



**: UNIT STRUCTURE :**

- 8.0 Objectives**
- 8.1 Introduction**
- 8.2 Significance**
- 8.3 Features**
- 8.4 Types**
  - 8.4.1 Informal Reports**
  - 8.4.2 Formal Reports**
- 8.5 Structure**
- 8.6 Key Words**
- 8.7 Let Us Sum Up**
- 8.8 Books Suggested**

**Answers**

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**8.0 OBJECTIVES**

In this unit, we shall

- discuss what is a report, significance of reports, types of reports, features of reports, the structure of reports
- learn how to write an effective report

On completing the unit, you should be able to

- define a report, understand the significance of reports, types of reports, features of reports and structure of reports
- write an effective report

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**8.1 INTRODUCTION**

You must have learnt report writing in your school. Mostly, you were asked to write event reports where you had to write about an event that took place or was celebrated at your school. This is one scenario. Now, let's see a different scenario. Imagine that you are working as a sales executive in a company. One day your reporting authority calls you and informs you about the fall in the sales of the products of your company. She/he tells you to investigate and find out the reasons for this fall and make some recommendations to increase the sell. You will investigate the problem and prepare a document which contains all the details (reasons for the fall, your findings, your recommendations etc.) and submit to your authorities. She/he will study the document submitted by you and take the required actions. The document you submit is known as a report.

**Definition:** In general terms, a report is a description of some event or situ-

ation that happened in the past. However, a business report refers to a formal document prepared for a specific purpose which is written for conveying authentic information pertaining to business activities, plans, progress and problems. It contains all the information in a proper and established structure.

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## 8.2 SIGNIFICANCE

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Reports play a vital role in the way professional communication takes place at industries. They help professionals achieve the following objectives:

- Reports are primarily a source of information or a record of events for future reference which help the management or an individual in decisions making. Thus, reports may also serve as a repository of information.
- Reports provide the professionals with information about the company's business activities, plans, progress and problems and also help in analysing these things.
- Reports help in solving various business issues by recommending specific actions.
- By analysing the contemporary scenario with the help of reports, the authorities may come up with a direction to address the future challenges successfully.
- Reports also keep the shareholders and the customers updated about the market position of the company.

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## 8.3 FEATURES

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### **Logically organised**

It is very important for a formal document to be logically organised. So, report being one of the important formal documents needs to have an organised structure. The author has to think about how she/he would organize the information/data in a proper sequence. An unorganized or less organized report would not convey the accurate information and it could be misunderstood by the reader.

### **Objectivity**

Objectivity refers to the quality of not getting influenced by personal feelings or opinions. Reports are always written with objectivity where the author analyses the data in relation to the problem/issue and she/he is expected to present the facts. In such a scenario author's personal evaluation has little place in report writing.

### **Specific purpose and Specific audience**

Reports are not written willingly. They are based on the needs of the company or industry. When authorities need information or data on particular problems or issues, they assign the task of investigating the problems or issues and preparing the report. The author prepares the report according to the requirements of the company or industry and submits it to the authori-

ties. So, reports are written for a specific purpose and addressing specific audience.

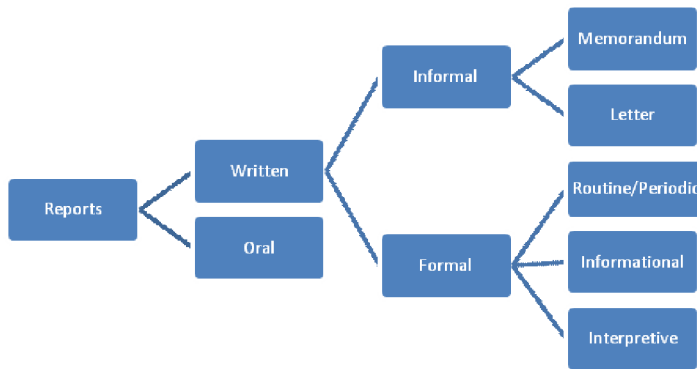
### Brevity

Brevity of the report refers to the length of the report. It should be as short as possible. This does not mean that the author should omit any necessary part, but she/he should not include any irrelevant or ambiguous information. The information or data related to the subject and purpose of the report should find a place in the report.

## 8.4 TYPES

The types of reports largely depend on the audience for the report and purpose of the report. Reports are mostly written and presented to the authorities, however, at times we may also come across oral reports, for example when a student tells his/her teacher, “Sir, I have submitted my assignment”. This can be called an instant oral report where the student is informing the teacher about the submission of his/her assignment.

Let’s see the major types of reports with the help of the diagram below.



For the purpose of our study, we will focus only on written reports. Let’s discuss each type of written reports one by one.

### 8.4.1 Informal Reports

Informal reports can afford to have a little informality while presenting various aspects/parts of the reports. These reports are called informal reports primarily because they do not follow the structure and style of formal reports. These reports may not include all the parts of formal reports as the ultimate purpose of an informal report is to fulfil an immediate requirement which does not need a detailed analysis or presentation. So, generally informal reports are shorter than formal reports. They are generally written in the first person (I suggest that...).

