



# Starting your report

[https://youtu.be/YewU0bjh\\_Xw](https://youtu.be/YewU0bjh_Xw)

## Transcript

**Slide 1:** Welcome to this short tutorial on ‘starting your report’. This tutorial is useful if you have a report assignment where you have not been given a set structure to follow and have to identify your own report headings.

**Slide 2 Confused student:** This is Amy. She has been given the following report assignment: ‘Investigate whether Facebook can be a useful tool for student learning in Higher Education - Report your findings to the University Committee for Learning and Teaching.’ Amy doesn’t know where to start – she has a lot of questions, but she is not sure what’s required in this report – she knows she should break it down into sections, but what sections will she need... all of this is making her stressed!

**Slide 3 Audience and Purpose:** But to get started, Amy only needs to remember two things – audience and purpose. A report is a piece of informative writing. This means that it is designed to inform a specific person or group of people (your audience) about something that they want to find out more about (your purpose). Identifying the audience and purpose for your report will show you what you need to include and what will be relevant.

**Slide 4 Rat Population:** For example, a report on the same topic would look very different if it was written for different audiences. Imagine you have been asked to report on the numbers of rats living on your university campus...

How would the audience and purpose of your report differ if it were written for:

- A local conservation charity
- The University health and safety manager
- Your lecturer on your 'small mammals' module on your environmental science course
- A company looking to build a new halls of residence on the site

[PAUSE]

A report for a conservation charity would have a very different content and layout to one for the halls of residence building company – all determined by the needs of the specific audience and purpose.

**Slide 5 Break down of Amy's brief:** Let's return to Amy – she is now feeling a bit less stressed as she has a place to start. She examines her assignment brief carefully to identify her audience and her purpose. She finds that her audience is a University committee concerned with setting teaching and learning policies at the University and her purpose is to assess for this committee whether Facebook could be beneficial for learning; should it be used more formally by the University?

**Slide 5 Headings breakdown:** Once Amy has identified her audience and purpose, she starts to break down the brief into some sub-questions that her audience would want answered in the report in order to meet the report's purpose.

So, for example, they might be interested in what ways could Facebook be used for learning based on the evidence Amy gathers. They'd also be interested in what the background research says about the use of social media for learning, are there any benefits or disadvantages. They would definitely want to know what conclusions or recommendations could be made based on the evidence, and they would be interested in current students' use of Facebook: are any of these uses already related to learning?

Once Amy has these sub-questions she starts to place them in an order that seems logical to lead her audience through the information: starting with current use of Facebook; then looking at the background research; then assessing both of these to provide different answers; and coming to conclusions and recommendations based on them.

This gives Amy a draft structure, starting with an introduction which looks at the purpose of the report and current state of affairs, going on to reviewing the

literature and gathering the evidence, then investigating options based on assessing that evidence, and finally coming to conclusions and recommendations to the audience based on these findings. And then she can start to investigate each of these different sub-questions and it might be as her report progresses she changes these sub-questions into sub-headings to help structure her report.

**Slide 6 Summary:** So in summary:

- First, read your brief or assignment title carefully
- Identify your audience and purpose (that is who your report is for, and what they want to find out)
- Break down your assignment into sub-questions bearing in mind what the audience want to find out
- Then put the sub-questions in an order that makes sense and then start planning your investigation to find answers to these sub-questions.

**Slide 7:** We hope you found this short tutorial useful. For more on report writing and other study practices, see the University of Reading Study Advice website:

[www.reading.ac.uk/studyadvice](http://www.reading.ac.uk/studyadvice)