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# **1 Writing at Third Level**

## **2 Introduction**

This essay will begin by mentioning what an introduction is and how it should be structured. The summary section will be outlined. Then the various methods used to distinguish between headings and subheadings will be examined. How to construct the main body text will be described including the size and type of font that should be used when writing any essay, report or assignment. Included will be a description of how the text should be aligned and spaced. It will look in detail at the structure and layout of these common essays and reports that you will need to produce in the coming years. Following on from that an example of writing in the first, second and third person will be presented and discussed. It will also mention when and where you might use this first, second, or third person method of writing. Finally, the difference between a reference list and bibliography will be explained.

## **3 Summary**

It was suggested in this report that to put your own look on an essay or report is very important. However, the ideas contained within the written text should be where you put your own stamp on any assignment and not in the choice and layout of the text used. An introduction should outline the basics of the report contents (max 150 words). Headings (bold, pt size 14, left aligned) and subheadings (bold, pt size 12, left aligned) should be used to frame and guide the reader through the research. This helps break up the content into easily digestible chunks of information. Main body text should be (Times New Roman or similar, pt size 12, 1.5 line spacing and justified). Page layout and formatting should be consistent, with page numbering placed, bottom middle "Page 1 of 1" format. An essay is a story, whereas a report is more descriptive and technical. Writing in the second or third person is recommended unless the work is specifically reflective writing. A bibliography is a list of resources read; however, a reference list is a list of resourced used.

### 3.1 Introductions

If you look at the introduction for this essay and just copy it, and use it as a template, you should have no problems writing introductions in the future. Always title your introduction as Introduction, and not something else, as readers will be looking for the introduction (Cooke & Philip, 2001). (See Fig 1 for tips on writing introductions).


<p>The introduction of any report or essay should:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. focus the reader's attention on the exact subject of the report;</li><li>2. provide background information on the topic of the report;</li><li>3. engage the reader's interest in the topic;</li><li>4. give definitions if required [not usually done if it's a short piece of writing];</li><li>5. summarise the writer's main argument if it is an argumentative essay or report;</li><li>6. familiarise the reader with the structure and purpose of what they are about to read.</li></ol>	
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Figure:1 6 Tips for writing introductions

URL <https://www.utas.edu.au/accounting-communication-matters/writing-an-essay-or-report/starting-to-write/introduction>

### 3.2 The Summary

This is not just a list of topics discussed during the report or essay. It is a presentation of the findings from the research. A reader should be able to obtain all of the main results from the research which are outlined in the report.

### 3.3 Headings and Subheadings

“Always use headings so the reader knows what you are talking about” (Seifert, et al., 2000, p. 345). Headings should be size 14 and subheadings should be size 12. Both should be left aligned, and bold exactly the same as used in this essay. Use a numbered hierarchical system to make it easier to identify sections (See Table 1). Don't make up your own style of heading as this will only look good to you and is not what is required. Keep it plain and simple. There should be two spaces between each section in your document i.e. you should hit the return key twice before typing your next heading as seen in this essay.

While reports vary in purpose and in the type of information, they present (e.g. site visits, environmental impact or assessments, industrial projects, investigative studies, or design projects), all are based on a similar structure and follow similar presentation conventions.	
<b>Reports are designed for:</b>	<b>So, they use:</b>
Selective reading	Sections with numbered headings and subheadings
Quick and easy communication of information	Figures, tables and Bullet-point lists

Table 1 The Purpose of a Report

URL <https://www.monash.edu/rlo/assignment-samples/engineering/eng-writing-technical-reports>

## 4 Main Body Text

The main text should always be size 12, Times New Roman, 1.5 line spacing and aligned as justified, which means the text is square on both sides of the page as seen in this essay. There should be one space between each paragraph i.e. you should hit the return key once before starting the next paragraph as seen in this essay. Just to note, the title of your main body is not main body. All of the titles and sections should be named appropriately so the reader has an idea of what the section/paragraph topic is going to discuss.

The points that are being made here are absolutely fundamental and essential to what you are doing in college. Surveys have shown that up to 70% (See Equation 1) of the working week of an engineer is spent writing (Sageey & Romanowski, 2001) (Cunningham & Stewart, 2012). If you do not follow these basic guides, you will end up wasting a lot of your own time in the future. Therefore, the author suggests that you follow these instructions and recommendations. If you don't understand or are not sure about anything you must ask. If you don't ask the question how will you ever know the answer?

$$36 \text{ hour} \times \frac{1}{.70} = 25.2 \text{ hours per week}$$

*Equation:1 Weekly average time spent writing*

### 4.1 Page Layout and Numbering

You should not have any big gaps on your pages between the text or diagrams as this looks ridiculous. Merchant (2007) suggests that you should check your document again and again and then again to make sure it looks ok (get someone to look over it for mistakes). Another good idea is to use the "Read Aloud" tool on the Review Tab to listen to what you have written. This will help highlight any mistakes. Don't have your heading on one page and then the text starting on the next page. You can change the size of your margins slightly if you need to improve your layout appearance. Always place the page numbers in the bottom centre of your page (and use Page 1 of 1 style) so the reader always knows how many pages are in the document and what page they are on.

