

Annotated Bibliography: Report Writing

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For students - study practices generally

Cameron, Sheila, *The Business Students' Handbook*, 3rd ed. (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2003).

Looks at how to adapt academic skills for employment. A useful short section on reports which bridges the gap between academic and business report writing. Looks at how reports are read in a business context.

Cohen, Jack & Medley, Graham, *Stop Working and Start Thinking: A Guide to Becoming a Scientist* 2nd ed., (Abingdon; Taylor & Francis, 2005).

Aimed at postgraduate students. Includes accessible and thorough explanations of terms and processes in scientific practice (e.g. explanation, observation, hypothesis). Useful model of a 'pre-abstract' – method of planning and structuring to get started.

Cottrell, Stella, *The Study Skills Handbook* 2nd ed, (Basingstoke; Palgrave, 2003).

Brief guide to writing and structuring reports included in general guide to study practices. Includes useful and concise plan for structure.

Drew, Sue & Bingham, Rosie, *The Student Skills Guide* 2nd ed, (Aldershot; Gower, 2001).

Starter and development level advice included in general guide to study practices. Takes the reader through each stage of a written report.

Race, Phil, *How to Get a Good Degree* (Buckingham; Open University Press, 1999).

Accessible guide helping students to make the most of their time at university

by taking charge of their learning. A concise and pertinent summary of how to write reports by focusing on the audience's needs.

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[For students – report writing and other writing practices](#)

Ashby, M., *How to Write a Paper*, 6th ed. Available at <http://www.grantadesign.com>

Very thorough guide suitable for postgraduate students. Uses the idea of a 'concept sheet' to help design reports which would especially appeal to engineers, graphic artists and designers.

Barrass, Robert, *Scientists Must Write* 2nd ed, (London; Routledge, 2002).

Two very thorough chapters on writing reports, with checklists and tips on layout. Includes explanations of graphical data, and chapters on writing style.

Davies, John W., *Communication for Engineering Students*, (Harlow; Longman, 1996).

Contains a chapter on report writing with a number of good exercises on structuring reports. Also contains summaries of the different kinds of reports engineers may have to write.

Ebel, H.F., Bliefert, C. & Russey, W.E., *The Art of Scientific Writing* 2nd ed (Weinheim; Wiley-VCH, 2004).

Text-heavy but thorough guide to scientific writing genres, including section on reports. Especially useful for postgraduates, or for teaching purposes.

Evans, David, *How to Write a Better Thesis or Report* (Melbourne; Melbourne University Press, 1995).

Friendly and very accessible guide which focuses on structure. Works from case studies and examples.

Gilpin, Andrea & Patchet-Golubev, Patricia, *A Guide to Writing in the Sciences* (Toronto; Toronto University Press, 2000).

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Guide to better writing in the sciences produced following a course for undergraduates combining teaching from writing specialists and scientists. Various genres including lab reports.

Gustavii, Bjorn, *How to Write and Illustrate a Scientific Paper* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 2003).

Advice on writing papers but equally applicable to reports. Organised by sections of report. Includes extensive discussion of graphic formats. Gives good and bad examples throughout.

Harris, Peter, *Designing and Reporting Experiments in Psychology* 2nd ed (Maidenhead; Open University Press, 2002).

Aimed at undergraduate psychology students, but including some tips for students working at a higher academic level. Clear and thorough guidelines conveyed in an accessible style.

Katz, Michael Jay, *From Research to Manuscript: A Guide to Scientific Writing* (Dordrecht; Springer, 2006).

Treats writing as part of the research process. Includes examples throughout. Explicitly science-orientated.

Kirkman, John, *Good Style: Writing for Science and Technology* 2nd ed (Abingdon; Routledge, 2005).

Guide to various issues in writing style. Includes choice of vocabulary, phrasing and sentence structure. Aimed at scientific and technical writers.

Malmfors, Birgitta, Garnsworthy, Phil & Grossman, Michael, *Writing and Presenting Scientific Papers* (Nottingham; Nottingham University Press, 2000).

Brief but useful guide to various types of scientific writing including scientific papers. Good chapter on improving writing style.

McMillan, Victoria E., *Writing Papers in the Biological Sciences*, 4th ed, (Boston; Bedford/St Martins, 2006).

Contains a chapter on writing lab reports, interspersed with examples of good

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and bad academic writing suitable for reports. Also includes an example of a lab report.

Peat, Jennifer, Elliott, Elizabeth, Baur, Louise & Keena, Victoria
***Scientific Writing: Easy When You Know How* (London; British Medical Journal Publishing, 2002).**

Targeted at medical students. Focuses on writing papers for publication, but very useful chapter which works through each section and concludes with a clear set of construction guidelines.

Pechenik, Jan & Lab, Bernard, *How to Write About Biology*, (London; Harper Collins, 1994).

Detailed chapter on writing lab reports in Biology, with sections on presenting data, and also analysis of extracts from students' reports.

