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# REPORT WRITING

## Introduction

**F**OR this month's "Write and Speak" column, I would like to address an important writing component that all students may have to perform either in an exam or at their future workplace – i.e. writing a report.

Report writing is a popular question in the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) English language paper under the directed writing section. To prepare yourself well, you first need to understand the different types of reports, such as writing a factual article, a newspaper report, a school magazine article, a newsletter, a police report and a book report. So if you want to excel in this writing task, you need to pay attention to the different types of reports and the formats. In this article, I will focus on the general aspects of report writing and in the subsequent articles, we will explore and study in detail the differences in the structure, content and presentation of various reports.

## What is a report?

A report is a well written essay that provides a systematic and well

organised account or analysis of a problem or subject. In short, your report must aim to be accurate, concise and well structured. Generally, reports can be either formal or semi-formal. This distinction is based not on the topic given, but rather in the expectations of the audience for the report. However, in most cases the format is formal and structured in both content and presentation. Therefore, when writing a formal report, remember that the audience expects a systematic presentation thus make sure your report comprises key headings and points as well as relevant appendices. In most cases, formal reports are often read by two or more key people who constitute the professional audience.

## Format of a Report

Similar to an essay format, reports too have a distinctive format which aims to make it more accessible to the reader. An easy way to remember is that all reports must consist of three sections: introduction, body/content and conclusion/ending.

The introduction is usually the first page of the report and constitutes

introducing the report. Here, you need to present initial information or explain the problem/issue/concern. In other words, the introduction sets the pace to inform the reader about the content of the report.

The next section of the report, i.e. body/content, is the most important section in your report because here you will proceed with reporting the main essence of the report by highlighting and discussing key aspects of the report in a methodological or systematic manner. You may also include headings or sub headings in this section in order of importance in an effort to appeal to your audience/readers.

Finally, the conclusion/ending section is where you will present your summary or conclusion succinctly. In some instances, you may also briefly include your recommendations followed with providing your appendices, glossary and references.

## Useful Tips on Report Writing

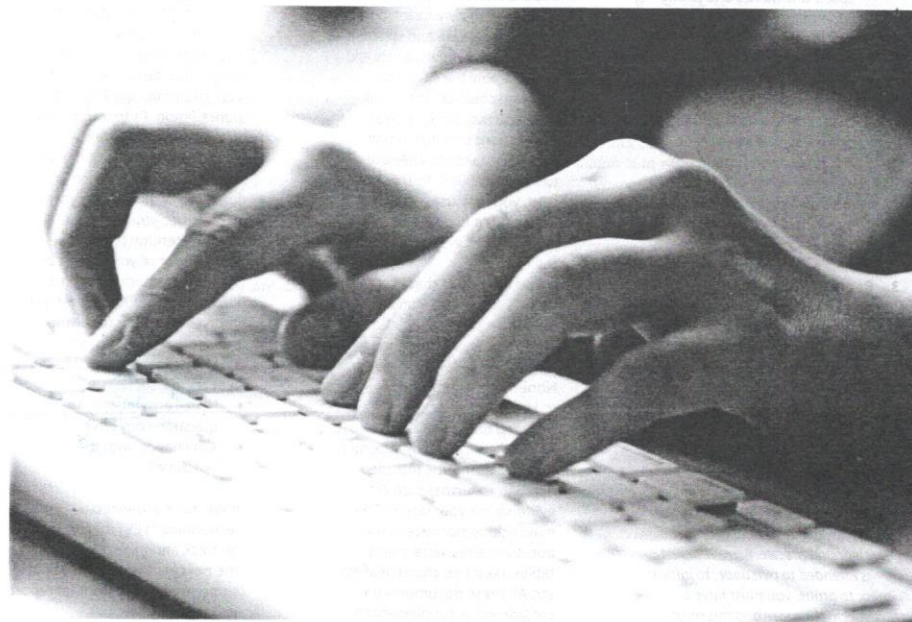
### 1. Planning and Preparation

The first step towards performing well in this directed writing task is to ensure you read and understand the task/question/topic. In the case of report writing, begin by focussing on the main purpose or objective of the report. Ask yourself – is the report intended to persuade, to argue, to inform or to evaluate? Who is the recipient or rather who is it being written for? Once you have clearly understood these aspects, writing the report will be much easier. More importantly, there will be less chance of you diverging from the question and you will be more effective in your writing. The next step entails planning a simple mind map to brainstorm

your ideas. Jot down key/main points followed with supporting details for the body of the report. Remember this is by far the most important section of your report. Keep adding and editing this aspect so that you keep the topic in mind and all your points support your report.

### 2. Body or Content of Report

This section constitutes the main part of your report. Based on your mind map, aim to provide balanced and well-structured paragraphs. Each paragraph should contain a topic sentence which provides the main idea and this should be supported with supporting details. Remember the "3 E's" formula (Explain-Elaborate-Examples). Each main idea should be first explained, then elaborated with



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