### 4.2 Essay verses Reports

An essay is a story or a discussion on a specific topic which is usually given to you by your lecturer or which you are asked to choose yourself. You should start by reading about the topic and gathering information from different sources. Then you should complete a mind

map outlining all of the important headings or issues surrounding the topic. From this mind map you will have all of your headings for your discussion or story. Just type out your heading and write your content under them. When you are finished write your introduction and then your conclusion, similar to this essay.

The main type of report you will have to write will be a work or project report. These are usually “based upon work you have either carried out or work you need to carry out” (Waterson, 2003, p. 135). They will be factual and descriptive in nature i.e. X and Y were carried out and then Z happened and subsequently there was a requirement to redo Y and merge it with Z. Reports usually have a similar structure to essays with an introduction, series of headings and a conclusion. Instead of an abstract at the beginning you have a summary which does the same thing. Waterson (2003) also points out that sometimes you have a section at the end of your report with recommendations, but only if it’s applicable. A report should go beyond just presenting information, it should include some discussion or even better and argument (See Fig 2).

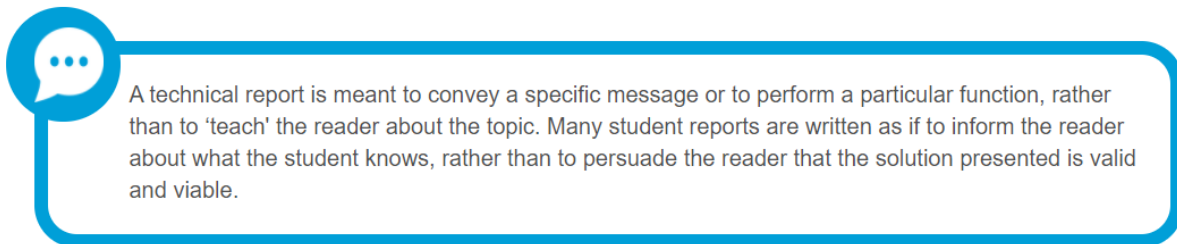


Figure:2 A Report should be used to persuade the reader that your findings are factual  
URL <https://www.monash.edu/rlo/assignment-samples/engineering/eng-writing-technical-reports>

### 4.3 Writing in the First Person Verses the Second, or Third Person

What is this all about? When writing in the first person you would say I will do X or I did Y or I think Z. When writing in the second person you would say X was done or Y was carried out or it was shown that Z was better than Y. If you are writing in the third person you would say the researcher did X or the researcher will do Y or the researcher showed that Z was created. Your lecturer should tell you if you have to write in the first, second or third person and if you are not sure ask straight away. Writing in the first person is usually only used in reflective writing where you have been asked how you feel about something. “If you are writing an academic paper, essay or a work report you always write in the second or third person” (Lane, 2003).

#### 4.4 Bibliography or References (they are two different things)

A bibliography is found at the end of your essay and it contains a list of all the resources that you have used for researching and writing your essay or report. A reference list is also found at the end of your document however it only contains a list of all of the resources that you have directly cited from or paraphrased in your essay or report (See Fig 3).

A reference list is the detailed list of references that are cited in your work. A bibliography is a detailed list of references cited in your work, plus the background readings or other material that you may have read, but not actually cited. Different courses may require just a reference list, just a bibliography, or even both. It is better to check with your tutor first.

Figure:3 Difference between Reference List and a Bibliography URL [Online](#)

The bibliography and reference list are presented in alphabetical order using the authors' surname. A reference list is what you will be required to use most of the time.

List of sources	How you used them for your research		
Reference List	Cited work		
Bibliography	Cited work	Reading list	Viewing list

Table 2 List of sources, Bibliography V Reference List

## 5 Conclusion

This essay began by mentioning what an introduction is and how it should be structured. The summary was then explained. Various methods used to distinguish between headings and subheadings was examined. How to construct the main body text was described including the size and type of font that should be used when writing any essay, report or assignment. Included in this was a description of how the text should be aligned and spaced. It looked in detail at the structure and layout of the common essays and reports that you will be required to write in the coming years. Following on from that an example of writing in the first, second and third person was presented and discussed. Including when and where you might use these. Finally, the difference between a reference list and bibliography was explained. For this conclusion the author basically copied and pasted the introduction and changed some of the words.

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