

## Chapter 7 Report Writing

### 7.1 What is a report?

A report is information transferred from one person to another or from one group of people to another group.

1. Dictionary meanings. *Report*—an account (description) prepared for the benefit of others, especially one that provides information obtained through investigation—Collins.
2. To report—to give an account (description) of, especially a formal, official, or requested account—Chambers.
3. Definition. A report (*n.*) is a statement about something heard, seen, done or read in regard to some problem, happening, situation, suggestion, proposal or idea. A report is based on information collected, examined (analyzed or investigated) and arranged with a view to conveying it to someone, with the writer's conclusions or remarks or criticism or without it.
4. To report (*v.*) means to make a statement about, give an account of, something that one has heard, seen, done or read about in regard to some problem, happening, situation, suggestion, proposal or idea.
5. A newspaper, whether you read it in English or Urdu or any other language, is full of reports by news-reporters.
6. A report is
  - (a) formal or official in presentation.
  - (b) result of a request made or assignment given to the writer of the report.
  - (c) is based on information got through observation and investigation for the benefit of others.Normally a report is the answer to a question or questions arising out of a situation.

Note.

1. A report can be written without the writer being asked or requested (to write it). He can write it himself, prompted by some reasons, for the benefits of others.
2. Reports on printed forms, like confidential reports written by senior officers on the performance of their juniors and market survey reports by salesmen and market surveyors, are easy to write for which little effort and arrangement is needed. Forms are readily filled in, some columns kept blank, and the reports are ready. These are the regular or formal, official reports.
3. In this chapter we are mainly concerned with reports written in essay form preferably with titles and headings as presented in the various examples that follow.
4. Reports are: (a) On forms (b) Not on forms (c) Technical (d) Non-technical. (Technical reports with technical terms and technical explanations are for technical experts.)

#### 7.1.1 Language & style :-

The words used in a report should be proper (appropriate) and preferably simple. The sentences should be short and easily understandable. Each paragraph should have one kind of ideas related through well-arranged sentences. It should look like a unit of thought. Simple ordinary words and a simple, direct style should be preferred in report writing.

#### 7.1.2 Length of a report

1. The subject often determines the length. It should be as brief and relevant as possible, but should present the most material (essential or important) facts. It should not have long paragraphs and many details.
2. For examination purposes, a report of moderate length, say of about three to four pages of the examination script, is recommended.



### 7.1.3 Further explanation of reports, recommendations & feedback

1. In report writing we collect information, analyze it and then report it to others on given subjects.
2. Reports can be very short, of medium length and very long.  
For example, a short report can be the visit of some person at some time to some place, of a telephone call, of a meeting with someone; of the arrival of some guests or their departure, and so on.
3. A formal long report can be of a bus or train accident, the sale of smuggled goods in a particular market, the working of a particular government department, and so on.  
Then we have routine and non-routine reports. For example, the lecture statement of the students of a class in college or school is the routine report. ~~It is given on~~ forms or is written in a regular and formal way. The report of a happening like a terrorist act or an accident is non-routine as the reporter writes it in his style or way and arranges its parts more freely.
5. Reports generally have a formal structure and tone. They do not have the delicacies of address as we have in letters, pleasant leave taking and exchange of greetings, etc. They are without conversational elements.
6. A report is meant for official or formal study or for wide circulation or for record purposes.
7. The use of pictures, maps, and graphs is helpful in understanding numerical details and facts. Computer graphics and laser printers have cheapened and facilitated the accompaniment of these to reports of different kinds, say, on dams, roads, markets, bus services, air traffic, advertisements and marketing, scientific developments and progress, examinations and education, and so on.
8. The terms of reference of a report  
These are to be provided at the start. This may be its subject.
9. Headings  
These facilitate and systematize the usefulness of and ready reference to the report.
10. Non-routine reports  
(a) For our purpose, most of the reports we here deal with are non-routine as there are no set routines of reporting, "no previous guidelines and no feedback (advice or information)."  
(b) In a report the investigator collects evidence, takes comprehensive notes, and records the sources. Relevance to the purpose of investigation is necessary.  
Important facts and sources should be double checked.
11. The layout (arrangement)  
The basic requirements of the layout of a report are as follows.  
(a) The author's name, organization and reference, the title of the report, the date of issue and the name or reference of the person or organization being addressed.  
(b) The introduction. It would be the outline or background history that led to the writing of the report. The terms of reference or the subject should be given.  
(c) The main body. The structure and headings will depend on the subject matter.  
(d) Conclusions and recommendations.  
Reports have to be of a high standard, in a plain style, concise and well-structured.
12. External non-routine reports  
(a) Such reports are consultant reports, visit reports investigation into fraud, etc.--- the form and content are likely to be determined by the kind of report, by the readers



and purposes as usual, and possibly by legal, professional, or conventional requirements. These reports must be comprehensive. The writer is likely to be less familiar with the readers—so prior discussions are important in clarifying the purpose of the report.

