

# Report Writing



**ACADEMIC LEARNING DEVELOPMENT**

<http://www.westminster.ac.uk/learning-and-study-skills-support>

# Workshop content

1. What is a report?
2. What's the difference between reports and essays?
3. What makes a good report?
4. Stages involved in writing a report:
  - Understanding your audience
  - Planning your work and creating a framework
  - Report structure and sections
  - Collecting your information
  - Critical reading of your sources
  - Writing critically
  - Extra writing advice



Always check your  
Tutor's guidelines!

Different schools, different  
rules!



# What is a report?





A report is a systematic, well organised document which defines and analyses a subject or problem.

A report is written for a **clear purpose** and to a **particular audience**. Specific information and evidence are presented, analysed and applied to a particular problem or issue.

The information is presented in a **clearly structured** format making use of **sections** and **headings** so that the information is easy to locate and follow.



## Reports must always be:

- Accurate
- Concise
- Clear
- Well structured

# You need to:

- ✓ understand **the purpose** of the report brief and adhere to its specifications strictly!
- ✓ **gather, evaluate and analyse** relevant information
- ✓ **structure material** in a logical and coherent order
- ✓ present your report in a **consistent format and manner** according to the instructions of the report brief
- ✓ make **appropriate conclusions** that are supported by the evidence and analysis of the report
- ✓ make thoughtful and practical **recommendations** where required

# How is a report different from an essay?



## Contents

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Feature	Report	Essay
Purpose	<p>To communicate the results or findings of a project</p> <p><i>To take decisions, e.g. policy</i></p>	<p>Discursive, you can express your ideas and thoughts, and make judgements</p> <p><i>To think...</i></p>
Language	Formal; concise and clear	Formal; more discursive, it often contains longer paragraphs and needs linking words and phrases to ensure cohesion
Structure	Formal. Broken up into different sections, each with their own headings and subsections	Generally using headings and subheadings but freer structure.

Source: University of Leeds, “Difference between an essay and a report” at [http://library.leeds.ac.uk/info/341/writing\\_skills/187/report\\_writing/4](http://library.leeds.ac.uk/info/341/writing_skills/187/report_writing/4)

**Essays are more discursive and wordy and give you more opportunity to expand on possibilities, ideas or concepts.**

**Reports** deal with describing and/or analysing actual past events. Reports can be written that make predictions or recommendations for the future, but these are usually the result of an analysis of past events or of current or past social, cultural or economic phenomena.



# So what makes a good report?

**The key is** *to understand the purpose of the report* rather than just what goes in each section, as this may differ from one report to another!

There is no set formula for writing a report - every report is different. Each one depends on:

- your discipline
- what the purpose is
- who you are writing for
- the kind of research that you are reporting

# Some of the most common problems in poor reports:

- Doesn't answer the brief
- Overall point/message of report is unclear
- Poor structure
- Unclear headings/sub headings
- Inappropriate writing style
- Incorrect or inadequate referencing
- Too much/too little/irrelevant material
- Expression not clear
- Doesn't relate results to purpose and recommendations
- Not enough critical analysis





# Stages involved in writing a report:

1. Understanding your audience
2. Planning your work and creating a framework
3. Report structure and sections
4. Collecting your information
5. Critical reading of your sources
6. Organising and structuring your information
7. Critical Writing – Analysing and Evaluating your ideas and research
8. Extra writing advice

# Audience and Purpose

Think about who you are informing (the audience) and what information they need (the purpose). This will help ensure the relevance and clear focus of your report. A report can differ greatly depending on the audience!

Who is going to read your report?



# Who is going to read your report?

Try not to think in terms of your lecturer as your reader. Instead, imagine your report is going to be read by the CEO of a large, multi-national company. Ask yourself these questions:



- How much time does this person have?
- Will they understand 'wordy', academic styles?
- If they read this report, would they pay you for your advice?

