

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN REPORTS AND ESSAYS?

A report is a piece of **informative writing** that describes a set of actions and analyses any results in response to a specific brief. A quick definition might be: **“This is what I did and this is what it means.”**

You may also have assignments which are not called reports but which are still pieces of informative writing; for instance, some dissertations and project write-ups fall into this category.

A good way to understand the key features of reports is to see how they differ from essays as a type of academic writing.

Reports are...

- Formally structured
- Informative and fact-based
- Written with a specific purpose and reader in mind
- Written in a style appropriate to each section
- Always include section headings
- Sometimes use bullet points
- Often include tables or graphs
- Offer recommendations for action

Essays are...

- Semi-structured
- Argumentative and idea-based
- Not written with a specific reader in mind
- Written in single narrative style throughout
- Usually do not include sub-headings
- Usually do not include bullet points
- Rarely include tables or graphs
- Offer conclusions about a question