**Letter Reports:** Reports which are written in the letter format can be called letter reports. Letter reports are important and convenient for communication in or outside an organization. They convey the information briefly without getting into an elaborate analysis. So, they fulfil the immediate requirement of the company easily. This type of report rarely contains graphics and material from secondary sources.

Take a look at the layout of a letter report:

**Letter Head**

**Date**

**Inside address**

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**Subject:**

**Salutation**

**Main body**

- Introduction: background
- Findings: the findings that you get after investigation with analysis and illustration in brief
- Conclusion: Outcome/recommendations/expected actions

**Complimentary close**

**Signature**

**Enclosure**

**Memorandum:** Memorandum, also known as memo is a kind of report which communicates information to individuals within an organization. It is used to convey information about day-to-day business operations, for example sending information from one department to another, spreading information about policy matters, any administrative changes etc. So, a report which deals with these and other similar issues is called a memo report.

The layout of a memo report is given below:

**Techworld Industries Pvt. Ltd.**

To:

From:

Date:

Subject:

Introductory paragraph: reference, purpose

Main text: analysis, findings, recommendations in brief

Concluding paragraph

Signature

### **8.4.2 Formal Reports**

Formal reports are different from informal reports in terms of the style and seriousness of purpose. Formal reports are more detailed and the layouts of these reports are set as per the established conventions. Since formal reports include all the necessary parts, they may run into several pages. Content of these reports may incorporate graphical illustrations, examples etc. Formal reports are generally written in the third person (It is suggested/recommended that...).

Broadly, formal reports are classified under three categories

1. Routine/Periodic reports
2. Informational reports
3. Interpretive reports

**Routine/Periodic reports:** Routine reports, also known as periodic reports, are regular intervals viz. weekly, monthly, quarterly, annually etc. These reports are mainly used to inform the reader about the status or the progress of a particular project initiated by an organization, to write about laboratory researches, to present the investigation of the products, to evaluate the work performance and behaviour of employees etc. Such reports present the collected data and facts in their original form and sometimes they contain brief recommendations too. For example, a periodic report on the progress of a project may include a few recommendations on how the progress can be expedited etc.

**Informational reports:** The term ‘informational’ suggests that the reports written for conveying the information are called informational reports. These reports generally help in making decisions, deciding a plan of action, coordinating the operations of the organization etc. In this type of report, one does not find data analysis and recommendations as the purpose here is only to give the information in an organized way.

**Interpretive reports:** Interpretive reports help the readers analyse, evaluate and interpret the data which subsequently leads to decide the course of action. Because of the purpose they serve these reports are also known as analytical reports or investigative reports. Here the focus is on two things: analysis of data and the proposed solution to the problem. Interpretive reports are very crucial in terms of making an appropriate decision, investigating a problem, solving a problem, planning necessary actions, expanding the business etc.

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## 8.5 STRUCTURE

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Formal reports are divided into several parts. Each part has its own importance and purpose. These parts are –

### Front Matter

- Title Page
- Acknowledgement
- Table of Contents
- Executive Summary

### Main Body

- Introduction
- Discussion/Description
- Conclusions
- Recommendations

### **Back Matter**

- Appendix
- Bibliography

Let's understand these parts one by one

### **Title Page**

The title page is the first page of a formal report. It includes

- Title of the report
- Name and status/designation of the author
- Department and date of issue

### **Acknowledgement**

In this section, the author takes note of the people who have contributed and supported him/her in preparation of the report. The author should thank everyone associated with the process of preparing the report. She/he may use the following language expressions/phrases for expressing his/her gratitude.

- I would like to offer my thanks to...
- I am indeed grateful to...
- I would like to express my appreciation to...
- I wish to acknowledge the help provided by...
- I would like to express my sincere/heartfelt/deep gratitude to...
- Assistance provided by \_\_\_\_\_ is greatly appreciated
- My special thanks are extended to...

### **Table of Contents**

This part basically shows the sequence in which the topics are arranged in the report. It includes titles of the topics with page numbers. This gives the reader an idea of what the report contains. The titles of the topics written in this section should be clear and unambiguous. The author also has to make sure that the titles mentioned in the contents should be the same as the titles mentioned in the text.

### **Executive Summary**

Executive Summary gives details of the report in nutshell. It is generally written in one or two short paragraphs and it presents a preview of a report's main points, important details, major conclusions, recommendations etc. It saves the time of the reader as it gives the overall idea about the contents of a report. Following language expressions or phrases can be used to write an executive summary:

- The report focuses on...
- The report investigates...
- The report discusses...
- This report sheds lights on...

## Introduction

In this section, the author mainly talks about the purpose of the report, background, method of investigation, scope etc. This section provides information on the problem or situation that gave rise to the investigation. While talking about the method of investigation the author states how the investigation was carried out, e.g. questionnaires, interviews etc. She/he may also include references to secondary data (data that was discovered by someone else). The scope mentioned in this section refers to what information one needs to meet the purpose of the report.

