

English Lesson

REPORT WRITING



PREPARED

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1. Introduction

For those of us who start their mornings by reading their daily newspaper, the significance of a report is unique, because a newspaper is nothing but a collection of reports. Reports sure look like a small piece of writing but there's a lot that goes into writing it; and to compliment the credibility of this report, there are certain details that we need to keep in mind while drafting it. This is what we will study here.

Before we get into Report writing, we first illustrate the clear distinction between essays and reports. These words are sometimes used interchangeably, but there is definitely a difference of purpose for both.

Here are some differences between essays and reports:

Essays	Reports
Essays present information and opinions	Reports present facts and information specifically, no opinions
Written for everyone in general	Written for a specific audience, a report concerns itself to only a certain set of people
The structure is casually flowing in paragraphs	The structure is methodical and clean, using pointers and numbered headings and sub-headings
Essays usually have room for expression of one's opinions, need not be supported with graphical proofs	Reports use tables, graphs, charts to prove a point is very common
Essays have a logical flow of thoughts but no need of a summary	Report often needs a quick summary addressing highlighting points
Essays don't have an appendix	Reports often have an appendix
Both essay and report writing need formal writing, analytical thinking, solid reasoning behind every conclusion, careful reading and neat presentation, but a report-writing layout is very different from essay writing	Methodical, often pre-designed layouts

2. Essential Elements of Report Writing

Reports are written with much analysis. The purpose of report writing is essential to inform the reader about a topic, without one's opinion on it. It is simply a representation of facts. Even if one gives assumptions, solid analysis, charts, tables and data is provided. In many cases, your suggestions are required for a specific case after a factual report. That depends on why you are writing the report and who you are writing it for. Knowing your audience's motive for asking for that report is very important as it sets the course of the facts to focus on in your report.

All your facts and information presented in the report not only have to be **bias-free (1)**, but they also have to be 100% correct. **Proof-reading (2)** and **fact-checking (3)** is always what you do as a **rule of thumb (4)** before submitting a report.

Report writing is a formal style of writing elaborately on a topic. The tone of a report and report writing format is always formal. The important section to focus on is the target audience. For example – report writing about a school event, report writing about a business case, etc.

Producing a full or formal version of something in a report includes an introduction, body, conclusion and summary. The layout is systematic with a title page, numbered subheadings, clear bulleted points, recommendations, references, appendices, dates, and timings reported exactly sometimes, and so on. This format stays consistent throughout.

3. Types of Reports and their Explanation

Based on some special characteristics, a report can be a certain types. Why classify them in types? Depending upon the purpose of the report, it is always best to know what kind would be the best for that case.

For example, informal reports in office formal contexts may not be suitable. In that case, even if your report is relevant and the best, just the structure or format or language could work against your report.

Small things like that should not prevent you from conveying your point and, therefore, for these reasons and more, we will discover the types of reports that exist so that we can make clear decisions of their usage.

1-Formal and Informal Reports

Formal reports are meticulously structured. They focus on objectivity and organization, contain deep details, and the writer must write them in a style that eliminates factors like *personal pronouns*.

Informal reports are usually short messages with unrestrained, casual use of language. We generally describe the *internal report/memorandum* as an informal report. For example, a report among your peers, or a report for your small group or team, etc..

2-Long Report and Short Reports

These types of reports are quite clear, as the name suggests. A *two-page* report or sometimes referred to as a *memorandum* is short, and a *thirty-page* report is absolutely long. But what makes a clear distinction of short reports or long reports is, usually, that longer reports are generally written in a formal manner.

3-Internal and External Reports

As the name suggests, an internal report stays within a certain organization or group of people. In the case of office settings, internal reports are for within the organization.

We prepare external reports, such as a news report in the newspaper about an incident or the annual reports of companies for distribution outside the organization. We call these as *public reports*.

4-Vertical and Lateral Reports

This is about the hierarchy of the reports' ultimate target. If the report is for your management or for your *mentees (5)*, it's a vertical report. Whenever a direction of *upwards* or *downwards* comes into motion, we call it a vertical report.

Lateral reports, on the other hand, assist in coordination in the organization. A report traveling between units of the same organization level (for example, a report among the administration and finance departments) is Lateral.

5-Periodic Reports

Periodic reports are sent out on regularly pre-scheduled dates. In most cases, their direction is *upward* and serves as management control. Some, like *annual reports*, are not vertical but are a Government mandate to be *periodic* in nature.

That is why we have *annual* or *quarterly* or *half-yearly* reports. If they are this frequent, it only makes sense to pre-set the structure of these reports and just fill in the data every period. That's exactly what happens in most cases too.

6-Informational and Analytical Reports

Informational reports (attendance reports, annual budget reports, monthly financial reports, and such) carry objective information from one area of an organization to maybe a larger system.

Analytical reports (scientific research, feasibility reports, and employee appraisals) show attempts to solve actual problems. These analytical reports usually require suggestions at the end.

