Reports

Reports are a means for which writers are able to provide information or recommendations to a select audience member or members.

Reports fall into two major categories: formal and informal.

1. Formal reports require planning, researching, collaborating, and recommending and can take months to complete.
2. Informal reports can be prepared quickly and presented in a less complicated formatting than a formal report.

Rhetorical considerations for writing a report:

1. Purpose: Why are you writing the report and what are your goals? Purpose will determine whether you will write a formal or informal report.
2. Audience: Who is going to read the report? Primary audience members are the decision makers and secondary are the technical staff.

In addition to the purpose and audience, you will consider the following:

1. Stakeholders: The people who are affected by the report.
2. Context: The background information that provides you with the purpose of the report.
3. Usability: Is this document usable—if so, how will it be used?

Professionalism of your report is based upon its readability. Readability is determined by the correct use of language and organization:

1. Language—your writing should be clear and concise.
   • Writing conventions—you should practice correct usage, grammar, and punctuation.
   • Logical flow—your report should proceed in a logical fashion with developed, unified, and cohesive paragraphs.
   • First person point of view—you should use first person singular or plural.
   • Sentence structures—active sentences are clearer and more accountable than passive constructions.
   • Word choice—avoid using clichés, slang, colloquialisms, sexist language, and verbose language.
   • Technical language—use only in those sections of the report that will be read by technical people.
   • Style and Tone—use a professional tone and formal style.

2. Organization—your audience will have an expectation of form.
   • Formatting—follow the form that is used in your field or in your company.
   • Highlighting techniques—use to provide your audience with titles, headings, and subheadings.
   • Bold and italics—use for those words or phrases that require extra attention.
   • Transitions—use for a smooth movement from texts to figures, providing clear signals and identifying structures.
   • Fonts—incorporate fonts consistently.
   • Bullets—use to organize large lists or large clauses.