

Writing Scientific Reports

Why do we write scientific reports?

Science is about investigating and communicating new ideas and writing is an important aspect of this. We write to share our discoveries with other scientists and make contributions to our field of study. In order to achieve this, we develop a hypothesis and test it. Our findings (results) either support or reject this hypothesis. Consequently, we detail how we tested our hypothesis and discuss the resultant findings.

Format of a Scientific Report

The basic format of a scientific report is as follows:

Section	Content
Title	Includes what was studied, how and where/in what context was it studied. Must be brief, concise and descriptive.
Abstract [if applicable]	Provides a condensed and concentrated version of the full text Uses an introduction-body-conclusion structure Can be understood without reading the paper
Introduction	Provides context Introduce previous research Gives the purpose of the experiment/study
Methods	Provides step-by-step details about how the experiment was performed Should provide enough detail so the experiment can be repeated. Describes how you will analyse the raw data Written in the past tense
Results	Presents and describes analysed data Reports facts Expresses the data appropriately in figures or tables.
Discussion	Consider whether the data obtained supports the hypothesis Explores the implications of your findings, potential limitations of your study. *Clearly state your conclusion.
References	Acknowledges information obtained from other sources Clearly states any information obtained somewhere other than yourself. Both in-text and in the bibliography.
Appendices [if applicable]	Shows your raw data here in tables, graphs, etc.

Adapted from:

1. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Thesis statements. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://cssac.unc.edu/> (Accessed 11 March 2015)
2. UCT Upper Campus Writing Centre, 2015