7-Proposal Reports

Proposal reports are like an extension to the *analytical/problem-solving* reports. A proposal is a document prepared to describe how one organization can provide a solution to a problem they are facing. There is usually always a need to prepare a report in a business set-up. The end goal is frequently very solution-oriented. We call such kinds of reports as *proposal reports*.

8-Functional Reports

Functional reports include marketing reports, financial reports, accounting reports, and a spectrum of other reports that provide a function specifically. In general, we can include almost all reports in most of these categories. Furthermore, we can include a single report in several kinds of reports.

Solved Example on Types of Reports

Question: We know that reports are a part of formal communication. So, is there any kind of informal report? If yes, then explain?

Answer: Informal reports are usually short messages with unrestrained, relaxed use of language. We generally describe the internal report/memorandum as an informal report. For example, a report among your peers, or a report for your small group of team, etc..

4. Steps in Report Writing

Report Writing Format

The following are the parts of a formal report format that is most common.

1. Table of Content – index page
2. Executive summary – highlights of the main report
3. Introduction – origin, essentials of the main subject
4. Body – main report
5. Conclusion – inferences, measures taken, projections
6. Recommendation – suggestions, solutions
7. References – sources of information
8. Appendix – optional supplementary material

Let us understand each one of them in detail.

1-Table of Content - index

The report should begin with a table of contents. This explains the audience, author, and basic purpose of the attached report. It should be short and to the point.

2-Executive Summary – highlights of the main report

You summarize the main points of the report, such as the report topic, the data obtained, the data analysis methods, and recommendations based on the data. The summary could be as short as a paragraph or as long as five pages, depending on the length of the full report.

Usually, the recipient of the report doesn't always have the time to read through the entire report. This summary gives the reader a general idea of the important points.

Remember that although attached as the first page, this summary is always putting a perspective for the entire report.

Most importantly, the summary should contain:

- the purpose of the report
- what you did (analysis) and what you found (results)
- your recommendations; these recommendations should be short and not go beyond a page

3-Introduction – origin, essentials of the main subject

This section is the beginning of your report. It highlights the major topics that are covered and provides background information on why the data in the report was collected. It also contains a top view of what is covered in the report.

4-Body – main report

The body of the report describes the problem, the data that was collected, sometimes in the form of tables or charts, and discusses with explanations. The body is usually broken into subsections, with subheadings that highlight the further breakdown of a point. Report writing format is very specific about clear and effective headings and subheadings.

This just structures out readers clarity in understanding and further enhances the logical flow that can get hard to follow. Since a report has no personal bias or opinions, you can imagine that reading through a report can be a bit boring and people may find it hard to follow through. In such a case, it's always best to create pointers and lay out the points in short and simple methods.

Note: Tables and figures must all be labeled

5-Conclusion – inferences, measures taken, projections

At the end of our main body lies the tying of ends together in the much-awaited conclusion. The conclusion explains how the data described in the body of the document may be interpreted or what conclusions may be drawn. The conclusion often suggests how to use the data to improve some aspect of the business or recommends additional research.

This solution then may be implemented to solve a given problem the report was made for in the first place. Big consultancies or service providers prepare reports in the form of Microsoft PowerPoint or the Keynote in Mac to present to the stakeholders; at the end of which lies the conclusive suggestion section.

6- Recommendations – suggestions, proposed solutions

Recommendations are given when you are asked to provide your opinion about a problem or issue. This is your suggestion of WHAT SHOULD BE DONE.

7- References – sources of information

If you used other sources of information to help write your report, such as a government database, you would include that in the references. The references section lists the resources used to research or collect the data for the report. References provide proof for your points. Also, this provides solid reasoning for the readers so that they can review the original data sources themselves. Also, credit must be given where credit is due.

8-Appendix – optional supplementary material

Lastly, comes the appendix. Although this one is not necessary, more like an optional element. This may include additional technical information that is not necessary to the explanation provided in the body and conclusion but further supports the findings, such as tables or charts or pictures, or additional research not cited in the body but relevant to the discussion.

Some Key Words:

(1)Bias-free: free from all prejudice and favoritism, eminently fair an unbiased opinion.

(2)Proof-reading: examining your text carefully to find and correct typographical errors and mistakes in grammar, style, and spelling.

(3)Fact-checking: to verify the factual accuracy of information.

(4)Rule of thumb: a broadly accurate guide or principle, based on practice rather than theory.

(5) Mentees: a person who is advised, trained, or counseled by a mentor (advisor).

5. Example of a Formal Report

An Example of a Formal Report

Letter of Transmittal

English Department
Western University
Sector: 11, Uttara
Dhaka 1230

01 May 2015

The Vice Chancellor
Western University
Sector: 11, Uttara
Dhaka 1230

Dear Sir

The enclosed report *Bad Pronunciation and Fluency in English of the University Students in Bangladesh* is the product of the research we did about the problem. In a meeting of the university officials held on 05 April 2015, a commission headed by me was set up to carry on an investigation into the matter.

As it was thought that possibly the problem originated at the school level, so we have visited about 50 schools (primary and secondary) in different parts of the country, carried out an elaborate research into the matter, and produced this report.

