

## Writing Effectively for the ILO

### Module 2b - Printable Report Writing

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#### Introduction

"To hear is to forget, to see and hear is to remember, and to do is to understand." (Confucius)

This module takes you through the process of producing a report from conception through to proofreading. You will learn by **doing** rather than by reading about **how to do**.

In the first section, **From Task to Draft**, you will apply the writing framework discussed in Module 1 to the task of report writing. You will determine a statement of purpose for your report and do an in-depth analysis of its intended readers. You will then organize your material and produce a preliminary draft.

The second and most substantial section of the module, **Key Sections of a Report**, will take you through the fundamental skills of report writing. You will work through ILO-based exercises on writing introductions, conclusions, recommendations, and summaries.

In the third section, **Working with Visual Information**, you will consider the use of visual representations of information such as tables, charts, graphs, and images. You will revise and polish the corresponding parts of your assignment report or add visual information if it is not included in your initial draft.

The next section, **Editing your Report**, focuses on the final tasks needed to complete your report and make it ready for distribution. This section lets you apply what you learned in Module 1 to a single text.

At times during the preparation of your report, you will be asked to reflect on the process that you are undertaking. You will keep a record of the time you take on the various steps in preparing your report and your observations about the process. This reflective process will help you work out the best way to approach future report-writing tasks.

Throughout, you will have the support of your tutor, with whom you will be required to discuss the scope and directions of your report.

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#### Module objective

On completion of this module, you should be able to apply the principles and strategies of effective writing explored in Module 1 to report writing. Therefore, by the time you have completed this module, you should be able to produce work-based writing that shows you can:

- develop a strategy for structuring your report;
- adapt the writing process described in Module 1 to the development of a report;
- apply brainstorming and drafting techniques to the writing of a report;
- arrange your ideas to bring out main points;
- recognize the essential components of a report;
- compare strategies for conveying information with text and visually;
- distinguish different types of reports at ILO and recognize their differences.

#### Assignment

You will demonstrate your competence by the production of a work-related report that meets the performance criteria stated in the assignment page.

Please have a look at the assignment requirements for this module by viewing the [assignment page](#).

This assignment is significantly different than the first one. In this module, you are encouraged to develop your report in sections as you work through the module. That way, by the end of the module you will have already completed the entire assignment. You will also create some planning documents that will help you to develop your report in a systematic manner. These documents are part of your assignment. You are encouraged to submit some of them to your

tutor before you have completed your report. You will see reference to these documents in the **Assignment Preparation Tasks**.

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## Communicating with your tutor

You are encouraged to stay in contact with your tutor as you work through the second module. It is particularly important to tell your tutor some preliminary details about your second module assignment. For example, once you have decided upon a report to write and submit as your assignment, send an email to your tutor providing the title and a very short description of the report's contents.

The list below provides links to the points in the course that provide good opportunities to make contact with your tutor. On these pages you will find some questions or directions to prompt you in your discussions with your tutor. These messages are not mandatory assignments, but they are of benefit to you. Regular contact with your tutor will help you get the most out of the course.

[Assignment Preparation Task 1: Choosing a report for this assignment](#)

[Assignment Preparation Task 2: Defining your purpose](#)

[Progress check: Working on your first draft](#)

[Progress check: Following an ILO style](#)

[Progress check: Completing your report](#)

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## Assignment preparation task 1: Choosing a report

Before you begin work on this module, choose a report writing task to work on throughout. As you are choosing a project, take a quick look at the assignment requirements for this module.

This report should be work-related and ideally a current requirement of your job.

The ideal type of assignment report has an anticipated length of somewhere between four and ten pages. If you think it will be longer or shorter, [contact your tutor](#) to ensure the scope is appropriate.

You can choose to submit an entire report if it falls within the recommended length or you may decide to work on a section of a report: for example a chapter of a longer report. Either choice will be appropriate for this module.

It is best if you write the report from scratch; however, if your work commitments do not allow that, you could take a draft of an existing report as your starting point with the aim of improving its various parts and overall effectiveness.

Requirements for report writing vary across the Organization. For this reason, this module does not focus on specific types of reports. The purpose of this module is to allow you to apply general principles of effective writing to any type of report. You are expected to follow the guidelines or conventions of your department or working area.

Keep in mind though that a degree of flexibility is possible. The most important feature of your report is that it is relevant to the kind of work you do. Please do not hesitate to [contact your tutor](#) to discuss the nature of the report you would like to write.

### Assignment 2B: Report Writing

Your name:

Working title of your report:

Type of report: (working paper, programme evaluation, mission report, proposal, progress report, etc.)

Is this an entire report or a section of a report?

Are you following a specific template?

Anticipated page length:

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You will add more information about your report as you work through the module. By the end of the module, you will have submitted a Reader Analysis Form, a **Reflections File**, a purpose statement, in addition to your outline, draft, and final report.

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## SECTION 1: FROM TASK TO DRAFT

ILO officers undertake a range of reporting activities in their day-to-day work. Some of these writing activities, like mission reports, are relatively straightforward and require little planning. Others, such as progress reports, programme and evaluation reports and proposals, are of sufficient weight to warrant a multi-step procedure. This section focuses on a procedure for writing such reports in an effort to equip you with the strategies and skills required for a range of future report writing tasks.

Reports are not detective novels. You don't have to build to a climax, reveal clues as you go, or even keep the reader in suspense. Reports are much simpler. They are working documents. The sooner the reader knows the plot, the easier it is for everyone. If you keep this thought in mind, you will find the task of developing an effective report one that does the job much more achievable.

In this module, we will examine the report-writing process more deeply by applying it to report writing in general and to the report you are writing for your assignment in particular. The aim is to equip you with useful tools with which to produce effective reports in the future.

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### Determining your purpose and analysing your audience

You have already explored the notion of purpose in Module 1. We called it your desired response: what you want the reader to do as a result of reading your document. ([Click here if you need to refresh your memory of this part of Module 1.](#))

When confronted with the task of producing a report, the first steps are to decide why you are going to write it and for whom.

Your statement of purpose, or the desired response from your reader, is dependent upon a prior step: finding out clearly what your instructions are from whoever has assigned you the report writing task. Unless you know exactly what the task is, you cannot write clearly and ultimately you cannot expect your reader to understand what you have written. Continue asking questions of the person authorizing the report until you are clear about the requirements.

A good report shows a strong relationship between its conclusions, recommendations, and the writer's statement of purpose. Consider this in the context of some common reporting tasks.

Click on "As a result" in the following statements of purpose to see the corresponding purpose of the report.

A progress report	
<a href="#">As a result</a> of reading my progress report, my reader will support my recommendation that this project be extended for six months.	
A mission report	
<a href="#">As a result</a> of reading my mission report, my reader will have a clear idea of the discussions that occurred during the mission.	
An evaluation report	
<a href="#">As a result</a> of reading my evaluation report, my reader will know the reasons for success or failure of the programme under consideration.	
A proposal	
<a href="#">As a result</a> of reading my proposal, my reader will approve the funding for our department's new project.	

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### Assignment preparation task 2: Defining your purpose

In order to get this assignment off to a good start, it is important to keep your tutor informed of your planning. Here is

an opportunity to discuss your plans.

### Contacting your tutor

Compose a purpose statement now, and [send it to your tutor](#), who will be examining your report in the light of this statement.

#### As a result of reading my report, my readers will...

If you keep this purpose statement in mind as you are writing your report, you will find it a helpful way to stay focused. If you find your writing is beginning to stray from your purpose, you can always re-evaluate your report, or perhaps you will find you need to revise your purpose.