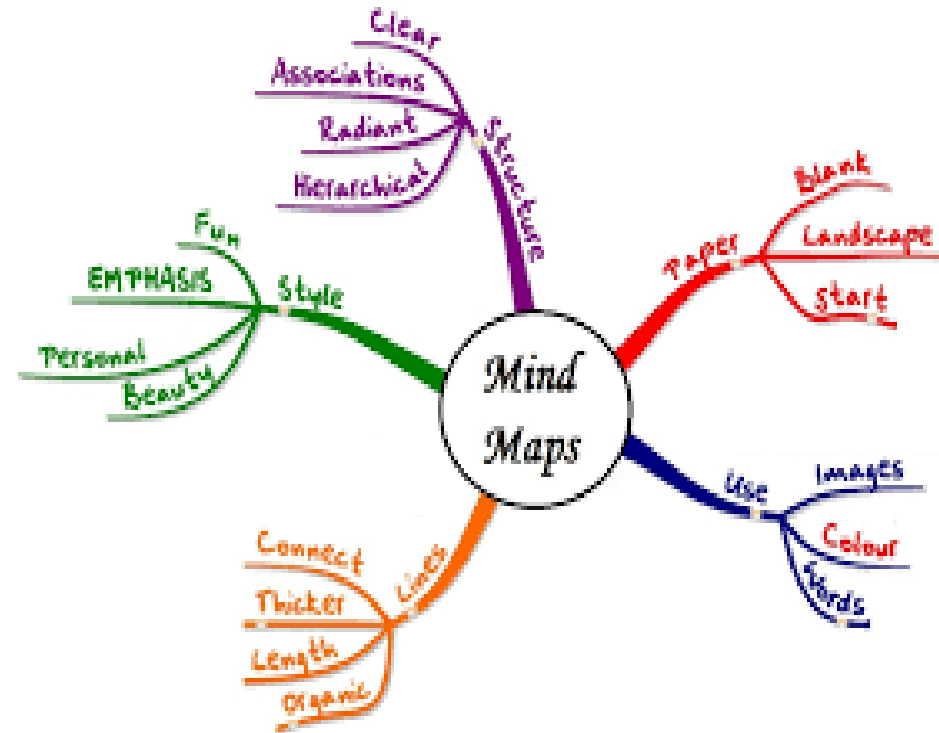
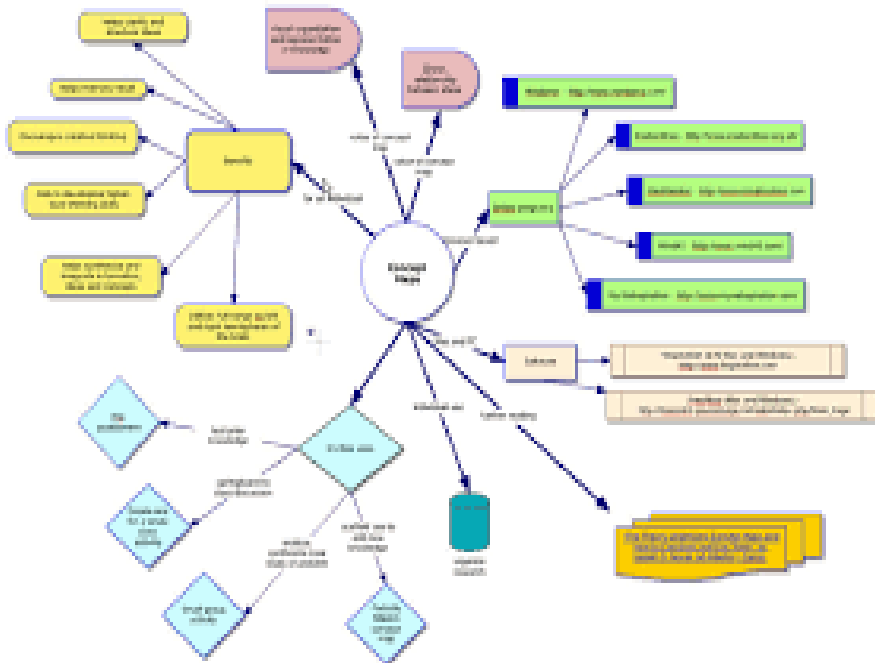
# Things to think about when planning!

- Time management – use an assignment/project planner
- Make a plan
  - Concept maps/ mind maps
  - Linear points





Mind maps and concept maps can be helpful in the beginning stages for brainstorming ideas and especially to help you see connections and where gaps in knowledge might be!





- ✓ Group together points that are related
- ✓ Think about and create relevant headings/sub headings {within the sections} to group similar ideas {**themes**}
- ✓ Think about the best order to introduce them {sequence of ideas}
- ✓ If it's not directly relevant to the report don't include it!
- ✓ Keep referring to the report brief – never forget your purpose!
- ✓ Mini introductions for each main section



The key to writing an effective report is in designing the **skeletal framework** or structure for it.

**Headings and Sub-headings** will provide you with signposts for the preparation of the report and help your reader to understand easily and quickly its contents.

The information presented in the report should gradually develop and cascade from one section to the next!

# Gathering your information!

Where can we find information?

What kind of sources can we use?



# Resources: What?



- Literature
  - Books
  - **Scholarly journal articles**
- Newspaper articles
- Data bases
- Empirical work
  - Interviews
  - Observation
  - Experiments
  - Surveys



# Resources: How and Where?

- Library search
- Internet search
- Google Scholar
- British Library
- SCONUL (other libraries)

Google

research methods

Scholar

About 6,620,000 results (0.04 sec)

Articles

[book](#) [Qualitative research in education. An introduction](#)  
[RC Bogdan](#), [SK Biklen](#) - 1998 - ERIC

Case law

Abstract: This introductory level text provides a background for and qualitative **research** in education, its theoretical and historical and **methods** of educational **research**. This revised edition places qua  
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SEARCH FOR BOOKS, JOURNALS AND MORE Enter your search terms...

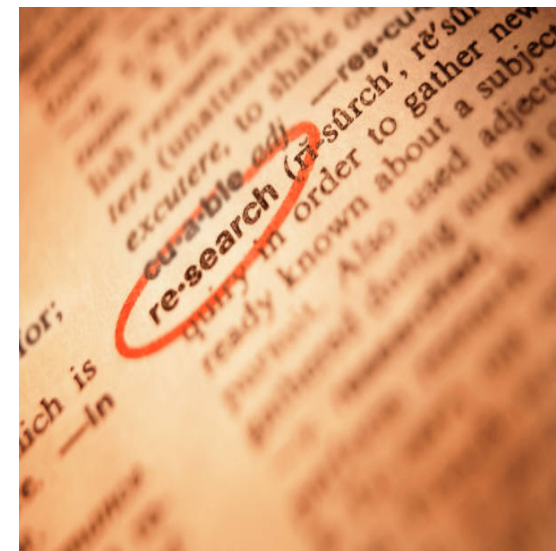
SEARCH

# ACADEMIC LIAISON LIBRARIANS

## WHO WE ARE

# Be a critical reader!

- **Relate what you read directly to the report**
  - Which parts are relevant? How do they fit in with my assignment?
  - What do they tell me?
  - How will it help me to answer the question?
- **Evaluate the source itself, Be a critical reader!**
  - Is the argument consistent?
  - Is the evidence convincing?
- **Compare sources, e.g.**
  - Does one support or disagree with another?
  - Does it raise a different issue?





