STRUCTURING ESSAYS AND REPORTS

Two common ways to present information are **essays** and **reports**

An **essay** is a short piece of writing on a particular subject, often used to **give your opinion**

- It is divided into different **paragraphs**
- Some essays have subheadings but usually you use **topic sentences** (sentences that make clear what a paragraph will discuss) to structure an essay

A **report** is a document that gives detailed information on a subject, often as a result of an investigation and is **neutral rather than opinionated**

- It is divided into different **sections**, using **headings** and **subheadings**
- In reports you will usually **present evidence, analyse it** and **draw conclusions**

This worksheet will give some tips on how to structure reports and essays. Expressing yourself doesn't have to be hard work!

This worksheet was adapted from the **BBC Bitesize** guides on how to write an essay (link) and how to write a report (link) - click on the links for additional tips and resources!

DGC
Dumfries and Galloway College
One step ahead

ESSAYS

Here is an example of a short essay:

Marine Parks – A Discursive Essay

INTRODUCTION

The issue of whether we should allow marine parks to stay open has been widely debated in our community recently. It is an important issue because it concerns fundamental moral and economic questions about the way we use our native wildlife. This essay will explore both sides of the argument.

MAIN BODY PARAGRAPH 1

It has been argued that dolphin parks provide the only opportunity for much of the public to see marine mammals (Smith, 1992). Most Australians, so this argument goes, live in cities and never get to see these animals. It is claimed that marine parks allow the average Australian to appreciate our marine wildlife. However, as Smith states, dolphins, whales and seals can be viewed in the wild at a number of places on the Australian coast. In fact, there are more places where they can be seen in the wild than places where they can be seen in captivity. Moreover, most Australians would have to travel less to get to these locations than they would to get to the marine parks on the Gold Coast. In addition, places where there are wild marine mammals do not charge an exorbitant entry fee – they are free.

MAIN BODY PARAGRAPH 2

On the other side of the argument, the Marine Park Owners Association say that marine parks attract a lot of foreign tourists (The Sun-Herald 12.4.93). This position goes on to assert that these tourists spend a lot of money, increasing our foreign exchange earnings and assisting our national balance of payments. However, foreign tourists would still come to Australia if the parks were closed down. Indeed, surveys of overseas tourists show that they come here for a variety of other reasons and not to visit places like Seaworld (The Age, Good Weekend 16.8.93).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I think these parks should be closed, or at the very least, no new animals should be captured for marine parks in the future. Our society is no longer prepared to tolerate unnecessary cruelty to animals for science and entertainment. If we continue with our past crimes against these creatures we will be remembered as cruel and inhuman by the generations of the future.

- The **first paragraph** of an essay is the **Introduction.** This is where you:

  - Introduce the topic you are writing about
  - Provide relevant background information
  - Say exactly what your essay will do – e.g. "This essay will explore the arguments for and against zoos and marine parks."

- The most important paragraphs in an essay are your **main body paragraphs**. The example essay (above) has only two main body paragraphs, but an essay can have as many main body paragraphs as you need. These paragraphs:

  - Make arguments and present evidence
  - Discuss topics in detail

  Some **tips** for writing **main body paragraphs** are:
  - Try and keep each main body paragraph a **similar length** (this helps keep your discussion balanced and the layout clear)
  - Try and focus each main body paragraph on **one thing** – e.g. your first main body paragraph discusses the advantages of zoos, your second main body paragraph discusses the disadvantages of zoos
  - Use **topic sentences** to help the reader follow your structure. A topic sentence is a sentence that acts as a mini-introduction to a paragraph – e.g. "First, let's look at some of the arguments in favour of zoos."

- The **last paragraph** will be your **Conclusion.** This is where you:
  - Summarise the main points you've discussed

3

This worksheet was adapted from the **BBC Bitesize** guides on how to write an essay (link) and how to write a report (link) - click on the links for additional tips and resources!

- Draw your arguments together and reach a final position (if applicable) – e.g. "Overall, I think that the advantages of zoos outweigh the disadvantages."

And that's your essay done – you've crossed the finishing line!

*Final tip – remember to **proofread** an essay before submitting it for marking

- careful proofreading will help you pick up and correct small grammar and spelling mistakes

- if you'd like help with proofreading you can e-mail your work to proofreading@dumgal.ac.uk

4

This worksheet was adapted from the **BBC Bitesize** guides on how to write an essay (link) and how to write a report (link) - click on the links for additional tips and resources!