#### Assignment 2B: Report Writing

Your name:

Working title of your report:

Purpose of your report:

As a result of reading my report, my readers will...

*You will add more information about your report as you work through the module. By the end of the module, you will have submitted a Reader Analysis Form, a Reflections File, a purpose statement, in addition to your outline, draft and final report.*

### Assignment preparation task 3: Reflecting on the process of writing

From now on, for each assignment preparation task, please record in your [Reflections File](#) the time taken on any assignment-related activity.

Save this file in your assignment folder, since you will need to return to it as you work through this module. It might be easiest to leave this file open as you work through the next few sections of the module.

### Assignment Preparation task 4: Analysing your readers

Your report is likely to be read by a number of different readers. In this instance, your tutor will be one of your readers, but please do not include your tutor in the reader analysis. Complete the exercise on the assumption that your report will be used at work.

You will have primary readers, probably including a key decision maker, and then you are likely to have other readers (secondary readers). Although your focus should be on your primary readers and the key decision-maker, it is wise to keep other readers in mind. (Some of these readers can be particularly important to you in your career.)

#### Reader Analysis Form

Complete a Reader Analysis Form introduced in Module 1. You will need to submit this with your assignment report.

[Click here for the Reader Analysis Form.](#)

#### Reader questions

Let's take this one step further. Think about the route your report will take through the ILO. Think about its possible uses by other sections of the organization. Identify readers along the route and try to work out their specific needs and agendas. In this exercise you should keep in mind that some of your readers (and in particular, the busiest of them) may not know much about the subject area of your report. What implications does this have for your writing?

Write down some of the questions that you think your various classes of readers will have about the contents of your report. [Click here for the reader's questionnaire document.](#)

Record your impressions in the **Reflections File** you started with the previous Assignment Preparation Task.

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## Prewriting

Using your favourite prewriting technique, generate the ideas and content required for your report. (The Outlining tool in Word is particularly effective for prewriting and organization of reports.) If you need to fill gaps in data for your report, do that data collection now.

Open the **Reflections File** that you created in the previous piece of work. Record the following in your **Reflections File** (remember to save your work as you go along):

- the type of prewriting technique used;
- how you felt about using it;
- the time taken for this step.

Note: If you are working on an existing report, you can skip this step.

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## Organizing

Already at this early stage, you have completed three important planning tasks:

- determining your statement of purpose;
- analysing the report's targeted readers;
- generating some ideas about the content and direction of your report.

Now you need to get down to the business of organization. This involves establishing your main points, which will become the Level 1 headings in your report.

I will assume from here on that you are familiar with the concept of assigned levels of headings in your writing. If you are not, you can [Click here for information on using levels of headings in MS Word.](#)

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### Activity 1: Establishing main points

How do you arrive at these main points? There are a number of ways, and they are all about distilling the essence of what you want to communicate. Here are three strategies to help you. Think about the report that you are planning to write. If you are struggling to come up with ideas, try one of these strategies. You can type your answers in the fields below each strategy.

- Imagine you are sending your message by telegram at some outrageous price per word. How would you arrive at the essence of your message to save money?

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- Ask yourself this: if you know your reader will only be skimming or paying partial attention to your writing, what is the absolute minimum that you want your reader to know?
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- Imagine you have told your reader the title and purpose of your report. What questions would you expect them to

This section builds on the work you did in Module 1 on prewriting. If you need to, take a moment to look back at [these sections in Module 1](#) before you continue.

ask? The questions you anticipate can form the basis for your headings.

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## Achieving flow through organization

Report writing has many similarities with newspaper writing. In both cases, the writer needs to get the most important information first, both to tempt readers to go further and to ensure readers have the main point(s) if they decide to abandon the reading.

When your eye runs over the front page of a newspaper, you immediately know what each story is about. If you are interested, you read further to get important details and still further to get fine detail. By reading the first paragraph, you have the expectation that you will know the main drift of the story.

You can visualize this approach by thinking of your writing as an inverted triangle.



As put forward by Barbara Minto in *The Minto Pyramid Principle: Logic in Writing, Thinking and Problem Solving*, Minto International, 1996

There are many applications of this concept from the whole-document level to the paragraph level.

### In a report...

Putting a summary first in a report allows your reader to begin reading with a framework on which to attach new ideas. Comprehension or understanding is only possible when there is a bridge between the new and the known. For example, if you have no experience in piloting an aircraft, it would be difficult for you to understand a lesson on aerobatics. The summary up front gives you some known information on which to link new information.

### In a message...

Make sure you have informative subject lines in emails, faxes, and memos.

### In a paragraph...

Place your topic sentence at the beginning of a paragraph to help your reader capture the main idea immediately and then fill in the detail.

## Flow and your reader

The flow of a piece of writing affects how its readers interpret ideas. If a report's organization fails to provide readers with the information they are looking for in an organized way, they will lose interest.

The reader does not need, or want, to know about all the steps you took along the way to forming your conclusions. The reader wants to know what those conclusions are and if you have sufficient logical support for them. What is required on your part is organization or structuring of your material to express your conclusions clearly and your support for them. Organization is based on:





- providing a hierarchy of ideas for your audience;
- choosing the most appropriate order for those ideas.

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## Establishing a hierarchy of ideas

Level 1 headings become the 'signposts' of your report, with each section heading clearly indicating the nature of the content below it. Depending on the size and complexity of the document, you will need to divide the information under each Level 1 heading into subsections (level 2 headings) and so on.

For example, here is a partial look at the hierarchy of ideas as organized in this module so far:

	Module 2B: Writing Reports and Structured Documents			
Level 1 headings	From task to draft 		Key sections of a report	Working with visual information
Level 2 headings	Determining your purpose	Analysing your readers 		
Level 3 headings		Reader Analysis Form 	Reader questions 	
Content	Description of the reader analysis form and its function in planning a report		Questions that a writer should anticipate from the reader in order to determine how to structure answers within the body and structure of the report	

Arriving at a hierarchy of headings, however, is not enough to give your writing flow; information needs to be arranged according to patterns so your reader can see the relationship between ideas. This patterning of information should take place at all levels in the document: whole, section, and paragraph.

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## Choosing an appropriate order

Constructing paragraphs according to various patterns of organization has been treated in Module 1. There it was treated at the [paragraph level](#). In this module, we will explore patterns of organization: the section and the whole document.

The report's purpose and audience should control your choice of a pattern of organization. So the pattern you decide to follow should be influenced by the report's purpose and its intended readership. Let's look at this in practice.

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## Activity 2: Ordering ideas

Consider the following scenario, for which you will need to generate a report outline:











You have been sent to a field office to investigate an absence of any reporting for two months. The Regional Director has asked questions about the area and your department has no up-to-date information to send on. Your supervisor has asked you to go on a mission to bring everyone up-to-date on the activities in the area in

question.