## Some useful questions to ask yourself when taking notes?

- *Do you really need this information? If so, which bits?*
- *Will you really use it? When, and how?*
- *Have you noted similar information already?*
- *What questions do you want to answer with this information?"*

Cottrell S. (2003 p.126) The study skills handbook 2nd edition.  
Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan



# Referencing your work

## STUDY SKILLS AND TRAINING

ACADEMIC SKILLS WORKSHOPS

ACADEMIC SKILLS APPOINTMENTS

## RESEARCH SKILLS

## REFERENCING YOUR WORK

REFWORKS AND ENDNOTE

UNDERSTANDING READING LISTS

UNDERSTANDING ESSAY QUESTIONS

FINDING INFORMATION

EVALUATING INFORMATION

WRITING CAFÉS

If you are using quotations, ideas or information from other people's work in academic writing, you need to acknowledge the source. This is known as referencing or citing. Most departments use Westminster Harvard style. Our referencing guide shows how to cite and reference using examples.



Download the Referencing Your Work booklet (PDF)

135.34 KB

Some departments use a different system. Remember to check your **course handbook** so that you are familiar with exactly what referencing system your school or department requires.

Other styles in use at the University are:

- ▶ Architecture - Oxford
- ▶ Computing and Engineering - IEEE
- ▶ History - Oxford
- ▶ Law - OSCOLA
- ▶ Psychology - APA

# Why reference?



- ✓ provide evidence of your own research
- ✓ acknowledge that the work/idea belongs to another person
- ✓ illustrate a particular point
- ✓ support an argument or theory
- ✓ allow others to locate the resources you have used
- ✓ avoid accusations of plagiarism
- ✓ Source: Information Systems and Library Services referencing your work

# Organisation and Structure

# Reports: Generic structure

- Reports are written in sections with headings and sub-headings, which are usually numbered
- Always consult your module handbook or ask your Tutor to see if your report needs to have a specific structure and specific headings!

## **1. Title Page**

## **2. Terms of Reference**

- A brief explanation of who will read the report (audience), why and how it was written

## **3. (Executive) Summary/Abstract**

- Briefly describe the content of the report including an outline of the aims and main points to provide the reader with an overview and findings and conclusions if relevant

## **4. Table of Contents**

- Presented so that the reader can quickly scan through what the report will entail. Use numbers, headings and subheadings to make it clear

## 5. Introduction

- The aims and objectives of the report include some relevant background information, previous research and outline structure of report

## 6. Literature Review

## 7. Methodology

- How did you carry out the research? Include sources of materials/texts and preparation. Highlight any problems that occurred and why method(s) were changed. *Why did you choose these particular sources/approach over others?*

## 8. Results and discussion {can be separate}

- A summary of results of the investigation or experiment. Include diagrams and charts to support results

## **9. Discussion of findings**

- Discuss results and draw on main points in more depth so that it follows in a logical order. Use headings, subheading and bullet points. Remember to reference using in-text citations.

## **10. Recommendations**

## **11. Conclusion**

- A summary of the main points. Highlight what you considered a central part of your report. Do not add anything new in this section. To what extent have you been able to fulfil the aims?

## **12. Limitations**

## **13. Reflective account**



## **14. Appendices**

- Include all supporting information e.g. graphs, tables, questionnaires, transcripts

## **15. Bibliography/Reference List**

- Full list of sources used in alphabetical order e.g books, ebooks, websites, academic journals

## **16. Glossary of Terms**

- List of any technical terms with a brief description e.g. abbreviations or acronyms

What if you haven't been given any instructions on structure/headings?

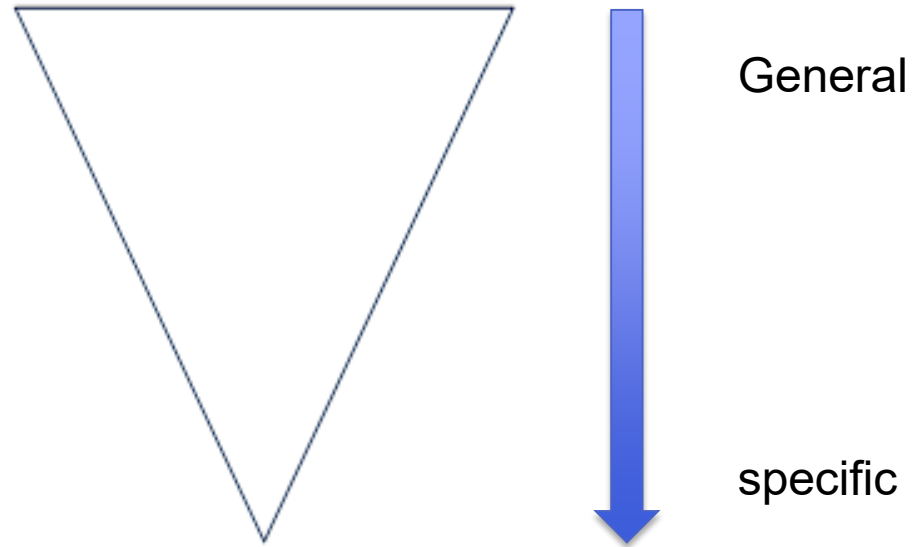


# Hierarchy

## Broad to narrow focus

**Hierarchy** – moves from the most general to more and more specific.

You can use this idea to structure your content within the different sections and within a paragraph!



Before you put together a report look at others written in the professional field or a previous assignment from your Tutors!

