HOW TO WRITE A REPORT ?

Reports and **proposals** are usually written to present information in formal situations. They are usually divided into sections. Each section is written as a paragraph, in the same way as other types of writing, but the sections are given headings.

You will be given a role (e.g. *You are the secretary of your local music club…*) and specific instructions as to what you should include (e.g. *Write a report outlining the activities held by the club in the last twelve months*).

Reports tend to be about past events or present situations.

Proposals usually outline a course of action for the future.

A report or proposal should contain:

- An introduction in which the reason for writing is stated.
- A main body with headed sections. It is essential to choose appropriate section headings in order to answer the question properly.
- A conclusion in which the main points are summarised. The conclusion may include a reference to future action.

→ Formal and Informal Style

How formal your letter needs to be depends on the target reader and the reason for writing. It is very important to maintain the same level of formality throughout your letter (in other words, you should not mix very formal expressions with very informal ones). Study the guidelines.

Formal style includes:
• sophisticated vocabulary • impersonal tone • more frequent use of the passive voice • complex grammatical constructions • formal linking devices • advanced vocabulary

Informal style includes:
• colloquial (spoken) and idiomatic English • personal tone/ direct address • less frequent use of the passive voice • less complex grammatical constructions • simple linking devices • less advanced vocabulary • contractions

Linking Words and Phrases

In reports, ideas should be linked using linking words and phrases. Examples of these include:

To list points
Firstly / In the first place / To begin with ... ; Secondly / Then / Furthermore ... ; Finally / Last ... ; etc

To make concessions
Although ... ; while ... ; despite the fact that ... ; etc

To add emphasis
especially ... ; in particular ... ; particularly; etc

To express your opinion
I feel ... ; I believe ... ; I am convinced ... ; I am confident ... ; etc

To make suggestions/recommendations
I (would) (strongly) suggest / recommend ... ; If we (did this / were to do this) ... ; One solution / suggestion would be to ... ; It would be a good idea to ... ; etc

To express cause and effect
By (doing this), we could / would ... ; (Doing this) would (solve the problem, etc) ... ; In this way, we could ... ; ... in order to ... ; ... so that ... ; (This) would mean that ... ; As a result ... ; etc

To: Timothy Taylor, Dean
From: Tonia Washington
Subject: Suggested improvements to classrooms
Date: 8th May 20...

1) ....
The purpose of this report is to comment on conditions in the college and to make recommendations for possible improvements.

2) ....
Although conditions are generally good, there are one or two problems. Firstly, in large classes, there is not much desk space. Secondly, the classrooms tend to be dark, especially in the winter months. Finally, during video lessons, some of us find it difficult to see the screen properly.

3) ....
There are a number of changes that could be made in order to improve the situation. To begin with, I would strongly suggest that the number of students per class be kept to below ten. In this way, we would avoid the overcrowding that sometimes exists. Also, special care needs to be taken as far as lighting is concerned. Last, if the college invested in a larger television, it would mean that all of the students would be able to get the maximum benefit out of the video lessons.

4) ....
To sum up, while most of us are satisfied with the conditions, I feel that the above improvements would make things even better. If these suggestions were carried out, both teachers and students would have a more comfortable environment for studying and teaching.

Which of the following headings could you use in your report? (Tick ✔)

First Things First ☐ Beginning ☐ Purpose ☐
What I Like About The School ☐
Classroom Conditions ☐
What Can We Do About It? ☐
Suggested Improvements ☐
Last But Not Least ☐ Conclusion ☐

To: Mr Simkins, Principal
From: Tom Wheeler, Debating Society Secretary
Subject: Issues covered in the Summer Term
Date: 18 June 20...

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to present **1)** .... discussed by the society in the last term.

Crime

By far the most controversial issue that we have covered is the crime rate in modern times. In the three separate debates, chaired by Jonathan Deacon, we had almost maximum attendance. A **2)** .... opinions was expressed and a final vote was taken, in which the majority were **3)** .... stricter policing but more lenient punishment.

Homelessness

In the first of two debates, James Lawton put forward the suggestion that homelessness was a matter of choice. This **4)** .... a lively exchange with several members voicing their strong disagreement. The second debate **5)** .... the government's responsibilities in this area. A final vote on the question of whether the situation would improve in the near future revealed that over sixty per cent of our members were undecided.

