

Writing Reports

Include the following in the report:

- Introduction and body
- Background information only as needed: definitions, history, theory, process analysis, etc.
- New information
- Conclusions and recommendations

If the report is 10 pages or more, include front matter:

- Title page
- Abstract(s)
- Acknowledgements, etc.
(optional)
- Table of Contents
- List of Tables and Figures
- Executive Summary

The title page includes the following:

- Title of report: key words + organizational markers
- Authors' names, titles
- Readers' names, titles
- Date
- Optional elements: descriptive abstract, company logo, visuals, etc.

Key words indicate subject matter:

Cal Poly Registration System

New Bike Paths

Projectors

Organizational Markers indicate the purpose of the report

How to

A Recommendation to

A Proposal to (be careful with this term)

Capitalize correctly and consistently:

- First word
- Proper nouns
- No other articles (the, a, an), conjunctions (and, or, etc.), or prepositions unless they have 5 or more letters
- Alternate style: first word and proper nouns only

There are 3 types of abstracts:

Type	Readers	Content	Length	Location
Descriptive abstract	Technicians, specialists	Topic description	3 - 4 sentences	Library data bases, title pages
Informational abstract	Technicians, specialists	Topic, main points, major results, recommendations	3/4 to 1-1/4 pages	Before table of contents in a report
Executive summary	Generalists, managers	Same as above plus management concerns, definitions, background as needed	1 to 2 pages	After table of contents (or list of figures) in a report

The table of contents includes the following:

- Key words: Introduction to Bike Rack
Recommendation
- Headings matched identically to the text
headings
- Page numbers
- Leader lines
- Label: "Contents" or "Table of Contents"

The list of tables and figures includes the following:

- Descriptive captions: "Figure 1: The bike racks at Cal Poly usually have five extra bikes chained to other bikes."
- Captions matched identically to the text captions
- Page numbers
- Leader lines
- Label: "Figures" or "Table of Figures" or "List of Tables and Figures"

Use appropriate formatting in the body:

- Subheadings
- Key words in all subheadings (including introduction and conclusion)
- At **least** one paragraph break per page
- Informational headers or footers or both
- Tables and figures whenever relevant and possible

State the purpose specifically:

Not: This report will discuss bike racks.

But: This report will recommend more bike racks on Cal Poly's campus.

Not: Our copier needs to be replaced.

But: This report will recommend a new copier for the library.

Which of the following is a good purpose statement?

Copy machines were invented by James Watt in 1779.

Cal Poly needs more parking.

Cal Poly needs new student desks. Therefore we will evaluate three models and recommend the best.

Consider the reader's needs:

Not: (to Jane Smith) Jane Smith has been the CEO of her company since 2007. She is in need of a new desk for her office.

But: Since your desk was damaged by the party guests last week, we will recommend a replacement.

Not: Desks have been used in offices since Barney Rubble dragged the first slab of granite into his cave. Finding granite too cumbersome, Clark Kent began fabricating desks with anti-kryptonite metals.

But: Currently you have several choices of desk materials to choose from.

Consider the reader:

Not: (writing to President Armstrong) Cal Poly has a terrible problem with parking.

But: Cal provides parking for approximately 75% of its student population. This report will recommend solutions for the other 25%.

Not: Wait times at Firestone Grill are too long.

But: To reduce wait times at Firestone Grill, we recommend creating an order-ahead app for smart phones.

Choose a logical organization style:

- Problem – cause – solution
- Pros and cons
- Comparison

By criteria

By options

Make your points convincing:

- Give reasons or proof for all your assertions
- Report then analyze the data
- Make sure the sources' credentials are clear and appropriate
- Make sure you have enough sources
- Use no more than one direct quote

Repeat only where appropriate:

- Front matter summaries
- Introduction
- Section beginnings: briefly, only once
- Conclusion

Include a specific and explicit recommendation, focused on the reader, at the end:

Not: We recommend new bike racks.

Or: (to President Armstrong) We recommend you install new bike racks.

But: We recommend that you ask Facility Services to install new bike racks.

Or: Please consider asking Facility Services to install new bike racks.