**Your department might have specific requirements for the structure of your reports – be sure to check and follow any instructions they give you!**

# Your Introduction

# Introduction

- ✓ Explain the rationale for undertaking the work reported on, and the way you decided to do it. Include what you have been asked (or chosen) to do and the reasons for doing it.
- ✓ State what the report is about. What is the question you are trying to answer?
- ✓ Describe your starting point and the background to the subject: e.g., what research has already been done. What are the relevant themes and issues; why are you being asked to investigate it now?
- ✓ Explain how you are going to go about responding to the brief.
- ✓ Outline the structure of the report

# Conclusion



- ✓ No new material introduced
- ✓ Follows logically from the Discussion

This section should give a feeling of closure and completion to your report. Sum up the main points of your research. How do they answer the original brief for the work reported on? This section may also include:

- Recommendations for action
- Suggestions for further research

# Recommendations

Consult the assessment criteria as to whether recommendations are required

Are suggestions for possible actions based on the discussion section of the report?



# Integrating your references

According to Cartwright {2008:22} *“a balanced diet and physical activity are vital to academic performance”*

Cartwright {2008:22} demonstrates that *“a balanced diet and physical activity are vital to academic performance”*

*“a balanced diet and physical activity are vital to academic performance”* {Cartwright 2008:22}

**Have a look at the different ways we can integrate a quote. How are they different?**

*\*reporting verbs handout\**

# Paraphrase and summary

What is the difference?

In order to paraphrase or summarise correctly you need to have a good understanding of the original:

Change the **syntax**

- i.e., the word order

Change the **word class**

- i.e., a noun verb; verb adjective; verb noun

Use **synonyms**

- i.e., *happy, delighted, pleased...*

**Do we still need to reference a paraphrase or summary?**

# Using Graphical data and formulas

Common forms of graphical data

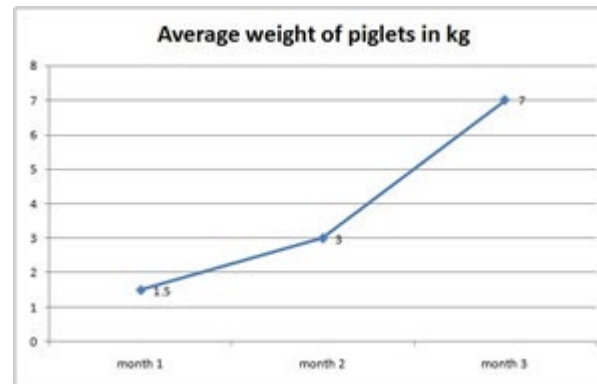
- Tables
- Bar charts
- Graphs
- Drawings/diagrams
- Photographs
- Mathematical formulas

- **Tables** are useful when you need to present a quantity of numerical data in an accessible format and you need to show exact numbers.

	Term			
	Autumn 07	Spring 07	Summer 07	Total
No of teas sold	500	567	609	1676
No of coffees sold	603	799	465	1867
No of cokes sold	355	455	700	1510
<b>Total</b>	1458	1821	1774	5053

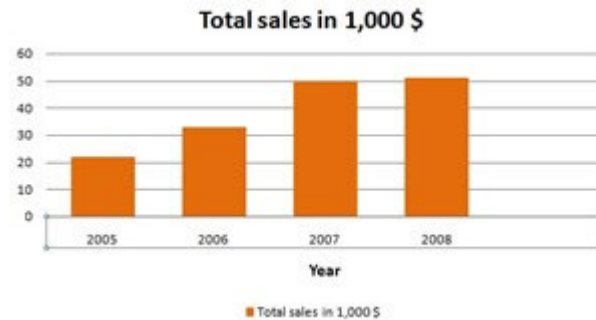
[http://archive.learnhigher.ac.uk/resources\\_for\\_students/Report-writing/Further-activities-and-resources/Using-graphical-data.html](http://archive.learnhigher.ac.uk/resources_for_students/Report-writing/Further-activities-and-resources/Using-graphical-data.html)

- **Line graphs** are especially effective at showing trends (how data changes over time) and relationships (how two variables interact)



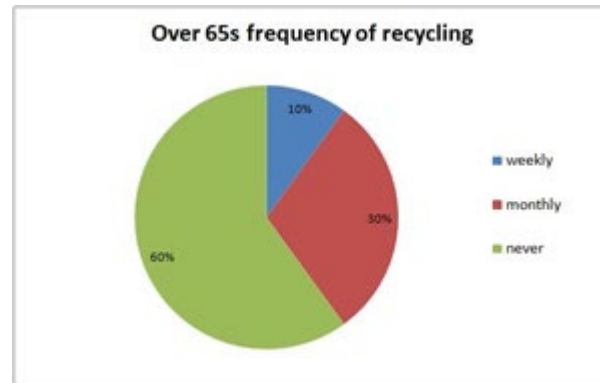
[http://archive.learnhigher.ac.uk/resources\\_for\\_students/Report-writing/Further-activities-and-resources/Using-graphical-data.html](http://archive.learnhigher.ac.uk/resources_for_students/Report-writing/Further-activities-and-resources/Using-graphical-data.html)

- **Bar charts/graphs** are good when you want to compare discrete items. The bars can be vertical or horizontal. Making them different colours can help the reader to differentiate each result.



[http://archive.learnhigher.ac.uk/resources\\_for\\_students/Report-writing/Further-activities-and-resources/Using-graphical-data.html](http://archive.learnhigher.ac.uk/resources_for_students/Report-writing/Further-activities-and-resources/Using-graphical-data.html)

- **Pie charts** show the proportion of the whole that is taken by various parts.



[http://archive.learnhigher.ac.uk/resources\\_for\\_students/Report-writing/Further-activities-and-resources/Using-graphical-data.html](http://archive.learnhigher.ac.uk/resources_for_students/Report-writing/Further-activities-and-resources/Using-graphical-data.html)



- **Drawings and diagrams** can be used to reinforce or supplement textual information, or where something is more clearly shown in diagrammatic form.