Riordan, Daniel G. & Pauley, Steven E., *Technical Report Writing Today* 8th ed (Boston; Houghton Mifflin, 2002).

Comprehensive guide which focuses on writing for an audience. Includes different types of report (formal and informal, recommendation and feasibility reports) with examples and exercises throughout. Written for US audience.

Silyn-Roberts, Heather, *Writing for Science* (Auckland; Longman, 1996).

Aimed at undergraduate science, engineering and technology students. Includes chapter on correcting common mistakes in writing, and advice on the process of producing a research report.

Smyth, R.T., *The Principles of Writing in Psychology* (Basinstoke; Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

Contains thorough chapters breaking down the process of writing reports for qualitative and quantitative psychology experiments.

Van Emden, Joan, *Effective Communication for Science and Technology* (Basingstoke; Palgrave, 2001).

Aimed at new students, covers communication skills generally. One chapter on reports and dissertations, includes examples of spidergrams for structuring.

Van Emden, Joan & Eastal, Jennifer, *Report Writing* 2nd ed (London; McGraw Hill, 1992).

Guide to the production of management and technical reports including sections on data presentation and revision, and specimen reports.

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Guides for teaching staff

Haines, Catherine, *Assessing Students' Written Work: Marking Essays and Reports* (London; RoutledgeFalmer, 2004).

Starts from the idea that assessment of a piece of work must include reflection on the process which produced it. Includes comments and examples from teaching practitioners, assessment grid, learning contract and checklist.

Race, Phil, *The Lecturer's Toolkit* 2nd ed (London; Routledge, 2001).

Suggests strategies to promote self-critical approaches to report writing, including evaluating past reports, and using peer-assessment and collaborative approaches.

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Research

Campbell, Bob, Kaunda, Loveness, Allie, Saalih, Buffler, Andy & Lubben, Fred 'The communication of laboratory investigations by university entrants', *Journal of Research into Science Teaching* 37 (2000), 839-853.

Study which compared actual laboratory activities with their description in student reports. Concludes that what is reported depends on student perceptions of a task's purpose and their understanding of lab procedure and discourse rules.

Carter, Michael, Ferzli, Miriam & Wiebe, Eric, 'Teaching genre to English first-language adults: a study of the laboratory report', *Research in the Teaching of English* 38.4 (May 2004), 395-419.

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Investigates the teaching of report writing as a genre through explicit teaching (using the LabWrite program <http://www.ncsu.edu/labwrite/>) in lab work situations. Concludes that explicit teaching of writing genres is successful if used in authentic contexts.

Chuck, Jo-Anne & Young, Lauren, 'A cohort-driven assessment task for scientific report writing', *Journal of Science Education and Technology* 13.3 (Sept 2004), 367-376.

Describes a project in which students used peer and self review to revise reports in response to academic feedback. Cohort-specific marking was used to measure tangible success for students at all levels.

Ellis, Robert A., 'University student approaches to learning science through writing', *International Journal of Science Education* 26.15 (Dec 2004), 1835-1853.

This study investigates the approaches adopted by students in a university writing programme designed to help them learn first-year undergraduate science. The results showed that students' understanding of the process would be greater if instructors made them more aware of the learning which is made possible through writing a report.

Marshall, S., 'A Genre-Based Approach to the Teaching of Report Writing', *English for Specific Purposes* 10 (1999), 3-13.

A study which regards report writing "not only as a means of teaching students how to express and present information effectively. It is also a means of facilitating the development of scientific thinking". The study examines lecturers' feedback on reports as a genre of writing in its own right, and designs a computer programme to help lecturers give feedback.

Sheehan, R.J. and Flood, A., 'Genre, Rhetorical Interpretation, and the Open Case: Teaching the Analytical Report', *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication* 42.1 (1999), 20-31.

Looks at how reports do not just provide a formal structure for writing, but they also impose a conceptual order on an experiment or investigation. This study analyses the use of open-ended case studies based in real world scenarios as a means of helping engineering students develop both their problem-solving and their report writing abilities.

Walker, K., 'Using Genre Theory to Teach Students Engineering Lab Report Writing', *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication* 42.1 (1999), 12-19.

Examines a collaboration between a university writing centre and lecturers teaching an Electrical and Computer Engineering course. Staff from both areas shared expertise on the genre of report writing. The successful interdisciplinary collaboration helped identify differences in reports *within* the department, as well as between departments, and generated discussion about academic writing amongst faculty members and students.

Willmot, J.R., Clark, R.P., and Harrison, T.M., 'Introducing Undergraduate Students to Scientific Reports', *Bioscience Education E-Journal* 1 (2003), available at: www.bioscience.heacademy.ac.uk/journal/

Describes a staged introduction to report writing for first year undergraduates, using scientific journal papers as a model. First, students analysed a journal article to deduce the structure and style of a scientific report. Then they used this as a model for designing and reporting their own experiments. Group discussion and formative feedback was provided throughout.

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(Kim Shahabudin and Michelle Reid, University of Reading, 2007-08)