

Exercise walk-through

Purpose, audience and format ■ 5.1

eXercise

You must be able to

- recognise that a report is written for a decision-maker
- use headings, and use them correctly
- separate fact from recommendation

Method — What makes a report different

An article entertains; a letter asks; a **report informs so that someone can decide**. The reader is usually a head teacher, a manager or a committee, and they will skim it. That is why a report:

- uses **headings**, so a reader can find the part they need
- puts **facts before opinions**, and keeps them separate
- ends with **recommendations** the reader could actually carry out

Method — The standard headings

- **Introduction** — what the report covers and where the information came from
- **Findings** (or a heading naming the topic) — the facts
- **Recommendations** — what you advise, and why
- **Conclusion** — a short summary of the main point

Headings are content credit. A report written as continuous prose loses marks even when the content is right.

Method — Say where the information came from

The information in this report comes from a survey of ninety students and from my own observations over two weeks.

One sentence, and it makes every later figure credible.

Method — Register

Formal and impersonal, but not stiff. Prefer *students reported that* to *loads of people said*. Avoid *I think* in the findings; save judgement for the recommendations, where *I recommend* is correct and expected.

Practice 2.1 ■ 3 marks

For each statement, say whether it belongs under Findings or Recommendations.

- (a) Sixty-one students said the queue was too long.
- (b) A second serving point should be opened at lunchtime.
- (c) On three of the ten days observed, the only vegetarian option was a sandwich.

Solution 2.1

Method: Register

Worked steps

(a) Findings **B1**. (b) Recommendations **B1**. (c) Findings **B1**.

Practice 2.2 ■ 2 marks

Write an introduction sentence for a report on the school bus service, saying what it covers and where the information came from.

Solution 2.2

Method: The standard headings

Worked steps

Any version stating scope and source **B2**, e.g. “This report examines the reliability and cost of the school bus service. It is based on a survey of eighty students and on timetable records for the spring term.”

Practice 2.3 ■ 1 mark

Rewrite this finding so it is impersonal and formal: “I reckon loads of people hate the new timetable.”

Solution 2.3

Method: Register

Worked steps

Any impersonal formal version **B1**, e.g. "A majority of students surveyed expressed dissatisfaction with the new timetable."

Exam-style 3.1 ■ 8 marks

Your school is deciding whether to extend the lunch break by fifteen minutes. Write a report for the head teacher describing the current situation and making two recommendations. Use headings. Write about 180 words.

Solution 3.1

Method: What makes a report different

Worked steps

Content (4): a clear introduction with a source, at least two findings supported by detail or figures, two workable recommendations, and a brief conclusion. Language (4): formal impersonal register, correct use of headings, accurate sentences, roughly within the limit.

Exam-style 3.2 ■ 2 marks

A student writes a report as five paragraphs of continuous prose with no headings. Explain why this loses marks even if the content is accurate.

Solution 3.2

Method: The standard headings

Worked steps

Format is part of the content assessment for a report, and headings are the feature that distinguishes it from a letter or an article **B1**. Without them the reader cannot skim to the section they need, which is the report's whole purpose, so the writing does not fulfil the task even when the information is correct **B1**.