[http://archive.learnhigher.ac.uk/resources\\_for\\_students/Report-writing/Further-activities-and-resources/Using-graphical-data.html](http://archive.learnhigher.ac.uk/resources_for_students/Report-writing/Further-activities-and-resources/Using-graphical-data.html)

- **Photographs** can be useful as illustrations that help to explain what is being discussed in the text.



[http://archive.learnhigher.ac.uk/resources\\_for\\_students/Report-writing/Further-activities-and-resources/Using-graphical-data.html](http://archive.learnhigher.ac.uk/resources_for_students/Report-writing/Further-activities-and-resources/Using-graphical-data.html)

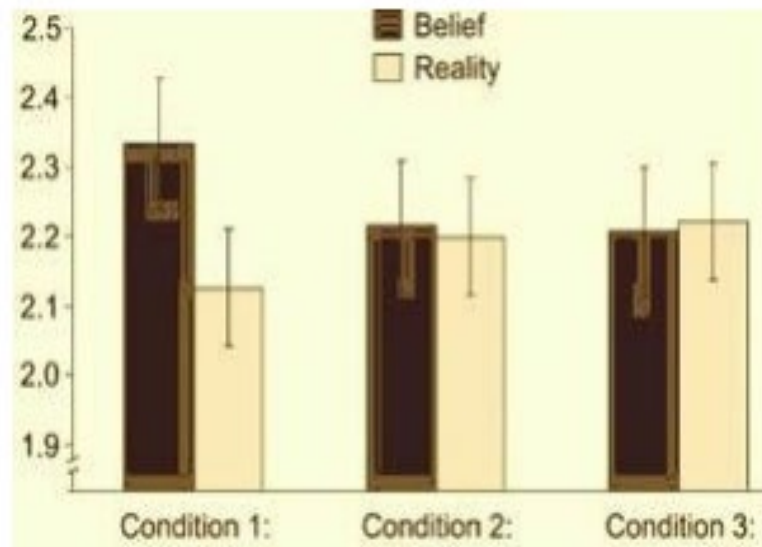


# When to use Data!

- When they do a better job of conveying something about the information than text alone:
- Make sure they **add value!**
- when they 'add value' to the textual description of the data. Use graphical information appropriately - not just because you think you should!
- It should never be necessary to present the same information in two different graphical formats!

## Activity: How could you improve the following examples of graphical data?

**Example 2:** A bar chart from a psychology experiment testing if belief reasoning is automatic:



The bar chart has no label on the Y axis and a very vague label on the X axis. The colour of the “belief” bars and the background make the graph difficult to read. There is no overall title for the graph.

A better example:

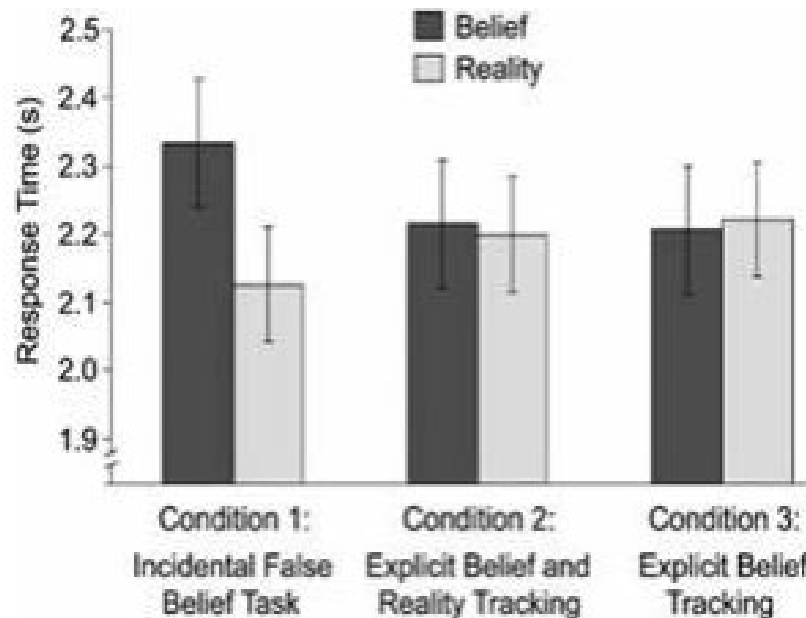
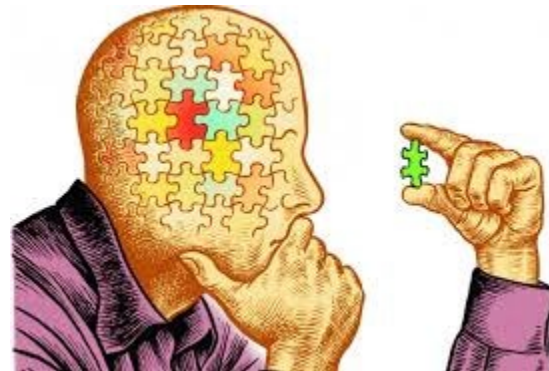


Fig. 2: Mean response times (bars represent standard errors) for belief and reality probes in Conditions 1, 2, and 3).

# Showing critical analysis and evaluation in a report

How can we do this?





## How to make your writing more critical?

- Don't just say what other people have said – USE it
  - Compare and contrast what people have said
  - Discuss / comment / indicate your view
  - Evaluate evidence
  - Infer / extrapolate / draw conclusions
  - Use the literature as supporting evidence or examples
  - Apply the literature to a particular case or context
  - Apply theory / models to a particular case or context
  - Don't use references to make your points – talk about your references!
- Analyse what happened don't just describe it

# Critical referencing

References cannot make your points for you: they provide support for your points or provide material for you to argue against!

Don't string together too many quotes to support an argument  
Instead....

