-Alberta” newsletter, which will feature *Innovations in Health and Safety*.
- Began E-scanning weekly summary.
- TD Report/Metropolitan Outlook information.
- Alberta Royalty Tax Credit information.
- Contributed to e-scan highlights which will be reviewed and used by executive management.

Friday

- E-scanning
- Meeting with staff to understand Appreciative Inquiry in Alberta Human Resources and Employment.
- Read through Symposium draft.
- Completed weekly e-scanning summary.

Update on Work Term Learning Plan Objectives

I will be helping to write two newsletters, the “WhatWorks Newsletter” in *Innovations in Health and Safety*, which is distributed three times a year as well as the “Building and Educating Alberta’s Workforce: 10-year Strategy” newsletter. I have begun to collect information, and have started an organized binder on data, articles, and anything else pertaining to Health and Safety.

I enjoy working on both newsletters and other projects because this requires multi-tasking, and a continual use of and development of my skills. It is important that I find information aimed at effective practices, which are practices that have been proven to have produced positive results in the past. Since the newsletter is not a priority right now I have also worked on other things such as compiling information for the Building and Educating Alberta’s Workforce: 10 year strategy.

Summary/Comments

My coordinator has been incredible in helping me to become more enmeshed in OPE in the short time I have been here. Through his guidance I have learned how to create an organized binder of information for the symposium, understand a storyboard, e-scan (this requires looking through newspapers, academic journals and web sites of research institutes for current events), create e-scan summaries, pull from e-scan summaries in order to compile a densely packed summary of e-scan highlights and begin to learn how to write effective practice summaries. This is all useful because one of the main objectives that the unit has is to share information on successful business practices.

While I have worked several jobs in the past, this is unlike any I have ever had. It is interesting to have set hours rather than different weekly schedules. I like that I can work on tasks at my own pace, and that there is constantly something and interesting to work on. I am the kind of person that enjoys completing assignments. However, since we are looking at best practices I have to keep in mind that the assignment can be changed or improved upon constantly. I find this unusual because I am so used to completing assignments, tests, mid-terms and exams in University and moving on to the next chapter or course. Overall, this has been an exciting and challenging experience and I look forward to the following month.

Different Examples for further understanding:

Example Introduction to a Progress Report

INTRODUCTION

I am now submitting to you a report on the progress that I have made on my research for your company, Ginseng Cola. Immediately following the January 15 acceptance of my firm's bid to study the advantages of bottling your soft-drink product in plastic bottles, I began investigating all areas of the project.

In the following sections of this progress report, you will be informed on the work that I have already accomplished, the work I am now involved in, the work left to do, and finally an overall appraisal of the how the project is going.

Example Project Description from a Report

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Here is a review of the purpose and scope of this project.

Purpose. The original investment plan of this corporation included only long-term, low-risk investment in corporate bonds and U.S. securities. This project was designed to answer questions about the potential of short-term, high-dollar investments, particularly those suited to the future expansion of this company's investment plan.

Scope. The report will cover basic definitions of stocks and options as well as reasons for and against these two investment strategies. The report will be broken down into four areas:

- Mechanics of stocks and options

- Comparisons of stocks and options
- Example investment scenarios
- Recommendations for an investment plan

Overall Appraisal used as Conclusion to a Progress Report

OVERALL APPRAISAL

The project to recommend PET production is coming along well. I have not run into any major problems and have found plenty of material on this subject. However, I have not heard from Mr. Simon Juarez of PET Mfg., who is sending information on PET production methods used in several plants in the Southwest.

I can foresee no major problems that will keep me from submitting my report to you on the contract date. In fact, I may be able to get it to you a few days earlier than planned. In general, I am finding that the PET bottle is an even more attractive packaging idea than had seemed in our earlier discussions. Full details on this, however, will appear in the final report.

Sincerely,

Steven C. Crosswell
Process Engineer
C & S Engineering