You decide that your statement of purpose will be:

*As a result of reading my report, my supervisor will have an accurate assessment of the situation to report to the Regional Director.*

As a result of your mission, you have collected the following points. To help you organize a mission report, chose the appropriate category for each point from the drop down lists to the right. When you are finished, click the **Show Answer** button to compare your response.

you spent five days in the region, talking with staff and liaising with other organizations	Choose a category: 
the senior administrative officer is unwell	Choose a category: 
the computing network has broken down	Choose a category: 
the office needs extra staff	Choose a category: 
the office is waiting for new equipment from Germany	Choose a category: 
the acting senior officer provided a full tour of all the offices and facilities	Choose a category: 
there is a lack of cooperation from government for recently implemented programmes	Choose a category: 
the situation should not have been allowed to deteriorate to this extent	Choose a category: 
there were two recent natural disasters that have devastated the region	Choose a category: 
staff have been called upon to cover for other projects dealing with these disasters	Choose a category: 

Show Answer

Level 1 headings	Background	General situation in Region X	Conditions in the field office	Personnel issues	Conclusion
Information Points					

### Activity 3: Organizing a longer report

Below is a random list of items for inclusion into one section of the report A fair globalization: Creating opportunities for all. Turn the list into a table of contents that reflects the way you would organize this report. Try to limit the table to no more than three levels of headings.

This is more difficult than it looks. Once you've arranged the headings and [checked the answer](#), consider whether the headings arranged hierarchically were helpful in giving you a sense of how the report is organized.



Globalization: Its nature and impact		
Choose a second-level heading: <input type="checkbox"/> Foreign Direct Investment		
Trade		
Financial flows		
The policy environment		
Technology		
The impact on economic growth		
Inter-relationships		
Primary concerns		
Introduction		
The impact on people		
Global production systems		
The global financial system		
Wider effects		
The multilateral trading system		
The impact of trade, investment and financial liberalization		
Employment, inequality and poverty		
Uneven impact across countries		

## Assignment preparation task 5: Organizing

Now that you have had a chance to practise some of these ideas, you can put them into action as part of your assignment preparation task.

Using the ideas and strategies in this section, produce an outline for your report. You will need to consider the purpose and audience, the hierarchy of ideas, and the pattern of organization you will adopt.

You will submit your outline to your tutor along with your completed report. You can send the outline to your tutor now if you wish to receive some preliminary feedback.

### What to do

Open a new Word document, and save it into your assignment folder.

Develop an outline for your report using one of the techniques discussed in this module. You will need to consider the purpose and audience, the hierarchy of ideas, and the pattern of organization you will adopt.

In your **Reflections File**, record the approach you used and how effective you found it. Also, record the length of time taken for this step.

## Drafting

In Module 1, we made several recommendations for writing first drafts:

- Concentrate on getting down what you want to say.
- Don't try to be drafter and editor at the same time. Do your editing later.
- Try to keep your thought flow going.
- Concentrate on capturing a good flow of ideas.
- Aim to pick up mechanical and other errors later.
- Don't try to write an introduction first or stick to a beginning-to-end structure.
- Write your draft as fast as you can and in one sitting if possible.

**Don't skip the crucial steps.** Don't expect to be able to write a final copy of your report immediately. If your timeline is desperate, it's still worthwhile going through the steps of identifying your objective and the report's purpose, quickly thinking about your reader, and working out an outline. Taking these steps will enable you to create a report more quickly and efficiently, and the product will be better than if you just sat down and wrote a draft.

**Control your writing sessions.** When your timeline for producing a report is less pressured, plan to write at least one draft of the entire report and be prepared to rewrite critical sections several times before you are satisfied. Try to write in uninterrupted blocks of time, and if you have to stop, try to break at a point where you know what you are going to write next. This means when you come back to the task you can reduce the warm-up time before becoming productive again. If time permits, wait at least two days after completing the first draft before you begin editing and rewriting.

**Use headings.** The drafting stage is a good time to consider your use of headings. Headings almost always improve the report's readability and usefulness.

Headings are like parts of an outline that have been pasted into the pages of a report. They are important to both the writer and the reader in long documents. Working on levels of headings (main headings, sub-headings, sub-sub-headings, etc.) forces the writer to think about the relationship between the different parts of your document.

For the reader, headings:

- indicate visually how the various parts of the document and the content relate to each other and their level of importance;
- help readers to find their way through long reports and to skip what they are not interested in;
- break up long stretches of text visually, with the result that a less-daunting reading task is presented to the reader;
- are an aid to revisiting parts of the document of particular interest to the reader.

## Activity 4: Using headings

Take a look at the following section of an evaluation report. The excerpt is included without the proper headings. From the drop down lists of headings select the heading that is appropriate for that place in the report. One of the headings provided is an extra one and does not belong in the report.

### Report excerpt

#### 2.3 Implementation of the strategy

From the onset, a major challenge for the IFP has been to develop, with limited resources, a rounded ILO crisis portfolio and capacity to perform. In assessing strategy implementation, the contingent nature of crisis work should be kept in mind, recognizing that preplanning and implementing established plans cannot and should not be the narrow measure of good performance. The assessment instead considers decisions related to prioritization and choice of activities and their usefulness, given the constraints faced by the team. In this context, highly impressive work has been accomplished by a skeletal staff of experts over the short period of 30 months.

Choose a heading:

Raising awareness among global and national players of the importance of jobs and livelihoods has been approached most directly through development of training tools and knowledge development materials. Although the initial plans for establishing a research centre and full-blown research network have not yet been realized, the IFP has completed a range of documents including the following:

- A series of working papers, reports, country studies, and publications addressing a wide range of research issues have been developed through involvement in different research networks, and internal technical collaboration. Some forty different technical reading materials have been published in the past three years. In general, the ILO can build on this success and offer more within the area of effective response to

vulnerable groups in crisis.

- Two recently developed manuals have met with success among users: ILO Generic Crisis Response Modules (2001) and Rapid Needs Assessment Manual (2001). More specialized manuals on emergency employment services, gender in crisis response, local economic development in post-crisis situations, the role of cooperatives, and other self-help organizations in crisis resolution and recovery, tackling employment challenges of armed conflict, and microfinance (through an ILO/SFU collaboration with UNHCR), are known and used internally and externally.
- The IFP has made headway in developing new areas of programming for the ILO and international humanitarian and reconstruction networks. Socioeconomic reintegration of ex-combatants is one area where a concerted ILO effort to research and develop effective technical cooperation is becoming effective. Manuals on this subject are now available in three languages.

Choose a heading:

Capacity building of ILO staff emphasizes inter alia a training of trainers approach, targeting different types of staff and levels of skills, with participation based on a cost-sharing scheme. IFP/CRISIS conducted two capacity building workshops on crisis response and reconstruction: an inter-regional one in Turin (Italy) in October 2000 and a sub-regional one in Kribi (Cameroon) in April 2001. In addition, a Training of Trainers workshop on crisis response was carried out for ILO Crisis Focal Points in Turin in November 2001. Additional training, including several aimed at constituents (Harare and Guinea, 2003), were funded under the ILO's 2000/01 surplus. Crisis network meetings, crisis-related workshops and training guides were all developed with involvement of staff from field and HQ units. Awareness-raising activities aimed at raising staff and constituent understanding of ILO crisis work have also been frequent and well received.

Externally, capacity building within key partner agencies has involved raising awareness of the importance of ILO-supported decent work approaches to crisis response, reconstruction, and development. This has involved participation in critical forums on crisis. Expanding and deepening ILO's working relationships and communication networks with crises programmes of key agencies has met with mixed results; however, considerable ground work has been made in better defining ILO's niche within wider inter-agency processes. Noteworthy achievements include the current revising of a framework agreement for agency collaboration with UNHCR, revised strategies and discussions for collaborating with UNDP's own Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (BCPR), and regular participation in OCHA and selected sub-committees of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC).

