

## 4.8.12: Types of Reports

### Learning Objectives

- Distinguish between informal and formal reports
- Distinguish between informational and analytical reports

### Informal versus Formal Reports

While there is no single difference between informal and formal reports, we can typically distinguish between the two based on their length and sections.



Some say the wording and phrasing changes between informal reports and formal reports from more conversational to more formal. Writing issues such as those are explored throughout this module. Specifics of wording and phrasing vary by company and by type of report. In any case, authors must remember their reports enhance their image and credibility in the workplace. The accuracy of each report, the professionalism in the layout, and the clarity of the writing all reflect the writer's reliability, validity, and full comprehension of the proposed solutions. Essentially, you should focus on simple, clear phrasing and organization. Focus on how to make the full meaning easiest to grasp for the audience.

### Informal Reports

**Informal reports** tend to be shorter, although the quantity of pages or words is not defined. Think of informal reports as documents of under ten pages. An informal report usually has specific topics grouped in paragraphs, and these topics tend to have simple headings. Note that while informal reports often don't have required headings, you can take inspiration from the headings required in formal reports.

### Formal Reports

A **formal report** tends to be longer; although, again, the quantity of pages or words is not defined. It may start at ten pages and in some cases exceed one hundred pages. With a formal report, the topic of the report or the policy of the company it's being written for determines which sections, labels, content, and purpose should be used as the basis for the report. These reports address complex topics that require substantial description of background, research on the topic, and evidence to support any proposed solutions. Both the data gathering and the summary of the topic generate length. To keep this abundance of information organized, the report requires formal headings and tight organization in order to help the reader stay on track.

### Informational versus Analytical Reports

Now that we've defined the difference between informal reports and formal reports, let's dive in a little deeper. Informal reports and formal reports have two major categories: informational and analytical reports. It's important to keep in mind that both informal and formal reports can fall into these categories (i.e., you can have an informal informational report or a formal informational report).

### Informational Reports

An **informational report** provides a summary of information and data found on a particular topic. One such report is the expense report: this report is a set of information that is used to request allocation of funds. The format is strictly pre-determined and it is often completed at the end of a business trip.

### Analytical Reports

The other category of report is an **analytical report**. In this report type, information is researched and collected, then the report provides an analysis that leads to one or more recommendations. For example, consider a report that helps a company determine

where to open a new store. The report might look at three properties with respect to road traffic, cost of the land, and adjoining stores, and then recommend the best site from the alternatives.

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