

Third Edition

Writing Reports *to* *Get Results*

Quick, Effective Results Using the Pyramid Method

Ron S. Blicq ▲ Lisa A. Moretto

Writing Reports to Get Results

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Lisa A. Moretto
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Preface

We have prepared these guidelines as an easy-to-consult reference handbook, designed especially for people who work in a business or technical environment and have to write reports. Its tailor-made writing plans can help you, as a manager, business administrator, researcher, supervisor, engineer, scientist, technician, computer specialist, or student, start writing more readily and continue writing more easily.

The writing plans cover the three general categories of reports written in business, government, and industry. Short reports include informal incident, field trip, job progress, project completion, and inspection reports; semiformal reports comprise laboratory reports and medium-length investigation and evaluation reports; and formal reports cover analytical and feasibility studies, as well as major investigations. There are also writing plans for three types of proposals, from single-page suggestions to full-length formal presentations.

All of the writing plans are based on a unique modular method of report organization called the pyramid method, which is described in Chapter 2. This chapter will help you identify the most important information you have to convey and focus your readers' attention on it. The pyramid method then groups the remaining information into compartments that develop your case logically and coherently.

For each type of report, the guidelines provide

- an individual writing plan,
- detailed instructions for using the writing plan,
- a model report (in some cases there are two examples), and
- comments on how the writer has used the suggested writing plan to shape his or her report.

A writing techniques section at the end of the handbook provides useful suggestions for “sprucing up” the appearance of your reports and getting better mileage from your words. It also describes how to construct a list of references or a bibliography; how to present numbers, abbreviations, and metric (SI) symbols; how to prepare illustrations for insertion within a report's narrative; and how to work collaboratively as one of several members engaged in writing a comprehensive report or proposal.

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PART 1

A Practical Approach to Report Writing

Chapter 1. How to Use These Guidelines

Chapter 2. The Report Writer's Pyramid

How to Use These Guidelines

There are two ways you can use these guidelines: you can read them right through from start to finish, or you can read only the parts that apply to the kind of report writing you do. If you are a busy person, you are more likely to read selectively.

If you choose to dip into sections of the book, we recommend you follow this reading plan:

1. ***Be sure to read Chapter 2 first.*** This is a particularly important chapter because it describes the basic structure on which all the reports in Chapters 3 through 8 are modelled.
2. From the Table of Contents identify which report types listed in Parts 2, 3, and 4 (Chapters 3 through 8) you write now. Also identify any report types you think you might have to write over the next 12 months.
3. Turn to each of the reports you have identified and then:
 - Read the introductory remarks and recommended writing plan.
 - Read the model report. You will find most model reports are printed on right-hand pages, and most comments about the reports are printed on the facing left-hand pages. We recommend you first read the model report right through once and resist the temptation to glance across to the cross-referenced comments on the facing page(s). This will give you a better “feel” for the report.
 - Read the comments on the facing page(s) and cross-reference them to the report.

Note: For some reports you write, you will find an exact writing plan to use and a comparable model to follow in the guidelines. For others, you may have to search