

DSC SPEED READS

**COMMUNICATIONS**

# Report Writing

Janet Owens



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# Introduction

## Who will this book help?

This practical guide will help those who would like to take some of the anxiety out of writing. It is a guide for people who have not had training or much experience of formal business writing and a quick easy reference guide for those who have. It will be useful for people whose time is at a premium.

## What will it give you?

This book will give you practical tools and guidance on how to write short, medium and longer reports in the context of day-to-day management. It adopts a systematic approach to report writing and will help you from the planning stage to writing and revision. It can be easily adapted to suit a variety of needs and will also provide transferable skills which are useful in any aspect of working life.

# Chapter 1

## What is a report?

*This chapter explains what a report is, how to characterise it and the key structural elements of which you should be aware.*

### Types of report

A report can mean different things to different people. Begin by thinking about the kind of reports you write and for whom. Reports are formal documents that present information tailored to a given situation and audience, and can fall into a number of different categories.

They may be:

- giving facts
- reporting details
- explaining or informing
- motivating and leading readers to make decisions.

There are many other reasons why a report may be required. The point is that you, as the writer, need to know the reason for your report.

## Top tip



Think of a report that you remember reading. Why do you remember it? If it was good, why was that? If it was bad, what irritated you? Think about how your report will be received.

## The character of your report

A report can be many a varied thing, and defining its nature is one of the first challenges. Here are some good questions to ask at the beginning of the process.

*What am I really trying to do?*

*What is the purpose of the report?*

*Who is the audience?*

However, these questions are not simply useful at the initiation stage of the report, but can be asked throughout the whole writing process. Putting these kinds of question to yourself is one of the keys to success: it keeps you focused and prevents the material from becoming too divergent or detailed.

### *Categorising your report*

Having established the need, purpose and audience, you can decide the category of your report.

- If it is in response to a request for information, perhaps from a funder, then usually the character and format is already decided by them and you will respond accordingly.
- If facts are being presented, you will be informing the reader by a straightforward presentation of those facts. Make them stand out from any background material.
- If the report is a leading report, it will be trying to motivate its reader. This calls for persuasive analysis and well-presented arguments that build to a clear conclusion.
- If you are trying to instruct your reader, then clear explanations are required. Direct instruction rather than persuasion will take a more decisive format.

# DSC Speed Reads

Aimed at people who are short on time and need to absorb information quickly, these indispensable guides are:

- **Accessible** – practical guidance on a wide range of subjects
- **Condensed** – distilling experience and expertise in just 32 pages
- **Clearly signposted** – Top Tips, Case Studies and Where Next ideas

Covering a wide range of topics and building into an invaluable library, Speed Reads are an essential addition to any bookshelf.

## Report writing

Report writing is one of those tasks that few relish. If you have not had training or much experience of formal business writing, or want a quick and easy reference guide, this book is for you. From the planning stage to writing and revision, it provides a systematic approach to report writing that can be easily adapted to suit a variety of needs.

**Janet Owens** is the owner and founder of Barwen Training Consultants, founded in 1996. She has a postgraduate Master of Education degree in Organisational Philosophy and Personal Development. She is an associate of the Institute of Management Consultancy.



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