

Lecture 4

4.1 Audience Nature

The nature of the audience is essential in determining the structure to be used for drafting a report. There are three different types of readers.

4.1.1 Technical Readers

Technical Readers have sufficient knowledge with respect to the subject matter which is why all they require is the factual information which they can use to interpret and draw a conclusion.

4.1.2 Managerial Readers

Managerial Readers have a hectic schedule which is why they are interested to get the gist of the content. In other words, they are interested in reading the executive summary of your report.

4.1.3 General Readers

General Readers do not have sufficient knowledge with respect to the subject matter. Thus, they require details for the comprehension of information provided within the report.

4.2 Purpose of Report Writing

As may already be inferred, a report must provide a valid reason for why it is written. In general, a purpose covers the following:

1. Information regarding a subject matter;
2. Instructions regarding the use of some instrument;
3. Description of a survey;
4. Explanation of some event, and
5. Mechanism of collecting data and its analysis, among others.

4.3 Technical Report Writing

Technical Report Writing can be defined as:

1. A written account of events related to a scientific inquiry;
2. As an exercise in **ineffectively communicating** technical information;
3. As an interpretation of graphs, tables and figures using language, and
4. As the foundation of drafting a well-written report, which is reflected in the organization of information.

4.4 Characteristics of a Report

Report writing involves the use of active voice with the use of active verbs to make it more effective and appealing for the audience. It is written in third person to remove the element of subjectivity from the content. The use of personal pronouns is avoided to maintain objectivity. The conventional structure of a report has page margins of usually one inch on all sides. Credible authors and their content is cited to ameliorate the authenticity of the content and discussion provided within a report.

4.5 Structure of a Report: Overview

A report is generally comprised of the following sections:

4.5.1 Title Page

A title page is also known as the cover page and provides the details of addresser (From), addressee (To), date of submission and the title itself.

4.5.2 Abstract

The cover page or the title page is followed by a short summary of the whole report. This short summary is technically called the executive summary. It is supposed to be qualitative, thus the adjective “executive”. This executive summary should clearly define the purpose and the outcome of the whole study with pertinent results without using any abbreviation to confuse readers.

4.5.3 Table of Contents

The Table of Contents (ToC) is a page which provides the details of all the sections and subsections along with a reference of pages where those sections can be studied in a tabulated form.

4.5.4 Introduction

The introductory section of a report describes the problem for the readers, elaborates the objectives, explains the methodology used for the collection and analysis of data followed by highlighting the most interesting results to catch the attention of readers and to draw a conclusion. The information is provided using the technique of conciseness.

4.5.5 Design and Procedure

This section involves the theoretical description of the research design used for the analysis of the report. This section can also cover the previous testing of the particular design under consideration. No specific measurements are needed at this point. This section has to be kept brief and clear.

4.5.6 Results and Discussion

The results and their interpretation is provided in this section with the application of figures, tables and diagrams etc.

4.5.7 Conclusion

This section sums up all the results of the study in a quantitative manner, maintaining brevity. Authors must strive to avoid the use of abbreviations as it will be read by readers who have earlier read only the executive summary without any idea of the body content. The conclusion must simply highlight the studied problem; explain the basic objectives, the procedure to collect and analyze the data and the most important results once again to get the attention of readers

4.5.8 Work Cited/Bibliography

A detailed list of all the resources which have been studied to develop understanding of the subject matter may be included in the bibliography. Works on which the report is based on may be cited and included in the work cited or references section. There are different formats of citations to prepare the work cited page or bibliography. Some authors use end notes for this purpose. The inclusion of this

section at the end follows a certain format, as well. Most of the researchers related to social sciences, arts and humanities use the MLA (Modern Language Associations) style whereas the studies based on natural sciences use the APA (American Psychological Associations) style.

4.6 Language of a Report

Clarity within a report can be maintained with the use of active verbs rather than the passive verbs. Brevity can be ensured with the use of simple and declarative sentences. Objectivity can be achieved by avoiding the use of first person singular and plural.

4.7 Deductive Report vs. Inductive Report

There are two types of report based on the manner of reasoning and drawing conclusion for initiating an action.

4.7.1 Deductive Report

This is the form of report where a general information itself is used to draw a specific conclusion. It is used to deliver routine messages with reference to neutral information which is presented openly and clearly.

4.7.2 Inductive Report

In this form of report, the discussion precedes the conclusion. In other words, you generalize your conclusion based on a specific discussion at the outset of report. It requires the provision and use of factual information to draw a conclusion. Such types of reports are used in case of informed readers who offer a strong and anticipated resistance with respect to the problem under investigation.