At national levels, capacity building among ILO constituents was planned to involve a series of training initiatives, written crisis-context guidelines for employers, trade unions and collaboration through field structures and ACTRAV and ACTEMP. To date, the IFP has completed several specialized training courses aimed at constituents with more planned in late 2003 and a number of field offices have worked with social partners to integrate crisis preparedness and response into joint work plans and as agreed priorities for future work, some of which have been partially financed through ILO surplus funds.

Choose a heading:

The primary work of the IFP team has been to coordinate actual ILO responses to crises at country levels. Towards this end, considerable programme resources and experts' time have been used. During its first full two years of operation, the IFP initiated ILO crisis response work in 19 countries, although the form and scale of action differed considerably. In 2002, interventions involved an additional eight country responses. In total, these have included post-conflict initiatives in Sierra Leone, Kosovo, East Timor, South Lebanon, DRC, the Great Lakes region, Solomon Islands, Afghanistan, Sudan, Somalia, Iraq, Cote d'Ivoire, Kenya, Palestine, Tajikistan, and Sri Lanka. In response to natural disasters, initiatives followed in Ethiopia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, India, Mozambique, Venezuela, El Salvador, and Southern Africa. Finally, the IFP has supported responses to economic crises in Indonesia and Argentina.

ILO interventions over the past three years have coincided with a high number of unexpected national crises developing during the same time period. At the time of IFP formation, few imagined so many crises posing major disruptions to peoples' work and livelihoods over such a short period. At IFP startup, staff anticipated the need to be flexible where actual crisis response would take precedence over other programme components. In assessing whether priorities among alternatives were appropriately considered, the IFP has followed its initial strategy with consistency by placing crisis response at the forefront of its workload, while maintaining a balanced programme.

Show Answers

Building on your outline, write a rough draft of the body of your report now. Do NOT edit it yet. As you work through the rest of the module, you can work on its various parts as we discuss them. You will edit and proofread towards the end of this module.

Please ensure that you do not continue until you have completed this step. You will need a first draft in order to complete the activities in the next section, **Key sections of a report**.

Keep a note of how long the drafting stage takes you and any observations about the process and record this in your **Reflections File**.

**Note:** If you will be submitting your draft to one of the editorial departments of the ILO such as OFFDOC, it is a good idea to consult with the department early on in the drafting process. This will ensure that you follow the prescribed guidelines on matters of style, presentation, referencing, and so on. Consulting ILO's editors early on will save you time in the overall process of writing your report.

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## Progress check: Working on your first draft

You've just worked through probably the most crucial section in this module. Once you plan a coherent structure to your report, your writing task will be much easier and you will be able to stay focused on your main message to your readers.

By now, you should have selected a report to write for your assignment, created an outline, and written a first draft. If you haven't done so yet, you should return to [the earlier part of the module where you were asked to submit some information about your report](#). If you are still having trouble deciding what type of report to write, or you are having difficulties with the module content up to this point, [then discuss it with your tutor](#). A short exchange may be all that's needed to get off to a good start.

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## SECTION 2: KEY ELEMENTS OF A REPORT

### Section overview

This section focuses on the skills required for writing specific parts of reports.

- introductions
- conclusions
- recommendations
- summaries (including executive summaries)
- using citations and references

Please note, the examples given are from reports that may be more or less sophisticated than those you are called upon to write. They have been chosen because they clearly show the use of the skills required in producing specific parts of reports. These skills apply to all report writing regardless of their complexity; however, not all reports you will write will necessarily have all these parts.

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### Adopting a 'style' for your report

Inconsistency in style or format creates unnecessary distraction for the reader. When readers encounter inconsistent font styles, page layouts, numbering, graphics and so on, they conclude there must be a reason for the inconsistency and waste energy trying to find the pattern. As a writer of a report with a message to convey, it is your aim to remove these distractions in order to make your readers' job as easy as possible.

This is why it is important for you to follow any prescribed styles set by the Organization, such the Publications Bureau's Guidelines for Author Units or the Deluxe OFFDOC Guide for Report Writers, both of which offer checklists, tips, and examples of good practice. Adhering to such style guides will not only save you considerable time in the planning and composition of your reports but your readers will appreciate the effort you've given to create a document that has a consistent style.

Although at the ILO, report writers are given considerable flexibility in how to organize a report, some ILO reports have predetermined structures. If you have chosen to work one of these types of reports for your assignment, then the organization of the report is already determined for you. However, the essential skills of writing good introductions, findings, conclusions, recommendations, and summaries still apply. Therefore, you should work carefully through this section of the module.

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## Assignment preparation task 7

After work on each element (**introduction, conclusion etc.**), you should work on the corresponding part of your own report. That way you will have an opportunity to apply what you are learning right away. (Please note that your report may be of a type that does not require recommendations.)

Don't forget to reflect on the process you are undertaking by completing the **Reflections** sheet for each step.

**If you have not completed the rough draft of your assignment yet, please stop work on this section and complete your draft before you continue.**

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## Progress check: Following an ILO style

If you are using a predetermined style for your report, whether it is a House style for the entire Organization or a departmental style, you should [let your tutor know](#). That will help her or him provide critical feedback on the consistency of your report.

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## Writing introductions

"It might be thought that a table of contents would serve the same purpose as an introduction. It does not. A table of contents is static, an introduction dynamic, and we want to be on the move towards our conclusion from the start."

W.H. Hindle, A Guide to Writing for the United Nations.

When readers make time to read your report, they are likely to be squeezing this reading into a busy day filled with other tasks. They will want answers to a number of questions very quickly, such as:

- Why have you written this document?
- What does it have to do with them?
- Why have they received it now?
- What have you got to say?
- How are you going to say it?

In general, these questions should be answered in your introduction. If you don't supply the answers, you run the risk of losing your readers' attention before they have really begun. Often in ILO reports, the heading "Background" is also used to serve the function of an introduction.

Why do readers need introductions? The English author, C.S. Lewis explained:

*I sometimes think that writing is like driving sheep down a road. If there is any gate to the left or right, the reader will certainly go through it.*

A clear introduction closes the gates, and helps the reader move smoothly through the report.

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## Model introduction

The best way to learn about writing introductions is to study examples.

Below is a short Governing Body report (*HIV/AIDS and Employment*) that offers some useful indicators of how a good introduction should work. Beneath the introduction, you can see the outline of the paper that follows.

### Introduction

1. The impact of HIV/AIDS on labour and employment seriously threatens the fulfilment of the ILO's goal of decent work for all. The epidemic has already caused substantial labour force losses and will, unless counteracted, continue to reduce labour force growth in many developing countries, especially in Africa. This in turn presents a major threat to sustainable development and poverty reduction. However, action by the ILO's constituents can mitigate the economic and social effects of the epidemic and contribute to reducing HIV

transmission.

2. The detrimental impact of HIV/AIDS on employment results from the effects on labour, enterprises and households, as well as on demand and investment. Of particular concern is the long-term damage to human resources through erosion of the skills base and loss of organizational capacity. In the workplace, discrimination due to HIV/AIDS is endangering rights, including income entitlements and social protection benefits.

3. The rationale for addressing HIV/AIDS in all aspects of the ILO's work, put forward by the Director-General in 2001, is strengthened by mounting evidence of the effects of HIV on employment, as well as by evidence that the Decent Work Agenda can contribute effective responses to the epidemic.

4. This paper first outlines the primary impact of HIV/AIDS on the labour force, and then discusses the effects on enterprises, employment and job creation. It draws attention to employment strategies that can help mitigate the impact of the epidemic. The paper concludes with a review of the ILO's work in this area and calls for consolidation of efforts to date.