- ✓ *Interpret* the quotes to the reader, and explain their relevance, discuss their validity, and show how they relate to other evidence and your argument!
- ✓ *Use reporting verbs* carefully to show your attitude to the ideas you're presenting, this will help give you a stronger academic voice and improve academic style.



# Limitations {may be required}

You may be required – or you may choose to – include a Limitations section in your report. This can have advantages:

- Allows for more critical assessment
- Shows professional awareness
- Acknowledges difficulties

But it can also have disadvantages:

- Adds to the word count
- Very easy to ‘complain’ rather than assess

# The Appendix

1. The Appendix is part of your word count.
2. The Appendices need to be referenced in your text.
3. Its main purpose is to allow you to include important information which, if it were included in the main body of the report, would interrupt the flow of the argument you are developing there.
4. Appendices are not counted towards your final grade.

1. The Appendix is part of your word count. **False**
2. The Appendices need to be referenced in your text. **True**
3. Its main purpose is to allow you to include important information which, if it were included in the main body of the report, would interrupt the flow of the argument you are developing there. **True**
4. Appendices are not counted towards your final grade. **It depends – check your brief**

# Writing advice



# Place information where it will be seen:

- ✓ Use strong headings/sub headings
- ✓ Think about first and last paragraphs
- ✓ The start of the paragraph - strong topic sentences!

# Abbreviations

- Always give the term in full at the first use and show the abbreviation in brackets, e.g., *Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI)*, subsequently use just the abbreviation: *MRI*
- Use accepted abbreviations, such as *MRI*
- Always be consistent, e.g., always *MRI*, not *mri* or *Mri*.

# Write strong Paragraphs

A paragraph is a group of sentences that are linked coherently around one central topic/idea

## 1. Topic sentence

- Introduces the topic and states what your paragraph will be about
- Often more general and the main point of the paragraph
- Usually at or near the beginning

## 2. Supporting sentences – develop your paragraph

- Expand on the point you are making: explain, analyse, support with examples and/or evidence.

## 3. Concluding statement

- Show how your evidence backs up your point
- May tie your point back to the question

# Paragraph bridges

Sometimes we need to provide links between paragraphs to guide the reader. One simple way of doing this is by repeating a word or phrase.

Example:

*Last sentence of a paragraph:*

In short, a number of **efforts** have been made to....

*First sentence of next paragraph*

Despite these **efforts**,...



## Use linking and signposting words / phrases

- Give your reader clear signals to understand your thinking
- They make the links in your argument clear
- They make your writing flow

### Examples of linking/signposting words:

moreover, furthermore,

similarly,

as a result, consequently, therefore,

although, yet, however

# Manchester Phrase bank

(for all your academic vocabulary and style needs!)

<http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/>



# Academic Voice

**It is formal, rational, logical, unemotional**

- It tries to persuade by a well supported argument rather than emotive language
- Uses cautious wording e.g. ‘suggests that...’; ‘there is evidence for...’; ‘it is possible that...’ might, may, seems, appears.....
- Avoids unsubstantiated statements
- Avoids informal, conversational language

# Academic style

## It is often impersonal

- It avoids the word 'you' meaning everyone
- It may avoid 'I' or 'we' – If not, it uses them sparingly. For instance, instead of 'in my opinion...' you could write 'it can be argued...' 'this essay argues...', 'one could consider...' There is evidence to suggest
- Uses the third person
- Use reporting verbs {see handout}



- No contractions – *don't, can't, won't*
- No colloquial language e.g., *At the end of the day, to be honest*
- No rhetorical questions – *So why didn't the material combust?*
- **Do not overstate** the evidence (use hedging), e.g.
  - *It would appear that...*
  - *These results suggest...*
  - *A possible explanation for this is...*



## Use passive voice, e.g.

- Active: *I observed the angle to be... (to)*
- Passive: *The angle was observed to be...*
  
- Active: *The authors suggest... (to)*
- Passive: *It is suggested...*
  
- Active: *We used a standard graphical representation to... (to)*
- Passive: *A standard graphical representation was used to...*

# Summary Writing Advice

- ✓ Provide strong sentences at beginnings of paragraphs
- ✓ Signpost throughout
- ✓ Link back - Write "*so what*" summary sentences throughout the literature review to aid in understanding of why it's relevant to your research.
- ✓ Use language to show confidence/caution:
- ✓ e.g. There is clearly a link.../This suggests a possible link...
- ✓ Use your own voice to comment on and evaluate the literature – don't just add it in without interpreting it!
- ✓ Avoid he said... she said.....
- ✓ Use reporting verbs strategically to improve criticality and use your voice

# Reflective Statement

Some tutors may require you to include a Reflection Section in your report. This is an opportunity for you to:

- Step back from the report, and focus on your own process
- To critically evaluate your input, learning and assumptions
- To analyse how *you* have affected the outcomes of your report
- To discuss future actions and learning needs



- Reflection is a way to explore and clarify your response to ideas, opinions, situations, and challenges.
- It can give you new perspectives on yourself and your work!
- ✓ Make time to "pause and reflect" on a regular basis.

# 6.

## Checking and Redrafting

# Checklist

- Carefully check the following elements of your report before you print off the final version:
  - General layout
  - Text organisation
  - Criticality
  - Coherence
  - Grammar, spelling and punctuation
  - Referencing
  - Style



*\*Report checklist\**



What questions do you have about reports?



# Academic Learning Development

- **Appointments** with a learning adviser
- **Skills workshops** and other activities

## Bookings:



Link to main portal:

<https://engage.westminster.ac.uk/students/login>

Direct link to our service:

<https://engage.westminster.ac.uk/workgroups/academic-writing-and-study-skills-support>

# Academic Learning Development

## Skills Resources

- You can find workshop slides, help-sheets and useful materials on our 'Skills Resources' [Blackboard](#) page.

