Why do we read and write reports? Reports describe the way things are. Their purpose is to **inform**, **document**, **organise** and **store** information. We **read** them to find out information. We **write** them to give information to others or to keep them for future use.

Reports are normally written for someone in authority (e.g. your employer, the local council, the head of a committee, etc.) and contain factual information. That is, in a report, we talk about facts, not opinions. If you include an opinion, you should make it plain to the reader that it is your opinion.

Characteristics of reports:

Style:

The majority of reports are written in a <u>formal</u> style; therefore, they should be printed (not hand-written) and they have the following characteristics:

Vocabulary:

Formal vocabulary (not colloquial expressions), for example, words of Latin/French origin; single-word verbs (not phrasal verbs); formal linkers (e.g. consequently, furthermore, for this reason…).

Grammar:

Reports are written in the third person: they, Egyptians, the public transport in Tenerife…

They are often written in present tenses, although past tenses are possible in reports related to past events.

Formal and impersonal structures (passive voice, long and complex sentences), no use of the imperative. To be more impersonal, you should talk about 'people' and 'they'. Try not to use personal pronouns, such as 'I' or 'me'.

Avoid ellipsis (since this is informal): It should be mentioned <u>that</u> the ages of…

But most importantly, write clearly – don't confuse the reader.

Punctuation:

Full forms of verbs (not abbreviated forms) and no use of exclamation marks.

Structure of reports:

1. You should begin a report by stating who it is addressed to (name/position/company), your name and position, what the report is about (the subject) and the date. For example:

To: Mr Thomas Williams, Manager, Grosvernor & Sons
From: Mary Briggs, Assistant Manager
Subject: El Monasterio Restaurant
Date: 27 December, 2010

Some possible <u>positions</u> are: Manager, Senior Manager, Assistant Manager, Chairman of Council, Committee Member, Department Head, Owner, Shop assistant…

The <u>subject</u> is the title of the report, for example, *Roman housing, Film recommendations, Attracting young customers, Yelmo Cinema Complex, etc*. The subject tells the reader what the report is about.

2. **1st paragraph**: an introduction in which you state the purpose and content of the report. Don't forget to write a suitable subheading in capital letters before you begin the paragraph. Some typical subheadings for the first paragraph are: INTRODUCTION or PURPOSE.

3. **2nd / 3rd (etc) paragraphs**: a main body with different paragraphs for each topic, introduced by sub-headings. The sub-headings should provide the key idea of each paragraph. Then, each paragraph should start with a general statement, and then go on to give more detail.
You can provide information sources. Diagrams, graphs, tables, charts, or even a glossary can be added.

4. **Last paragraph**: a report ends with a conclusion which summarizes the information from the main body. It may include your general assessment/opinion and/ or recommendation. Some typical subheadings for the conclusion are: RECOMMENDATION or CONCLUSION.

Types of reports:

1. Assessment reports:

They present and evaluate the <u>positive and/or negative qualities</u> of a person (i.e. an employee), a building/place (i.e. a hotel, a restaurant, a shop, a cinema complex, etc.), a plan, etc. They can also include your suggestions, as well as your general opinion and/or recommendation.

In the body of the assessment report, you present positive and/or negative aspects in detail under suitable subheadings, which show the topic of each paragraph, so you do not need to start each paragraph with a topic sentence. Positive and negative features of the same aspect should be

presented in the same paragraph, using linking words showing contrast: *however, although, despite, but, while, even though…*

- Useful language to begin assessment reports:

The aim of this report is to evaluate the performance of…
The aim of this report is to describe…/ provide details of…
The purpose of this report is to examine the suitability of … for…/ to recommend…
This report outlines the advantages and disadvantages of …
This report contains the assessment of … which you requested / asked for.

- Useful language to end assessment reports:

Summarising:
To sum up/ To conclude/ In conclusion, …
On the whole, it would be fair to conclude that…
The only/obvious conclusion to be drawn from these facts is that…
Recommending:
It is (therefore) felt/ believed/ apparent/ obvious that … would be ideal for…
It would (not) be advisable/ advantageous/ practical / wise to…
I (strongly) recommend/ would suggest that…
My/Our recommendation is that … should be…
I recommend that the best course of action would be…

2. Survey reports:

They present and analyze the results or findings of <u>research</u> concerning reactions to a product, plan, etc. They include general assessment, conclusions and/or recommendations.

The information presented may have been gathered in a survey/opinion poll or compiled from official statistical data, and may reflect the opinions/preferences, etc. of the general public, a particular group of people, a random sample of the population, etc.