(b) Use simple and exact language and avoid unnecessary technical and professional language. There should be no vagueness in the conclusions and recommendations.

(c) All these reports should be formal and formally addressed. The tone of writing should be official.

### ③ Internal non-routine reports

For example, about changes in an organization, or the effect of some external developments upon it. Subjects could include marketing, buying, policy, redesign of product, new production methods, etc.

### ④ Letters and memoranda

Letters are for those in different organizations, or for those in the same organization on special occasions. A memorandum or memo is for someone in the same organization. It can be a short note written as a reminder. Letters emphasize courtesy, and memoranda emphasize efficiency. Letters are informal or frank expression of feelings, ideas, or even information. They are not divided into parts and are not exact like reports. They do not usually have a formal or official tone. The basic outline of a report—problem or purpose; evidence; conclusion; recommendation.

- (a) To a lesser extent, subtitles can be included in letters.
- (b) The paragraphs of a letter are shorter than in a report because the message is simpler.
- (c) The words "To, From, Date, and Subject" keep the report relevant and effective. Information conveyed through a report should be brief and relevant.

## 4.2 Examples of reports

- ① About something heard. Reports regarding a public leader's speech, a lecture at a religious gathering, a discussion at a seminar, a conference of teachers or preachers or leaders, a radio or wireless or telephone or e-mail message received from another place, a welcome or farewell speech at a party or gathering, and so on in respect of some particular purposes or terms of reference.
- ② About something seen. Reports regarding visits to factories, manufacturing centres, markets, shops; construction sites; buildings, airports, seaports, bus-stations, train-stations, polling stations, parks, parties, dinners, luncheons, schools, colleges, universities, housing colonies, clubs, restaurants, hotels, and so on.
- ③ About something done. Reports regarding bridges or roads or buildings constructed by some agencies, school or college or hospital established somewhere, performance of a student or class or actor or group of actors, work done by a government servant in his particular capacity over a certain period of time, work performed by factory workers in different capacities, work performed by members of national or provincial assemblies in their constituencies with the funds provided to them, help provided by a government agency or private organization to flood or earthquake or train accident victims, and so on.
- ④ About something read. Reports about a person's study of a certain book or research paper or findings, the results of inquiries into crimes, misdeeds, charges of corruption, acts against the state, etc.), on published government bulletins, comparative reports of national budgets of several years, exports and imports of several years, population growth and its results in different years, studies, examination results of educational institutions in different years, detailed reports



and proposals for the solution of traffic or housing problems or rural uplift or military training of the youth, on the data or statistics or facts provided by different agencies regarding prices or crime or employment or health situation in different countries or areas of the world, on the military preparations of one country or more as described in books or magazines or newspapers, on the national budget or taxes as provided in official papers.

- (a) In the above cases, the reports can be accompanied by pictures, illustrations, charts, graphs, tables and indices (lists of names, subjects, references, etc. arranged at the end).
  - (b) There can be very brief telephone or computer reports from one person to another at another place.
5. Report writing is essential to journalistic, commercial, industrial, administrative, educational, defence, and continuous organizational purposes.

### 7.3 Parts of a report

A report should usually be structured under these headings: (a)

1. Date .....
2. To (the person or officer or institution addressed)
3. From (name or title of the writer). If the writer is not mentioned and this part is left out, the report is still complete.
4. The subject or title of document
5. The introduction
6. The main text and conclusions
7. Summary
8. Suggestions or recommendations
9. Appendices (if any) — (additional explanatory material).

Note. The comma, full stop, etc. in a report outside the main body should be according to the examples in the book. Just note the top and bottom of each report.

#### 7.3.1 Explanation of the structure of the report

1. Date: It is to be written on the right hand corner of the first page of the report.
2. To: The person or persons or institution which asked for the report or which needed the report or which needs to be addressed.
3. From: The person or persons or institution, which is providing the report.
4. The subject or title of document. It is the subject or matter on which the report is written. It serves as the title of the whole report.
5. The introduction. It introduces the subject of the report and gives its background if needed. It tells *what the report is about sets the scene* — may refer to some past reports or facts concerning the subject and may give the aims of the report. *(The introduction only prepares the reader for the main text of the report, and the main text should be understandable even without it.)*
6. The main text and conclusions. The main text or the body of the report has its own structure. The material is arranged properly with conclusions or results at its end. The facts or descriptions or arguments should be presented and developed one by one and methodically, in different paragraphs. Only relevant (to the point) details or facts should be provided. The result or conclusions if any, should be very relevant. These should come out in the *appendices* (if needed).



*Note. If the report is likely to become long, only the necessary information should be put in the main text, and the supporting or secondary information in the appendices (if needed).*

7. **The summary.** The summary of the report can be placed at the end or even at the beginning, but it is written last. It is in fact *the main points (or outline) of the report*. It comes out of the main body alone, and so should not have any irrelevant point.

