

There are many different types of business report:

- A **sales report** gives sales figures for different products in different regions in different time periods.
- **Market research** analyzes a company's competitive position in the industry, identifying new markets and product areas, etc.
- A **financial report** might discuss budgets, or might be the text that accompanies company accounts such as the quarterly or annual income statement (unit 26).
- A **progress report** reports on the progress of an ongoing project.
- A **cost-benefit analysis (CBA)** looks at the resources needed and potential benefits of a future investment (eg an IT system).
- An **appraisal report** is written by a manager about an employee's performance, training needs, etc.
- A **feasibility study** is an investigation into whether a particular system, project, product line, etc is practical, desirable and financially viable.
- A **business plan** describes the medium to long-term strategy of the company. See unit 9.
- An **inquiry** is an investigation into an ongoing problem, identifying causes and recommending action.
- A **case study** is an analysis of one particular completed case (eg an engineering project) that allows professionals to learn lessons.
- A **quality report** is a regular report that monitors standards, identifies failings and suggests action.

All these types of report have certain features in common in terms of style, layout and structure. See the table below.

Style	Layout	Structure		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● clear</li> <li>● concise</li> <li>● factual</li> <li>● careful</li> <li>● balanced</li> <li>● measured</li> <li>● high level of grammatical accuracy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● systematic numbering of sections and sub-sections</li> <li>● bullet points and lists</li> <li>● visuals such as tables, charts, diagrams</li> <li>● areas of blank space at the margins for the reader to make notes</li> </ul>	<i>(longer reports)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Cover page</li> <li>● Acknowledgements</li> <li>● (Table of) Contents</li> <li>● (Executive) Summary</li> <li>● Terms of Reference</li> <li>● Procedure</li> <li>● Findings</li> <li>● Conclusions</li> <li>● Recommendations</li> <li>● Appendix</li> </ul>	<i>(shorter reports)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● To / From / Date / Subject</li> <li>● Introduction</li> <li>● Findings</li> <li>● Conclusions</li> <li>● Recommendations</li> </ul>	<p>Note: in a business report the 'Findings' section will probably be replaced with sections related to the content of the report.</p> <p>For example:            Advantages / Disadvantages            Option A / Option B            Market A / Market B</p>

## The phrases you need

### Introduction

*The aim / purpose of this report is to ...*  
*As requested in your email of 16 November, here is my report summarizing / analyzing ... together with my recommendations.*  
*I'm writing this report at the request of ... / This report was commissioned by ...*  
*It includes / consists of / is divided into / contains ...*  
*It is based on interviews with ... / information obtained from ...*  
*Information was gathered from the following sources: face-to-face interviews, a questionnaire sent to ... , internal company documents and market research carried out ...*

### Findings

*We found that ...*  
*Our research shows that ...*  
*We identified the following key areas.*  
*45% of those who replied to the questionnaire thought that ...*  
*The survey showed the following areas of concern.*  
*This will inevitably have an impact on ...*  
*One of the big advantages of this proposal is ...*

### Conclusion

*A key challenge facing us is ...*  
*In the light of the above findings, we reached the following conclusions.*  
*On the basis of the figures presented above, ... would be very profitable.*  
*There is clearly a gap in the market, however serious obstacles still remain ...*  
*It is clear that there are significant levels of ... . Unless these issues are addressed as a matter of urgency, ...*  
*This has the potential to be a successful project provided ...*

### Recommendations

*There are three main recommendations to make.*  
*We (strongly) recommend that ...*  
*The Marketing / Operations department should ...*  
*Further research should be carried out to find out ...*  
*A meeting should be set up between ... and ...*  
*I recommend that we provide the funds for ... and move to the next stage of development.*  
*The next stage is ...*

## Exercises

**65.1 Match some possible sections of a report in the box with their descriptions 1–10 below.**

*acknowledgements   appendix   conclusions   contents  
cover page   executive summary   findings   procedure  
recommendations   terms of reference*

- 1 a short, overall view of the report together with the conclusions and recommendations (it helps others to decide whether they want to read the whole report)  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 2 the main body of the report: it contains all the information that has been collected, presented in a logical order, and arranged under headings and subheadings  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 3 includes some or all of these: the title; the name of the person who commissioned the report; the name of the report writer and his / her job title; the organization; the date the report was issued; a reference number; the degree of confidentiality; the distribution list  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 4 the writer makes a personal judgement about specific actions that should be taken – these should be based directly on the results of the investigation  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 5 a list of all the headings and subheadings that are included in the report, with the appropriate page numbers  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 6 the methods of investigation used to find the information (eg meetings and visits, interviews, published reference sources, personal observation, questionnaires and surveys)  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 7 supporting material that is too long, too detailed or too technical to be included in the main report (or material that is useful as background but isn't essential); it may include tables, diagrams, graphs, drawings, extracts from other publications, etc  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 8 the exact subject of the report, its scope (= what it deals with; its range) and limitations, why it was written, who asked for it, who wrote it, when it was completed  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 9 the significant results of the 'Findings' – this section flows logically from the facts and points discussed earlier  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 10 a paragraph or two where you thank all the people and organizations who helped you during the preparation of the report  
\_\_\_\_\_

**65.2 Match definitions 1–18 with the words associated with reports a–r below. Check any unknown words in a dictionary.**

- 1 the way in which text and illustrations are arranged on the page
- 2 when a block of text is further to the right than the block above it
- 3 an early version of a report that may have changes made to it before it's finished
- 4 pictures and designs that can be digitally inserted into a report
- 5 another word for 'summary' – used especially in scientific / technical reports
- 6 the method of holding together the loose sheets of paper (often also the cover of the report)
- 7 someone who answers questions (eg questions in a questionnaire)
- 8 an item in a list with a small symbol in front of it
- 9 a method of directing the reader to another part of the report
- 10 letters of a particular style
- 11 a note placed at the bottom of a page, or at the end of the report
- 12 information that appears at the top / bottom of every page (eg the page number, some words or letters identifying the report)
- 13 the target audience of the report
- 14 an alphabetical list of unfamiliar, difficult or specialized words and phrases, with their explanations
- 15 a consistent style of writing (and layout) used by everyone inside an organization
- 16 checking and making corrections to a document (particularly in relation to spelling and inconsistencies in layout)
- 17 a short piece of writing that introduces the report, written by someone other than the main author
- 18 words printed near an illustration or diagram that explain what it is

- |            |                   |                |
|------------|-------------------|----------------|
| a glossary | g header / footer | m respondent   |
| b draft    | h footnote        | n indentation  |
| c font     | i cross-reference | o proofreading |
| d caption  | j abstract        | p readership   |
| e binding  | k house style     | q clip art     |
| f layout   | l bullet point    | r foreword     |