

4.8.15: Using Informal Reports

Learning Objectives

- Differentiate among typical types of informal reports
- Discuss different methods of sharing informal reports

Informal reports are the bread and butter of reports. It is likely that all employees will be responsible for many informal reports over their careers.

Types of Informal Reports

The following are typical types of informal reports. Keep in mind that there may be some overlap with formal reports (i.e., some report types can be informal or formal).

- **Meeting minutes** are a type of informal report that summarizes the discussion and results from a meeting. These reports are informational. They are summaries, not a direct collection of all statements from all attendees.
- **Expense reports** are informal reports that nearly always have a prescribed format. These reports consist primarily of amount of expenditures by type of expense. There is little to no free writing.
- **Status updates** may be internal to a company in addressing a business situation, or they may be external in providing the status of a project to another organization. These reports are short and tightly focused to the purpose. They are informational reports.
- **Trip or conference reports** are used to summarize and transmit learning from a trip or conference. They are informational, and they increase the value of the trip or conference as they share what was learned with others.
- **Proposals or feasibility reports** for smaller or simpler projects can also be considered informal reports. These are analytical, as they provide analysis and propose a direction to take.

Sharing Informal Reports

Informal reports may be delivered in a variety of formats including letters, memos, emails, and digital postings (such as a blog). While your delivery method may impact the format of your report, the writing and purpose will stay the same.

An informal report may be something as simple as a completed standardized form designed by the company; it can also be something more complex, such as an informal proposal. Informal reports may be informational or analytical.

Informal reports may have internal or external audiences. The format of the report should align to the recipient:

- **Memos** are used for internal communication.
- **Letters** are used for external communication.
- **Web postings** are typically used for external communication, but institutions that have private networks may use these posting for internal communication.
- **Email** may be used for internal or external reports depending upon company policy.

Regardless of the mode of transmission, the structure and content of your report will be based on the type of the report.

Practice question

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