The summary is a very brief reproduction of *the main points of the main body and conclusions of the report*. It helps the reader in understanding at one glance (quick look) what the whole report is.

*Note. You may not include the summary if you like so, but its inclusion adds greatly to the effectiveness of the report.*

8. **Suggestions or recommendations.** If the report is such that the writer or reporter can or should make his suggestions or recommendations, he should do so in this part. Here the writer can very briefly discuss the subject and give his advice and suggestions.

*Note. If the report does not call for suggestions, this part can be left out.*

9. **Appendices.** (what is added at the end). If some additional facts or detailed information can make the report more complete, this can be put in the Appendices (plural of "appendix"). The main report should be clear and brief and only that information is to be put in it which makes it easily readable and understandable.

Note.

- For example, a reporter is called upon to report on the destruction of the mango crop in and around Lahore in a particular year, he can write the report on the above lines up to (viii) Suggestions and Recommendations. In (ix) Appendices he can give details in the form of tables the number of mango gardens and their total production in ten or more years prior to (before) the year of this report. He can give some numerical comparisons with the mango production of different varieties in the other provinces of our country and some other countries.
- The Appendices may not be included in the Report at all which will be in any case complete without them.

## Solved examples

- Q. 1 Write a survey report from a news reporter of a scene of earthquake devastation (general destruction) in the northern.

Date: 1 November 2005

To: The Editor, "Dawn," Lahore

From: ABC, news reporter, "Dawn," Lahore

Subject: Report on earthquake relief camps in Muzaffarabad, Azad Kashmir

Introduction. I have been called upon by your newspaper to report on the situation in the earthquake relief camps in Muzaffarabad, Azad Kashmir. In view of the large-scale destruction and loss of life in the earthquake, this report is important.

Report with conclusion. I visited several refugee camps set up by the government, the army, and the NGOs (non-governmental organizations).

- I found a number of camps in the city. I saw a lot of injured people, women and children lying and sitting in them. Doctors and nurses were attending on them. Enough food and clothing were available. However, it was not possible to accommodate new refugees coming from the villages.
- The army was using the Neelum ground as a helipad base (for helicopters). The helicopters with food supplies, clothing, and medicines were landing and taking off continuously.



3. Some of the refugee camps outside the city were not very well managed. I interviewed an army officer and a civilian government officer. They told me that they were soon going to get more supplies for the affected people from the Punjab.
4. I found some Turks and English people actively busy in the relief operations. They had fine tents, fruit, and canned food which they were providing to the homeless people.
5. I found that the helpers and volunteers were worried about the people on the mountains. There was no way to approach there except through helicopters as the paths were blocked.

**Suggestions or recommendations.** We should erect temporary homes in and around Muzaffarabad. We should have tents with ventilators for the circulation of fresh air. We should repair the paths leading to the mountain heights and bring down the people stuck up there. We should set up field hospitals in a greater number at short distances from the city.

Signed News reporter. *[Signature]*

*(In the above report the summary is not included. The summary may be included if you have the time and space.)*

Q.2 Write a report on your visits to a boys' and a girls' degree University examination centre for the examination this year to the Vice-Chancellor in your capacity as a member of the inspection team for university examinations.

Date: 12 November, 2006

To: The Vice-Chancellor, Punjab University, Lahore  
 From: XYZ, Member Inspection Team for University Examinations, ABC  
 Subject: Functioning of Boys' Degree Examination Centre in Government College, D Road, ABC and Girls' Degree Examination Centre in Government Girls High School, E Road, ABC on the 10 December 2005.

**Introduction.** It was with a view to knowing about the working of some very important or key university examination centers in the city this year that the VC, Punjab University asked me to submit this report. In the background of corruption in most of our examinations, the present report will be of great importance.

**Report and conclusion.** boys' centre. The centre was functioning in a big hall and two adjoining rooms. As I entered the main hall with two attendants with me, I began observing the candidates. I saw two students talking near a pillar. When I went close to them, I found three other students copying from printed matter hidden under their answer-books. On my questioning, they told me that about half of the candidates at the centre had paid bribes to the examination staff for copying and that large-scale copying was continuing in the smaller rooms. It was found true as about twenty candidates were caught with objectionable material in their answer-books, pockets or close to their tables. I immediately reported the matter to the Controller of Examinations and had the Centre Superintendent and his deputy replaced by new officers.

**Girls' centre.** This centre was functioning in the big school hall. The Superintendent showed me five cases of use of unfair means prepared against candidates on the 9 May and sent to the University. There was strict discipline all around and no one could be found talking or copying.

**Conclusion.** There are greater chances of corruption in boys' examination centers. But girls' centres can have corruption too if it becomes possible.