REPORTS

- There are different structures you can use for reports. An **example of a report structure** is below:

  - **Introduction** (what the report will look at and why)

  - **Background Research** (what we know about the topic already)

  - **Findings** (what your own research into the topic has found)

  - **Discussion** (relating what you've found to existing research and information on the topic)

  - **Conclusion** (summary of the most important points in your report)

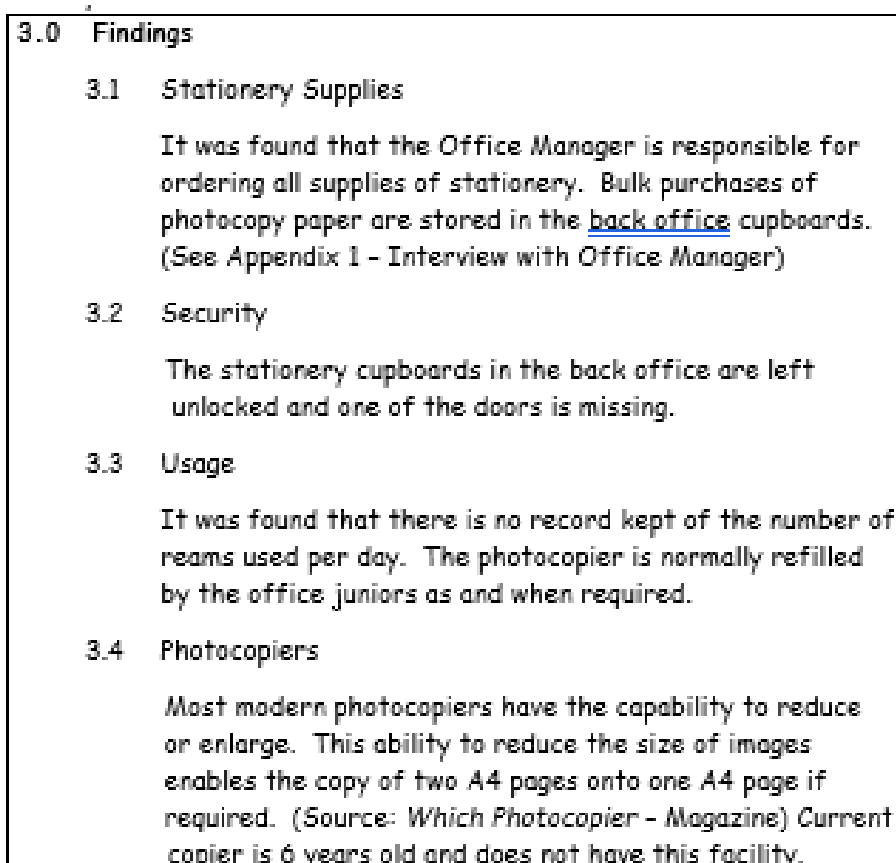 - **References** (list of the sources you used)

One of the biggest differences between essays and reports is that **in a report you should put forward facts and evidence rather than personal opinions.**

- Because of this you should **avoid the use of the word "I"**
- So instead of saying "I found that, I think that, etc" you should say things like:
- "This report has found that…"
- "Some researchers have suggested that…"

This worksheet was adapted from the **BBC Bitesize** guides on how to write an essay (link) and how to write a report (link) - click on the links for additional tips and resources!

Reports should also be written in the **present tense** (as if the actions are happening now) and in a **formal tone** (think of how you would speak at a job interview).

Finally, it is suggested that you write in **the passive voice** – this BBC resource has guidance and examples on using the passive voice

Headings, **Sub-Headings** are used in reports to help structure them. **Bullet-points** can also be used to break down the content into "chunks" that are easier for readers to look at

3.0   Findings

3.1   Stationery Supplies

It was found that the Office Manager is responsible for ordering all supplies of stationery. Bulk purchases of photocopy paper are stored in the back office cupboards. (See Appendix 1 – Interview with Office Manager)

3.2   Security

The stationery cupboards in the back office are left unlocked and one of the doors is missing.

3.3   Usage

It was found that there is no record kept of the number of reams used per day. The photocopier is normally refilled by the office juniors as and when required.

3.4   Photocopiers

Most modern photocopiers have the capability to reduce or enlarge. This ability to reduce the size of images enables the copy of two A4 pages onto one A4 page if required. (Source: Which Photocopier – Magazine) Current copier is 6 years old and does not have this facility.

A short extract from a report showing the effective use of headings and subheadings to break text into manageable chunks

This worksheet was adapted from the **BBC Bitesize** guides on how to write an essay (link) and how to write a report (link) - click on the links for additional tips and resources!

*Final tip – reports are usually also presented with a **cover page** and a **contents page**

A **cover page** contains information like your name, course code and the subject of your report

- A relevant picture on the cover brightens things up, too!

The best way to make a neat and tidy **contents page** is to use the automatic content page creator on Microsoft Word

- Here's a link to the latest Microsoft Guide on how to get Word to make a contents page for you!

This worksheet was adapted from the **BBC Bitesize** guides on how to write an essay (link) and how to write a report (link) - click on the links for additional tips and resources!