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Nicola Allett

HOME 2016/17 SITES **LEARNING RESOURCES** UNIVERSITY LIFE JOBS AND CAREERS STAFF E-LEARNING HELP AND SUPPORT

### Training and Study Skills

- Skills Resources**
- [Academic Learning Development](#)
- [Study Skills Workshops](#)
- [IT Training](#)
- [Academic English](#)
- [Learn from your peers \(WINPAL\)](#)
- [Disability Learning Support](#)

### Did you know?

- For Level 4 Students – find out about electives for next year
- Thinking of staying on to do a postgraduate course?
- Submitting Coursework Online

### Skills Resources

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ACADEMIC LEARNING DEVELOPMENT

Academic Writing  
Dissertations and PhD Theses  
Exams  
Group and Team Work  
International Students  
Maths and Statistics  
Presentations  
Reading and Notetaking  
Research and Referencing  
Time Management and Organisation  
Bibliography

IT TRAINING

### Learning Support Services

Welcome to the Learning Support Services Blackboard page.

Learning Support Services comprise:

1. Academic Learning Development (helping you prepare for your assessments)
2. IT Training (providing training in IT software)
3. Disability Learning Support (providing a range of services for students with disabilities)

#### 1) Academic Learning Development

Prepare for your university assessments and exams.

Academic Learning Development offers:

- Academic skills workshops in areas like essay writing, presentations, critical thinking and many more.
- Appointments with a Learning Adviser to discuss your academic writing and/or study skills.
- Academic skills resources, which can be found in the left-hand tab

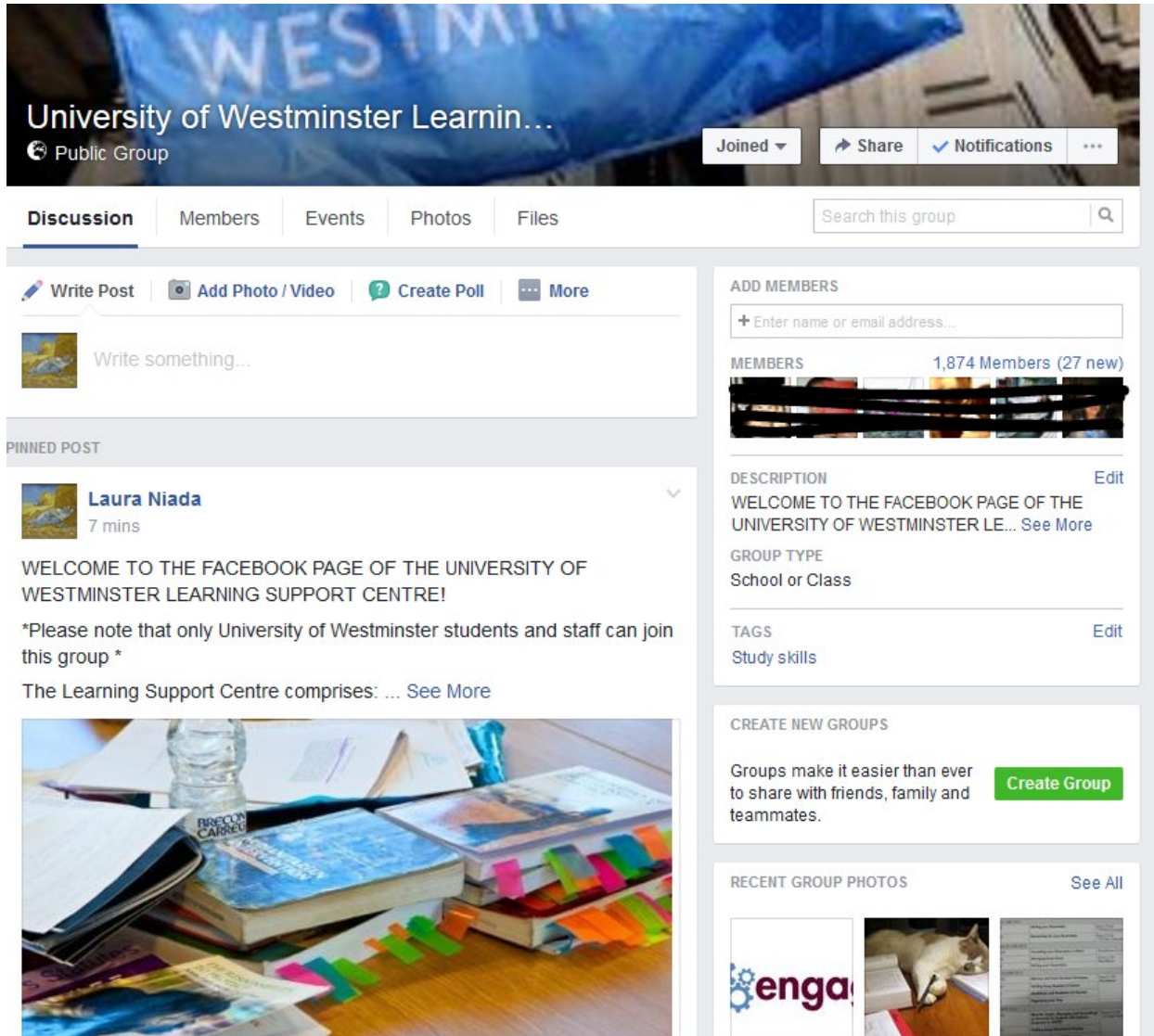
To book a workshop/appointment: <https://engage.westminster.ac.uk/workgroups/academic-writing-and-study-skills-support>

Website: <http://www.westminster.ac.uk/study/current-students/support-and-facilities/learning-and-study-skills-support>

Email: [learningadvice@westminster.ac.uk](mailto:learningadvice@westminster.ac.uk)



# University of Westminster Learning Support



**University of Westminster Learning...**  
Public Group

Joined ▾ Share Notifications ...