The information may be presented in the form of:
- Facts (numbers, percentages and proportions):

Fifty-five per cent of young people go to the cinema at least twice a month.
- Generalizations (*This indicates/suggests/implies that*):

This indicates that the cinema is still quite a popular form of entertainment among young people.

- Useful expressions to express facts and proportions:

Of the 680 people/students/workers who were questioned/interviewed…
Ten per cent of people/consumers were of the opinion that…
The majority/minority of viewers/of people surveyed replied that…
A large/small proportion of those interviewed chose/preferred…
Over one third of those who responded expressed (dis)approval of…
One in ten/ Two out of five of the people surveyed believed that…

- Useful expressions to express generalizations:

On the whole/ Generally speaking,…
Among pensioners/consumers … (e.g. aquatic sports) is/are generally preferred to … (e.g. working out in a gym).
Most consumers prefer/Only fifteen per cent of those surveyed said that…, which shows/indicates that…: *Only fifteen per cent of those surveyed said that they would purchase a fur coat, which implies that most people are against the practice of killing animals for their skin.*
Most people felt that…, which is shown/demonstrated by the fact that…: *Most people are against the practice of killing animals for their skins, which is shown by the fact that only fifteen per cent of those surveyed said that they would purchase a fur coat.*
Few people approve of…, as confirmed by the fact that…
This fact suggests/indicates that the average person chooses…

- Useful verbs: *agree, choose, claim, complain, reply, report, prefer, state...*
- Useful language to begin survey reports:

The purpose/aim of this report is to evaluate/assess the results of a survey conducted to determine/ discover the reaction/popularity/ attitudes/opinions of…
The intention of this report is to examine/present the results of a survey in which … people/residents/viewers were asked about/whether/what…

The data included in this report was gathered by means of a questionnaire/a telephone survey/ door-to-door interviews...

This survey examines people's responses to... Responses were taken from ...

The results were as follows:

- Useful language to end survey reports:

To conclude/ To sum up/ In conclusion, the survey/data clearly shows...

The results of this survey suggest/indicate/demonstrate/reveal that...

3. Proposal reports:

They present suggestions, plans or decisions for a <u>future</u> course of action. They are submitted for approval by superiors at work, a bank manager, members of a committee, relevant authorities, etc.

- Frequent structures: modals, conditionals or "would" are normally used in these reports.
- Useful language to begin proposal reports:

The purpose of this report is to outline/present the intended course of action...

The aim of this report is to discuss the future plans/ to recommend/ to suggest...

This report contains details of our plans/intentions concerning...

This report is submitted in support of our request for ...

- Useful language to end proposal reports:

To sum up/ To conclude/ In conclusion, our intention is to...

I believe that the course of action proposed above will achieve.../ answer the needs of the company.

There is little doubt that it would be a success/of great benefit to the ... (town/company).

I hope that the plan/scheme presented in this report meets with your approval/ will receive your serious consideration.

For the reasons above, I recommend...

4. Informative reports:

They present information concerning a meeting that <u>has taken</u> place, the progress which <u>has been</u> made on a project, or decisions which <u>have been</u> made concerning future action. They are usually addressed to one's superiors, colleagues or members of a committee.

- Useful language to begin informative reports:

The purpose of this report is to present/discuss the meeting held on...

The aim of this report is to outline the progress of...

The information below summarizes the events which took place...

This report contains the relevant information concerning ... which you requested.

- Useful language to end informative reports:

To conclude/ To sum up/ In conclusion, the current state of affairs is that...

I am pleased to announce members/the committee that arrangements are progressing smoothly/according to schedule/faster than anticipated/ ahead of schedule.

Unfortunately, progress has not been as fast as expected/ a number of difficulties have been encountered/ the issue has not been resolved.

5. Reporting experiences:

- This kind of writing can be found in newspapers or magazines in article form, or as part of a letter to a friend. When you are asked to report experiences, you normally write in an <u>informal</u> style. Past tenses are used in reports of this type.

These reports should consist of:

- An introduction in which you state the topic of your report, giving information about the event, date and people involved. Therefore, we <u>don't begin these reports as the other reports</u>, in which we state who they are addressed to (name/position/company), your name and position, what the report is about and the date in four different lines.
- A main body in which all information is presented in chronological order in various paragraphs, indicated by using subheadings.
- A conclusion in which you summarize your points and refer to your feelings, moods or consequences.