## Outline

Introduction

Labour force losses due to HIV/AIDS

The impact of HIV/AIDS on enterprises, employment and job creation

Enterprises

The informal economy

The public sector

Income and effective demand

Investment and competitiveness

Loss of jobs and effects on employment creation

Workers in high-risk situations

The role of the ILO

The introduction is short and to the point. It has flow and reads as a piece of continuous text. It clusters parts of the report in a meaningful way to reveal the structure of the report. Unlike a summary or an overview, it does not give the specific conclusions or recommendations. However, because Governing Body reports tend not to have summaries, the report in this example does provide a very brief summary within the introduction.

An introduction is a contract between you and your readers. In it, you make specific commitments that must then be fulfilled. The most important of these is your statement about the purpose or focus of your report.

So, introductions in reports have three main functions:

- to make the purpose of the report clear;
- to explain the scope of the report: this is sometimes expressed as **Terms of Reference** (TORs) in formal reports;
- to provide the readers with a framework on which to build their understanding of the document: this is usually the last part of your introduction and serves as a transition to the body of the report.

Their lesser but still important functions are:

- to gain the reader's attention;
- to provide some background information;
- to indicate the authority under which the report is written (i.e., who requested the report).

In short, your introduction should provide your readers with whatever they need to prepare them to understand the information in your report, and act on your statement of purpose.

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## Activity 5: The functions of an introduction

The introduction provided below is from a discussion paper at the Tripartite Meeting on the Future of Work and Quality in the Information Society: The Media, Culture, Graphical Sector. Work through the introduction, and identify those parts that fulfil any of the six functions listed below:

1. make the purpose clear

2. explain the scope
3. provide the reader with a framework or scaffolding on which to build their understanding
4. gain the reader's attention
5. provide background information
6. indicate the authority under which it is written (i.e. who requested it)

For each highlighted section, choose the function(s) that you think are fulfilled by that section (you can hold down your <ctrl> key to choose more than one function). Then click on the **Show Answer** button to compare your answer.

<p><b>The future of work and quality in the Information Society: The media, culture, graphical sector</b></p> <p><b>Introduction</b></p>	
<p>For more than a decade, the Information Society concept has been at the centre of discussions on the future of work and of society in general, both for socio-economic research and policy-making, in a period greatly affected by the growing importance of information and communication technologies (ICTs) across the world. Among the 22 industrial sectors covered by the ILO's Sectoral Activities Programme, the media and entertainment industries have been at the forefront of these changes, along with the electronics and telecommunications industries.</p> <p>The guiding theme of the Tripartite Meeting in October 2004 namely, the "Future of work and quality in the Information Society", encourages reflection on several questions, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• how the Information Society affects employment numbers (job creation and redundancies), new types of jobs, employment status, labour-management relations, and the quality of working life in the sector;</li> <li>• what impact ICTs have on the sector in terms of work itself, working conditions and the concept of "quality";</li> <li>• and the ways in which the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) addressed the sector, and specifically issues relating to work and quality.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Make the purpose clear</li> <li>2. Explain the scope</li> <li>3. Provide a framework</li> <li>4. Gain the reader's attention</li> <li>5. Provide background information</li> <li>6. Indicate the authority</li> </ol> <div>Show Answer</div>
<p>This report is intended as a starting point for the Tripartite Meeting (18-22 October 2004, Geneva), enabling ILO tripartite constituents to discuss such questions in the context of the debate that took place at the first session of the WSIS (December 2003, Geneva), and providing an opportunity to make an important contribution to the Summit's second session (November 2005, Tunis). The discussion on the Information Society at WSIS tended to focus on technology, connectivity and access to information, rather than on the information content itself, its use or its quality, and largely excluded discussion of information in anything other than digital form.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Make the purpose clear</li> <li>2. Explain the scope</li> <li>3. Provide a framework</li> <li>4. Gain the reader's attention</li> <li>5. Provide background information</li> <li>6. Indicate the authority</li> </ol> <div>Show Answer</div>
<p>This ILO report will, in contrast, focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "old media" (e.g. printed information and non-digital radio and television) and their importance for the Information Society;</li> <li>• the quality and content of information, and the ability to turn information into knowledge that can be applied at work and in daily life;</li> <li>• the key role of this sector in turning simple access to ICTs, telecommunications and</li> <li>• Internet networks into real possibilities for societies to become better informed;</li> <li>• the need in the Information Society for more and better information about every aspect of life on this planet - from leisure and entertainment to agriculture, business, culture, health, local and world events - via digital and conventional media;</li> <li>• the importance of social dialogue if the introduction of ICTs is to be</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Make the purpose clear</li> <li>2. Explain the scope</li> <li>3. Provide a framework</li> <li>4. Gain the reader's attention</li> <li>5. Provide background information</li> <li>6. Indicate the authority</li> </ol> <div>Show Answer</div>



<p>effective, including discussion on changes in work organization through which the technologies can be applied to improve work and quality;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the key role of training for employability; and</li> <li>giving greater emphasis to education, training, functional and computer literacy, conventional print publishing, radio and television to help people bridge the digital divide.</li> </ul>	
<p>For the media, culture, graphical sector, the key issues referred to at the WSIS Geneva (December 2003) and in the preparatory committees were the concentration of media ownership, restrictions on freedom of expression and information, and concerns about democratic values, diversity and representation of women and minority groups in the media. All these issues could be said to affect quality, while greater diversity and press freedom are likely to contribute to higher quality media, culture, graphical products and services. Political interests often compete in this area, so that concentration of media ownership may refer to the dominance of local or foreign multinational conglomerates (often unpopular with smaller businesses, trade unions and governments), to large public sector broadcasting and print media that support government (often unpopular with smaller businesses, trade unions and opposition parties), or to other variations (e.g. multinational conglomerates that support governments, public sector broadcasting that criticizes governments). Paradoxically, it is possible to argue both that cultural diversity has been enhanced and that it has been impaired by state-controlled or multinational media and entertainment enterprises in specific countries, and quality and employment may be increased or reduced by such entities.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Make the purpose clear</li> <li>2. Explain the scope</li> <li>3. Provide a framework</li> <li>4. Gain the reader's attention</li> <li>5. Provide background information</li> <li>6. Indicate the authority</li> </ol> <div>Show Answer</div>

## Assignment preparation task 8: Writing introductions

Revise the introduction of your report in the light of the points covered in this section and the examples given, or write an introduction if you did not write one in your first draft

In your **Reflections File**, record your observations about this step. Also, record the length of time taken for this step.

## Writing conclusions

Reports that are primarily analytical usually require conclusions. These are sometimes combined with recommendations. Executive summaries and large sections of major reports can also be improved by having conclusions. With some long reports, like the reports of the Director-General, a conclusion may take up an entire section or chapter of the report. In cases like this, you will see conclusions for each chapter.

It is surprising how many ILO reports fail to make use of conclusions. This is a missed opportunity because a conclusion enables a writer to reinforce the main messages of a report. A conclusion summarizes the report as a whole, drawing inferences from the entire process about what has been found, or decided, and how it impacts on the topic of the report.

Do not confuse the addition of a conclusion with adding unnecessary length to your report. A conclusion demonstrates good organization. When written well, it can help make the reader's task easier. A report that is too long is usually the result of poor planning or using too many words when a few will do.