Many language expressions or phrases are used to write the introduction of the report. Some of them are:

- The purpose of this report is to...
- This report looks into...
- This report studies...
- This report presents...
- The report aims at...

## Discussion

This is the main section of the report. There could be several subsections such as Review of Literature, Materials and Methods (methods used to carry out investigation), Findings (results of investigation), Analysis (the process of analysing data/information collected from various sources) etc. With reference to interpretive/investigative/analytical reports, this section discusses the process of data analysis and also summarises the findings. It also explains whether your findings answer the questions or aims you set out in the introduction and how your findings are relevant to solve problems/issues. It also shows where the sources of error were and how the author arrived at particular findings. In this section, the author should not make random guesses without providing supporting evidence. She/he may provide evidence with the help of statistics, comparison with other work or reference to established theories etc.

One should know that one may not find data analysis, findings, recommendations etc. in informational reports. Also, there are no fixed rules of what should go in this section. In some reports, you may find separate sections for methods, findings and analysis while some reports would include these points in discussion.

Some useful language phrases for writing this section effectively are:

- The report discusses...
- The report shows that...
- Errors may have been introduced by...

for findings and analysis

- The data was analysed through/with the help of...
- Data analysis was done by...

COMPULSORY  
ENGLISH

- The analysis revealed that...
- It was found that...
- The findings suggest that...
- With the help of findings, it can be asserted that...

### **Conclusion**

This section summarises the content of the entire report and attempts to answer the questions raised at the beginning of the report. Usually, no new information is seen in the conclusion.

Some useful phrases:

- It can be concluded that...
- In summary, the report shows that...
- In a nutshell, it can be summed up that...
- The analysis leads to the following conclusions:...
- The main conclusion that can be drawn is that...

### **Recommendations**

In this section, the author makes certain recommendations on the basis of analysis and findings. In a way, she/he provides solutions to the problems by showing the ways to overcome or eradicate them.

Some useful phrases:

- To improve the situation, it is suggested that...
- To combat this...
- To rectify this, it is essential...
- In light of analysis and findings, the following measures should be taken
- It is recommended that...
- The chief recommendation is that...

### **Appendix**

The appendix refers to a collection of supplementary materials usually appears at the end of a report. It includes data and supporting documents used by the author of the report. Data or documents included in the appendix may not be useful to explain the findings, but it supports and strengthens arguments presented in the main text. It may include figures, charts, graphs, tables, questionnaires, pictures, maps, drawings, diagrams, lengthy derivations of equations, surveys etc. The information included in the appendix should be related to the purpose of the report. It must be useful to the reader for understanding the report in a better way.

### **Bibliography**

A bibliography list includes the details of sources the author has used to prepare the report. It is generally written in alphabetical order at the end of the report. The author should carefully mention all the sources she/he has used to collect information/data which are not his/her original ideas. The

author may have used a magazine/journal article, book/books, reports prepared by other people, internet etc. to prepare the report. Every source needs to be mentioned in a proper format or style. You may learn about different formats or styles in your further studies.

### **CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 1**

#### **SAY WHETHER THE FOLLOWING SENTENCES ARE TRUE OR FALSE**

1. Reports may serve as a repository of information.
2. Letter reports can also be called memos.
3. Executive Summary is the main section of the report.
4. The purpose of the report is included in 'Introduction'.
5. The author thanks everyone associated with the preparation in the reference list.

### **CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 2**

#### **ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.**

1. What are the types of formal reports? Discuss.
2. Discuss the significance of reports.
3. Enlist the parts of a formal report and explain any two.
4. Explain the features of reports.

1. There is a sudden fall in the demand for your company's product. Write a formal report as a Marketing Manager to your company's vice president, marketing on the reasons you have investigated for the same. You may assume the necessary details, i.e. the place, company and the product.

2. Krishna Soft drinks Ltd. wants to launch a new soft drink in the market. Before launching it the Director of the company to do a proper investigation about customers' needs, taste, advertising, transport and cost of the product to make an instant hit. The Director assigns this task to the Production Manager. Now, assuming yourself to be the Production Manager of the company, write a report to be submitted to the Director.

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### **8.6 KEY WORDS**

Report: description of some event or situation that happened in the past

Description: a spoken or written account of a person, object, or event

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### **8.7 LET US SUM UP**

In this unit, you have learnt

- to define a report, understand its significance, types, features and structure
- to write an effective report

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### **8.8 BOOKS SUGGESTED**

1. Sanjay Kumar & PushpLata: Communication Skills

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2. P D Chaturvedi & Mukesh Chaturvedi: Business Communication: Concepts, Cases and Applications
3. Matthukutty M Monippally: Business Communication Strategies
4. Lehman, Dufrene & Sinha: BCOM
5. Meenakshi Raman & Prakash Singh: Business Communication

**ANSWERS**

**Check Your Progress 1**

1. True
2. False
3. False
4. True
5. False