I shall be happy to answer any questions you or your staff might have about or work.

Yours faithfully,

Name.....
Head of English Department
Enc.

Title Page

**BAD PRONUNCIATION AND FLUENCY
IN ENGLISH OF THE UNIVERSITY
STUDENTS IN BANGLADESH**

Prepared By

**The Commission for Probing into the Problem of Bad Pronunciation and Fluency in English
of the University Students in Bangladesh.**

01 May 2015

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BAD PRONUNCIATION AND FLUENCY IN ENGLISH OF THE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN BANGLADESH

Executive Summary

The report was occasioned by the realization of the problem of the deplorable state of the pronunciation and fluency in English of the students of this university. A commission for probing into the problem was set up in a meeting of the high officials of this university held on 05 May 2015. The commission set out on the 7th of May to investigate the matter and carried out research with about fifty primary and secondary schools in both villages and towns. The research revealed the low level of knowledge, efficiency, and teaching methods of English teachers in those institutions. The commission realized that these were the basic reasons for the unreasonably low standard of pronunciation and fluency in English of the university students. It has made some recommendations to improve the situations.

Introduction

Pronunciation of English is in a state of disorder, misunderstanding, and neglect in Bangladesh. Most of the teachers involved in all stages of our education system from the primary up to tertiary levels are neither aware of the importance of English pronunciation, nor do they have any knowledge about it or inclined to practice it in their teaching. The state of pronunciation is especially deplorable at the primary and secondary levels. And it is still far worse in the villages than in the towns.

At a high level meeting of the Western University held on 05 May 2015, the problem of the low level of the standard of pronunciation of the university students in Bangladesh was focused. After a thorough discussion the members came to realize that we should do something about it, and conjectured that the problem originated from the primary and secondary levels. The meeting chaired by the Vice Chancellor immediately set up a commission of five members headed by me to probe into the problem, and suggested solutions.

Accordingly, we, the members of the commission, set out on 07 May 2015 for the purpose. We visited about 50 schools (primary and secondary) in different parts of the country in remote villages and towns and found out the following facts.

Body of the Report

(1) Most of the teachers who teach English at the primary and secondary levels do not have any idea about the correct pronunciation of the standard English language.

(2) They do not have the least idea about the phonetic symbols given in the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, or any other English dictionary. They are only acquainted with *Student's Favourite Dictionary*, or *Bangla Academy Dictionary*, or *Samsad Dictionary*. The most pitiful condition is that some of them do not even have any dictionary, and still some others do not even know the names of dictionaries.

(3) What they do is teach their students in the translation method. It requires that students first know the Bangla word for a thing, and then the teacher tells them the English word for it.

(4) While uttering an English word, the teacher pronounces the word as he knows it, whether right or wrong. For example, they pronounce the word school as /isku:l, not as /sku:l, the correct one. They do not differentiate between the sounds of vowels and diphthongs. For example, they pronounce the word 'say' as /se/, not its correct form /sei/. In consonantal sound they substitute 'p' for the English 'f'. That means they substitute the bilabial for the labiodentals. They treat the different sounds /z/ and /dz/ as identical, so they would pronounce 'breeze' and 'bridge' in the same way, using /z/ in both words.

They do not have any idea about the differences in lengths of vowels. They pronounce /i:/ and /i/ in 'seat' and 'sit' in the same way. As regards stress and intonation they do not have the least idea. They speak English with a level stress as in Bangla. They utter the word in syllables. In intonation, they have similar problems. They do not at all use rise and fall in their utterances of any sentences.

Conclusions

From the above findings we can reach the following conclusions:

(1) Most of the teachers of primary and secondary levels do not have any idea about correct English pronunciation.

(2) Their students are also being taught with no idea of correct pronunciation. Even they do not know that there is something like correct and incorrect pronunciations.

(3) Once taught with the incorrect pronunciations, the students cannot change their pronunciation even when they grow up and enter the tertiary level of education.

(4) The teachers at primary and secondary levels are primarily responsible for the state of English pronunciation of the students at the university level. The matter of pronunciation is such that once fixed in the speech organs it is very difficult to change them later.

Recommendations

If we want to bring about an improvement in the English pronunciation of the students at the university level, we should train the teachers of English of primary and secondary levels. Training should be reasonably long, and repeated at some intervals. Secondly, in the curriculum and syllabus of those levels, some marks should be assigned to pronunciation of students. Thirdly, inspection teams should be appointed to check occasionally whether the teachers are following the rules and practices of correct pronunciation. Fourthly, a National Bureau for correct pronunciation should be set up to provide instruction and guidance to all concerned when necessary. Lastly, both students and teachers at all levels should be made conscious about the importance of good pronunciation.

Appendices

[This section should be given in a separate page. The documents of the following methods to conduct research have to be given here. For example, audio cassette of the recorded pronunciation of the students and teachers, some specimens of text books, names and designations of the persons who has helped in carrying the research out, etc.]

Bibliography

[This section should also be given in a separate page. There are different style manuals like MLA or APA. Any of the styles should be followed.]

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