With a good conclusion, the writer can pull all the threads of the report details together into a thesis and relate that to the initial purpose for writing the report. In other words, the conclusion should confirm for the reader that the report's purpose has been achieved. It should also confirm that the writer/reader contract set up in the report's introduction has, in fact, been fulfilled.

### Model conclusion

Let's have a look at a report that includes an effective conclusion.

Following is the table of contents of a working paper called Structural Adjustment and Agriculture in Uganda. This is a well-organized report, and the table of contents demonstrates the organization of the report very well. It also gives you some idea of the main points raised. After the table of contents, you will see the conclusion. Note how the conclusion, although brief, refers back to the content areas of the report and serves as a final summary.

### Contents



## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. Background to the crisis
- 1.2. Economic situation, 1979-84
- 1.3. NRM economic policy pre-ERP

## 2. The economic recovery programme

- 2.1. Economic policy under the ERP
- 2.2. Impact of the ERP
- 2.3. Uniqueness of the Uganda programme

## 3. Agriculture under structural adjustment in Uganda

- 3.1. Agriculture in Uganda
- 3.2. Agricultural policies under the ERP
- 3.3. Impact of the ERP

## 4. Recommendations and conclusion

- 4.1. Recommendations
- 4.2. Conclusion

### Conclusion

Given the severity of the economic and social problems facing the NRM Government, no choice remained to it but to launch the Economic Recovery Programme (ERP) as a prerequisite for obtaining financial support from multilateral and bilateral donors. The implementation of the ERP saw a major turnaround in the economy. Positive economic growth has been recorded, inflation has been tamed, the fiscal deficit has been reduced as a result of high tax revenues and rationalization of development expenditures, and current account deficits have declined along with improvements in the overall balance of payments and international reserves.

However, gains have yet to percolate down to the average person. With agriculture still the dominant sector in the economy, sustainability of the initial improvements should be closely tied with and dependent on agricultural growth. Most smallholders have not benefited from the ERP in the short term. Devaluations and liberalization of the foreign exchange markets have turned the terms of trade against food crops, drastically increasing the cost of inputs and labour without much institutional support for credit. On the positive side, however, liberalization has improved the availability of inputs.

The need for a more comprehensive policy that places equal emphasis on both the tradables and food crops, and provides strong linkages between agriculture and agro industries cannot be overemphasized. An agricultural programme that addresses the structural constraints in the agricultural sector will certainly provide a strong base for long-term economic growth and prosperity.

### The value of conclusions

Remember, the last words you write have the best chance of being remembered. For that reason, you should take advantage of the power of an effective conclusion. Many ILO reports that omit conclusions deny their writers the opportunity to reinforce their main points.

Some people find it extremely difficult to write useful conclusions. Remember, your conclusion is a succinct re-statement of the purpose of your report, and your supporting evidence. It is more than just a list of your main points. You may find it easier to write a conclusion if you leave the report draft aside for a day or two, then reread the draft and write your conclusion without further reference to the text.

### Activity 6: Evaluating a conclusion

In this activity, you will analyse a conclusion from a chapter in a report from the International Labour Conference, Towards a fair deal for migrant workers in the global economy (2004). The 210 page report is well organized into chapters, each of which is structured like a smaller report with an introduction, body, and conclusion.

The outline headings are provided in the example to show you the scope of the chapter.

Read the conclusion and then answer the questions that follow. You can check your answers with the suggested answers.

## **Chapter 2. Migration and its consequences**

### **2.1. Introductory remarks**

### **2.2. Impact of migration on countries of origin**

- (a) Reducing population pressure and unemployment.
- (b) Emigration of skilled persons – The brain drain
- (c) Social costs
- (d) Flows of remittances
- (e) Transnational communities and home country development
- (f) Return migration
- (g) Migration and trade
- (h) Migration and overall economic performance

### **2.3. Impact of immigration on destination countries**

- (a) Impact on employment and wages
- (b) Fiscal impact of immigration
- (c) Social consequences of immigration

### **2.4. Preliminary conclusions**

### **2.4. Preliminary conclusions**

122. We live in an age of global migration, with more migrants moving in more ways to more countries than ever before. As in the past, this migration is mostly beneficial for the migrants that move, the countries that welcome them, and the countries they leave. The challenge is to manage the migration that is occurring in a way that maximizes benefits for all parties involved.

123. Origin countries have begun to recognize that their nationals abroad can be an important source of finance for development, as their remittances can cover family living expenses as well as investment for job creation. Migrants who return or circulate between sending and receiving countries can also be an important source of new technologies and ideas. When recruitment, remittances, and returns come together in a virtuous circle, as in the Indian IT sector, the result can be an important new export industry that also benefits those who did not migrate.

124. The ambition and drive that motivates people to migrate generally helps migrants in many countries to find jobs, work hard, and benefit both themselves and host country nationals. In most cases, migrants have only slight negative effects on the wages of nationals, and they usually pay more in taxes than they receive in tax-supported services. There is also little evidence that migration leads to much displacement of nationals in employment.

125. Finally, demographic trends in some regions suggest that immigration will be an important component of a long-term solution to the anticipated problems raised by ageing. Along with raising labour productivity and increasing labour force participation - especially among older workers - countries will need to consider more immigration if a decline in levels of welfare is to be avoided. Promoting consensus on these long-term issues is clearly the task of responsible political leadership, since immigration always imposes social adaptation which must be supported by appropriate public policy.

## **Questions about the conclusion**

Question	Answer

<p>What is the statement of purpose in this report?</p> <p>As a result of reading this report, the reader will know...</p>	<div></div> <div>Show Answer</div>
<p>Paragraph 124 refers specifically to what part(s) of the outline?</p>	<div></div> <div>Show Answer</div>
<p>Which sentence in paragraph 125 represents a finding from the report on which the writer can base his or her conclusions?</p>	<div></div> <div>Show Answer</div>
<p>Does paragraph 123 consider positive and negative impacts of migration on the country of origin?</p>	<div></div> <div>Show Answer</div>

## Assignment preparation task 9: Writing conclusions

Now, as the next step in your assignment preparation, you should revise the conclusion of your report in the light of the points covered in this section and the examples given, or write a conclusion if you did not include one in your first draft. Remember to ensure that it is based on discussion within the body of your report.

Record in your **Reflections File** any observations you have about this step. Also, record the length of time taken for this step.

## Writing recommendations

Recommendations are often included with a report's conclusion, although they serve different purposes. Whereas a conclusion offers you the opportunity to summarize or review your report's main ideas, recommendations suggest actions to be taken in response to the findings of a report.

ILO reports often position recommendations as a way forward. In this way, they become tied to the next steps that follow after the report. With background reports, occasional papers and discussion papers, recommendations are offered as potential starting points for the ensuing discussion. As a result, your recommendations provide an essential focus for readers. In Governing Body reports, recommendations often serve as points of decision for the Governing Body. Usually, when stated as a point of decision, the recommendation is meant to include a set of earlier recommendations in the report.

In any case, your report structure should lead up to the recommendations and provide justification for them. Your report should actually grow backwards from your recommendations. Having your recommendations accepted then becomes your statement of purpose.

### What makes a good recommendation?

Effective recommendations:

- describe a suggested course of action to be taken to solve a particular problem;
- are written as action statements without justification;
- are stated in clear, specific language;
- should be expressed in order of importance;
- are based on the case built up in the body of the report;
- are written in parallel structure.

A word of caution about writing recommendations: you should always consider your relationship with the reader first. If you have no authority to make recommendations, the reader may be hostile to their presence.