Poverty

The approach which the society took to this matter was two-fold. Firstly, it was suggested that banks should cancel debts owed by developing countries. After the facts were presented by Jane Howell and Doreen Rose, there was tremendous support for the motion and our members voted overwhelmingly in favour. In addition, it was suggested that the problem of debt needed to be addressed on a local level, with more focus on the individual. It was **6)** .... that financial counselling should be made more freely available to **7)** ....

Conclusion

8) .... , this was a successful term, with over eighty per cent attendance on average. For the autumn term we hope to sustain these figures when we discuss the subjects of animal rights, urban anonymity and the use of surveillance cameras.

1 the main issues	5 focused on
2 wide range of	6 unanimously agreed
3 in favour of	7 members of the public
4 led to	8 All in all

1 the main issues

2 wide range of

3 in favour of

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5 focused on

6 unanimously agreed

7 members of the public

8 All in all

Beginnings and Endings

Reports and proposals usually begin with the following:

To: ....
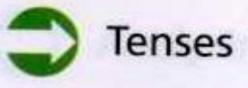From: .... } (The exact information you include
Subject: .... depends on the rubric).
Date: ....

The first paragraph is usually a short section entitled **Purpose** or **Introduction** which gives the reason for writing.

In the conclusion you can:
- summarise the points in the main body
- make a recommendation for future action
- offer a personal opinion
- reassure the target reader

In a proposal, you can also end by mentioning the benefits of the proposal being accepted.

Tenses

The most commonly used verb tenses in reports and proposals are as follows:

The **Present Simple** – to describe the present situation *e.g. It is believed that most of the students regularly read the newsletter.*

The **Present Continuous** – to describe things that are happening now *e.g. Although we are dealing with the situation, complaints are being received on a daily basis.*

The **Present Perfect** – to emphasise past actions that are relevant now *e.g. Over half of those questioned have responded favourably to the suggestion.*

The **Past Simple** – to report on past actions, events, etc. *e.g. Most of those who took part expressed an interest in similar projects.*

Writing about the future

When writing about the future, the following can be used:

The **future simple tense** e.g. *At least £3000 will be needed.*

The **future continuous tense** e.g. *We will be closely monitoring the situation.*

The **future perfect tense** e.g. *The work will have been completed before the beginning of the next academic year.*

Verbs

These include *propose, intend, hope, expect, predict, forecast, look forward to, anticipate*, etc. e.g. *We do not* **anticipate** *any further problems and we* **hope** *to meet the deadline as discussed.*

Adjectives

These include *imminent, potential, probable, possible, forecast, forthcoming, future, expected, proposed, etc*

e.g. *the* **proposed** *work, the* **potential** *profit,* **future** *discussion, etc*

Hypothetical constructions

e.g. *this* **would** *mean that, if we* **could***, this* **should***, we* **might***, etc.*

- **To:**
- **From:**
- **Subject:**
- **Date:**

  Purpose

- This is a report compiled to <u>assess </u>information on how students in the United States spend their time on an average weekday. The data given below reflect the results of a survey, conducted by our group.

- **2015 activities**
- Answers, collected from American students, showed the following results. There is no surprise in the fact that human beings need to have a rest, so the most sufficient period of <u>extracurricular</u> time is spent on sleeping (7.1 hours on average). The favourable sign is that such <u>pursuits </u>as leisure and sports are <u>catching on </u>with 5.6 hours in 2015. The last of the top-3 activities, taking up students' time, is travelling. This point is rather controversial. It's hard to say whether it is connected with the growing amount of cars and, consequently, traffic jams or whether students are just getting more ambitious and try to do as much as possible in 24 hours…Anyway, there might be another research on this issue.

- **Differences between 2014 and 2015**
- Analysing the year 2014 and 2015 we might say that students are sleeping less now. Educational activities, the runner-up of the 2014, <u>have been substituted </u>with the travelling – maybe now students are just doing their homework in the bus, as now studying process is taking 1 hour less than before. The most unintrusive activity, however, remains the same, although losing 20 minutes in its duration, comparing to the 2014. We are talking about grooming.

- **Conclusion**
- In conclusion we can say that this survey has been quite informative and in order to keep track of students' life the research will be conducted next year as well.