Discussion Members Events Photos Files

Search this group

Write Post Add Photo / Video Create Poll More

Write something...

**PINNED POST**

**Laura Niada** 7 mins

WELCOME TO THE FACEBOOK PAGE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER LEARNING SUPPORT CENTRE!

\*Please note that only University of Westminster students and staff can join this group \*

The Learning Support Centre comprises: ... See More

**ADD MEMBERS**

+ Enter name or email address...

**MEMBERS** 1,874 Members (27 new)

**DESCRIPTION** Edit

WELCOME TO THE FACEBOOK PAGE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER LE... See More

**GROUP TYPE** School or Class





**TAGS** Edit

Study skills

**CREATE NEW GROUPS**

Groups make it easier than ever to share with friends, family and teammates. [Create Group](#)

**RECENT GROUP PHOTOS** See All





@UWstudyskills



KEEP  
CALM

Learning Support  
is here to help you

TWEETS 152 FOLLOWING 105 FOLLOWERS 184 LIKES 1

### UW Learning Support

@UWstudyskills

University of Westminster Learning Support. Empowering students to reach their learning potential. We support all students with their academic skills.

University of Westminster

[westminster.ac.uk/study/current-...](http://westminster.ac.uk/study/current-...)

Joined May 2014

72 Photos and videos



Tweets Tweets & replies Media



UW Learning Support @UWstudyskills · Aug 30  
We are now booking with engage: [engage.westminster.ac.uk/workgroups/aca...](http://engage.westminster.ac.uk/workgroups/aca...) #getengaged



Reply Retweet Like Bookmark More



UW Learning Support @UWstudyskills · Aug 21  
Great tips on learning (and writing) English here: [learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/en/](http://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/en/)

Reply Retweet Like Bookmark More



UW Learning Support @UWstudyskills · Aug 15  
New international students - website with lots of useful learning resources about studying in UK: [prepareforsuccess.org.uk](http://prepareforsuccess.org.uk)



# De Bono's hats

## PROCESS



### Blue Hat - Process

Thinking about thinking.  
What thinking is needed?  
Organizing the thinking.  
Planning for action.

## CREATIVITY



### Green Hat - Creativity

Ideas, alternatives, possibilities.  
Solutions to black hat problems.

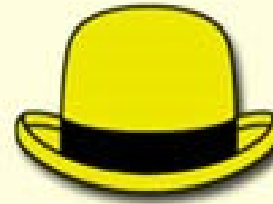
## FACTS



### White Hat - Facts

Information and data.  
Neutral and objective.  
What do I know?  
What do I need to find out?  
How will I get the information I need?

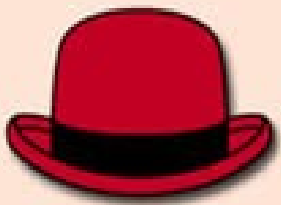
## BENEFITS



### Yellow Hat - Benefits

Positives, plus points.  
Why an idea is useful.  
Logical reasons are given.

## FEELINGS



### Red Hat - Feelings

Intuition, hunches, gut instinct.  
My feelings right now.  
Feelings can change.  
No reasons are given.

## CAUTIONS



### Black Hat - Cautions

Difficulties, weaknesses, dangers.  
Spotting the risks.  
Logical reasons are given.

‘write to express, not to  
impress’



# Writing clearly



- **Writing objectively** – report what the evidence tells
- **Write accurately** be as specific as you can
- **Write critically** – evaluate your own work as well as that of others
- **Write appropriately** – Avoid using colloquialisms, informality and contractions
- **Write for your reader** - identify the purpose of your communication and the audience you are communicating to

Write concisely –  
What does this mean?



It was decided, after much discussion and negotiation, spanning three hours and involving all the group members, that we would present the report using available visual aids.

*How could you make this more concise?*

The group decided that we would use PowerPoint to present our report.

# It is clear and concise?

- 1 theme: 1 paragraph
- 1 idea: 1 sentence
- Keep sentences on average 10-25 words in length
- Use as few words as possible e.g. “at the present time” = “now”
- Avoid **repetition** within sentences as **repetition** just makes the sentence more confusing because everything is repeated unnecessarily and this **repetition** reduces clarity and flow (because it’s **repetitious**).

# How to create an outline in Word

- Go to View
- Select Outline
- Select the text and choose what it should be:
- If heading → level 1
- If sub-heading → level 2
- If sub-sub-heading → level 3
- If body text → body text



# How to insert a table of contents

- Click an empty paragraph where you want to insert the TOC
- Go to References
- Go to Table of Contents
- Choose an automatic table
- Remember to update the table regularly to make sure it reflects headings name and page numbers
- To update the table:
  - Right click on the table
  - Update field
  - Choose: update entire table

# Lynda.com

[www.westminster.ac.uk/lynda](http://www.westminster.ac.uk/lynda)

**Business report writing {1 minute video}**

**Other useful videos**

✓ **Creating your report in word**

- LearnHigher

<http://www.learnhigher.ac.uk/writing-for-university/report-writing/>

- University of Leeds, “Difference between an essay and a report” at [http://library.leeds.ac.uk/info/341/writing\\_skills/187/report\\_writing/4](http://library.leeds.ac.uk/info/341/writing_skills/187/report_writing/4)

- Birmingham City University, “Study Guides: Writing”, at <http://library.bcu.ac.uk/learner/writingguides/1.27.htm>

- University of Leicester, “Writing reports”, at <http://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/ld/resources/writing/writing-resources/reports>

- University of Sussex

<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/skillshub/?id=372>