### A sample set of recommendations

The following example comes from an evaluation report on the *InFocus Programme on Crisis Response and Reconstruction (IFP/CRISIS)*. The report is approximately 40 pages in length and includes a set of recommendations that runs for two pages. An excerpt from the recommendations is included here for analysis. Scroll over the parts of this section to read more about how the recommendations are used in this example.

#### 4. Recommendations

Crises are a permanent feature of today's world. While their form, cause and effects differ, the ILO will need to contend with their debilitating impact on its member States. The short but rich experience of IFP/CRISIS since its inception has demonstrated the validity of an ILO contribution to reconstruction efforts following a crisis. Experience and knowledge has been gained and consolidated on employment and social protection in post-crisis reconstruction and rehabilitation. Likewise, much has been learned in the collaboration with UN and other specialized agencies and units in crisis response. The evaluation has noted that IFP/CRISIS had continually learned from these experiences and adapted modalities of its interventions. Nevertheless, it bears repeating some of the salient findings which will require further adaptation and possible reconsideration of present modalities.

Next steps...

Each crisis is intrinsically distinct, even within the same broad category. Lessons learned should enable the ILO to narrow and apply the criteria used on whether an ILO intervention is warranted or not. The ILO's crisis response will need to be prioritized and targeted. The final decision to intervene should be shared with those most likely to be directly involved in managing the response. This should lead to a more pronounced role of the regions. IFP/CRISIS should continue its catalyst role by providing a centralized capacity to support effective response.

Recommendations:

- IFP/CRISIS should redefine its own criteria for determining those crises it will support.
- Additionally, regions should work towards defining and applying their own criteria in line with their available means to support crisis work.
- IFP/CRISIS should operate in the style of a task force, with the capacity to coordinate an ILO wide response to a crisis. The regions must participate more directly in such responses, including in assessing the decision to intervene or not.
- The multidisciplinary characteristic of crisis response and consequent responsibilities of IFP/CRISIS need to be further highlighted.
- IFP/CRISIS should rely more on regions to indicate the appropriate form and level of capacity needed in crisis preparedness and response, integrating constituent interests and needs into the process. Regions should attach, to these, resources to ensure that related plans of action can be implemented.
- Regions should prioritize and support those crisis hotspots where need and interest are greatest. IFP/CRISIS can target training and other capacity building initiatives accordingly.

Not all recommendations need to be set out in a bulleted list as in the example above. They can be written just as effectively in paragraph form, particularly if you feel that each recommendation requires further explanation or

background. The main point is to ensure that you have provided specific suggestions for action to be taken in response to the issues raised in the report.

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## Activity 7: Improving recommendations

Read through the recommendations below. Improve the wording of these recommendations by rewriting the sentence in the field below the example. You should base your comments and revisions on the writing effective recommendations principles on the previous page.

Involvement of the private sector in dairy and meat processing could ensure incentive prices for the livestock farmers. As well, the fishing subsector could benefit from more cold storage and processing facilities. For the traditional exports subsector, the following specific recommendations arise: replacing ageing coffee trees with new high-yielding and disease-resistant varieties; improving seed production and distribution for the cotton industry; encouraging private sector involvement in coffee processing and cotton ginning.	
Write your answer	
<a href="#">Show hint</a>	
<a href="#">Show Solution</a>	

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## Assignment preparation task 10: Writing recommendations

If your report lends itself to having recommendations, review them now. If you can, improve them in the light of the points covered in this section and the examples given.

Record in your **Reflections File** any observations you have about this step. Also, record the length of time taken for this step.

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## Writing summaries

Many long reports are written at the ILO; few are read in their entirety. The ability to capture your main points in summary form is the key to getting your message across and achieving your desired response from your reader. A well-written summary will encourage readers to tackle your document or, at a minimum, to find details within it relevant to their needs. A poor summary will minimize your chances of having your work read.

Surprisingly few ILO reports have mandatory summaries. You should consider including summaries wherever possible, even for short reports. A well-written summary prepares your reader for the detail of your report and increases your chances of at least getting across your main ideas if the report is just skimmed. Interestingly, increased use of the web is increasing use of summaries. Many reports are introduced with a summary on a webpage before the report. In a case like this, it is critical that your summary provide a brief but comprehensive rendering of the report.

Other terms similar to **summary** that you may come across in your report writing work include:

**Introduction.** An introduction usually relates the topic under discussion to a wider field and gives necessary background information. As you now know, it should clearly state the purpose of the report and give its scope. It should also explain the arrangement or structure of the report in order to give the reader a roadmap or framework with which

to read the report. It does not summarize conclusions or recommendations.

**Abstract.** An abstract specifically refers to a summary of scholarly or academic text.

**Synopsis or outline.** These are more detailed than an abstract, both retaining the point-by-point ordering of the original. They may be drawn up by either the author or by someone else. A synopsis is common in long ILO reports such as the report of the World Commission, e.g., *A fair globalization - Creating opportunities for all* (2004). Its synopsis is over 7 pages for a 170 page report.

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## Summaries and executive summaries

Summaries and executive summaries serve the same purpose: they provide a brief version of a longer report. An executive summary, as the name suggests, targets a reader who makes funding, personnel or policy decisions and needs information quickly and efficiently. The main point about a summary is that it should be informative and not just descriptive; that is, it should not just describe the coverage of the report but also present what is in it. For example, an executive summary should include the recommendations, not just say 'Six recommendations were made'.

These guidelines should help you create effective summaries regardless of the size of the task. Summaries must:

- be written in well-constructed paragraphs that flow logically from one to the next;
  - follow an introduction-body-conclusion structure and be self-contained;
  - discuss purpose, findings, conclusions and especially recommendations;
  - include only essential or the most significant information;
  - add no new material;
  - not assume complete background knowledge in the reader;
  - use simple and concise language;
  - be less than five per cent of the original document and preferably less than one page for short reports;
  - be placed at the beginning of the report, after the table of contents but before the introduction;
  - be given a Roman numeral, rather than an Arabic number, as a page number.
- 

## Evaluating a summary

In this example, you will look at a very brief summary for a large document. The World Employment Report is over 250 pages long. It has an Overview, which itself runs to 22 pages. The example below is a summary of the Overview document. It is provided on the webpage where the entire is available to the public for downloading. Read the summary and consider whether it fulfils the purposes of a well-written summary.

### World Employment Report 2004-2005: Employment, Productivity and Poverty Reduction

#### Summary

Today there are 550 million people who work, but still live on less than US\$ 1 a day. These "working poor" represent 20 per cent of total world employment. In spite of the record levels of global unemployment, the reality for most of the world's poor is that they must work - often for long hours, in poor working conditions and without basic rights and representation - at work that is not productive enough to enable them to lift themselves and their families out of poverty. While it is clearly the case that employment is central to poverty reduction, it is "decent and productive" employment that matters, not employment alone.

This employment challenge has taken centre stage in the global community, most recently in the Report of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization, which drew attention to the need to make decent and productive employment a central objective of macroeconomic and social policies as a key endeavour to promote fairer globalization. Also, the centrality of decent employment to reaching the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals, particularly in halving the share of those in extreme poverty in the total population by 2015, is widely accepted and becoming more and more integrated as a component of national policy.

Given this backdrop, the World Employment Report 2004-05 examines the interrelationship between employment creation, productivity growth, and poverty reduction, exploring key issues relevant to the debate. It investigates whether gains in productivity lead to employment losses and, if so, the conditions under which this might occur. Given that productivity growth assumes a certain amount of flexibility of the labour force, this Report also examines how a particular degree of employment stability can be maintained without sacrificing long-term growth. Here, social dialogue plays a central role in maintaining the balance between economic and social objectives.

The report shows that bridging the "global productivity divide", particularly in parts of the economy where the majority of people work - such as in agriculture, small scale-enterprises or the urban informal economy - is essential for fighting poverty and stimulating growth in both output and "decent and productive" employment. Decent work has many components; the fundamentally economic one of an income adequate enough to escape from poverty, ultimately must come from growth - growth in output, growth in productivity, and growth in jobs.

The World Employment Report 2004-05 is the fifth in a series of ILO reports that offer a global perspective on current employment issues.

## Steps in summary writing

Here is an activity that you can try on your own report. This is a useful strategy for generating executive summaries. While the summary is placed first in a document, it is usually the **last** item written, so you should do this once you have completed your entire report. You'll notice that this process is very similar to the process of writing any document, only it is focused on organizing the main points of your report in a much shorter form.

<b>Step 1:</b>	<b>Review your main purpose</b>
	Read through your completed document from beginning to end (never attempt to write a summary before the document is completed). Immediately write down the main purpose of the document in a short paragraph.
<b>Step 2:</b>	<b>Paraphrase your main points</b>
	Reread the document, but this time with pen in hand or with a new document file open. As you find the main points, summarize them in a few words (identifying topic sentences in paragraphs should help). Do not write down chunks of text from the document. Paraphrasing is much better than copying as it will retain the message in a more concise manner.
<b>Step 3:</b>	<b>Note final points</b>
	Note any conclusions and recommendations made. Think about the subject-reader-context-purpose relationship and the overall structure of the document.
<b>Step 4:</b>	<b>Write the first draft of the summary</b>
	Write a first draft of your summary from your notes without referring to the main document.
<b>Step 5:</b>	<b>Revise your draft</b>
	Reread the document and make changes to your draft summary if you discover omissions or faulty emphasis. Revise your draft to improve paragraph structure and flow between paragraphs.
<b>Step 6:</b>	<b>Make final checks</b>

## Assignment preparation task 11: Writing a summary

At this point, you should have a draft report complete with a revised introduction, conclusion, and set of recommendations (if appropriate to your type of report). Now you should write a summary for your report. Remember that it should be in proportion to the length of your report. For example, if your report is within the recommended 4-10 pages, the summary should range from a third of a page to one page long.

Record in your **Reflections File** any observations you have about this step. Also, record the length of time taken for this step.

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## Using references and citations

Many if not most reports are supported by references and citations. In such cases, it is not uncommon to refer to previous studies or reports to bolster your own arguments or conclusions. A well researched report often uses the work of others to provide some background to the issue that is under consideration. As a report writer, you need to alert your reader when you are using the ideas or words of another author. The way to do this is through citations and reference lists.

Citing an author simply means acknowledging their words or ideas within your text. For example:

“Human resource management emphasizes fairness and distributive justice, especially to enhance organizational performance (Folger and Cropanzano, 1998).”

In this example the writer acknowledges that the description of human resource management is not an original idea, but is borrowed from the authors Folger and Cropanzano. For an in-text citation, it is enough to provide the name of the author(s) cited followed by the year of publication. Full details of the source document are provided in the reference list. Following are some examples of how citations are used in the text itself and in a reference list, using the Harvard style.

In-text citation	Reference list entries
Human resource management emphasizes fairness and distributive justice, especially to enhance organizational performance (Folger and Cropanzano, 1998).	Folger, R and Cropanzano R, 1998, <i>Organizational Justice and Human Resource Management</i> , Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage.
They tend to be what McEvoy (1999) calls social-community movements.	McEvoy, A 1999, 'The relevance of theory to the safe schools movement,' in R R Verdugo (ed.), <i>Quality Schools, Safe Schools, Special Issue of Education and Urban Society</i> , vol. 31, 275-285.

For published documents, all citations need to be confirmed in the editorial process. It makes the editors' work a lot easier if the citations and references are all clearly marked and sourced properly according to an accepted reference style.

For ILO reports, Official Documents (OFFDOC) recommends the Harvard style of referencing. The resources page of this course provides a more detailed list of variations of reference entries using the Harvard style. Please consult this document when you are writing your report. It is better to implement the style as you write your report rather than leave it all for the end.

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## Common elements of reports

Although the types of reporting tasks covered in this module vary greatly in function and form, they do have some common elements:

- Analytical writing
  - They all require some analytical writing. Few readers want a blow-by-blow description on how you arrived at your major points. They want you to do the work and give them the essence of the points you have arrived at.
- Appropriate length



- They need to be long enough to do the job and no longer. There is no intrinsic merit in length.
  - Reader focus
    - They need to focus on your readers, and the response you are trying to elicit from them.
  - Executive summaries
    - Executive summaries are useful for any reports that are not produced in summary template format. Even an extremely short executive summary up front will pay you good dividends in reader appreciation and increased understanding of your message.
  - Structure
    - Longer reports need structure: an introduction, a body and a conclusion.
  - Variety
    - Reports should be neither all continuous text nor all bullets or dot points. Let your consideration for the reader dictate how you write. If the relationship between various points is important, write in continuous prose (full paragraphs). If various elements or lists are involved, use bullet points to separate them and make it easier for your reader.
  - Powerful writing
    - Short sentences, a verb-based active style and simple vocabulary make writing more powerful and persuasive.
- 

## Progress check: Completing your report

You are now two-thirds of the way through this module. If you have been working through the module in sequence and finishing off each part of your report as it has been discussed in the module, then you should be far along in the writing process. How is it going?

Don't forget to keep your **Reflections File** up to date with observations, reflections, and recordings of the writing process.

[Remember, your tutor is there if you need to refocus or catch up or just to stay in contact.](#)

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## SECTION 3: WORKING WITH VISUAL INFORMATION

### Section overview

An effective report depends not only on clear language; but also on professional presentation. A report that is visually well designed, including formatting, style, and page layout, will contribute to your credibility as a writer and your report's credibility.

Apart from the page design of your work, reports can be greatly enhanced by an intelligent use of visual information. This type of presentation includes diagrams, tables (especially for figures and statistics), graphs, illustrations and maps. They can be invaluable aids for your audience because they condense text, clarify relationships, and highlight patterns.

### Using visual information to explain ideas

In some departments or with certain high profile reports, you may have access to professional graphic artists who can create visual representations of a concept or trend in a way that improves upon mere textual explanations. The Global Employment Trends report is a good example that makes extensive use of graphs and charts to explain and highlight complex information. This section is mainly targeted at those who would like to enhance their reports with graphical information but who are writing this report without the support of other specially trained staff.

### Explaining information that is presented visually

It is not enough simply to add a visual element in place of descriptive or analytical text. You have to know how to use your visual elements, and one key factor in their effective use is knowing how to integrate the visual elements of your report with your writing. That is, you can use the visual to enhance the written parts of your report, but you must also

be able to use your writing to enhance the contribution made by the visual element. That means using your text to interpret or highlight main points within a diagram, an image, or a chart.

## Considerations for using visual information

In this section, you will reflect on why and how to incorporate visual elements in your report. When deciding whether or not to use visual elements and considering how to use them most effectively, keep the following determining factors in mind:

- relevance and purpose
- clarification, simplification and emphasis
- reinforcement and explanation

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## Relevance and purpose

### Determine whether you need visual elements

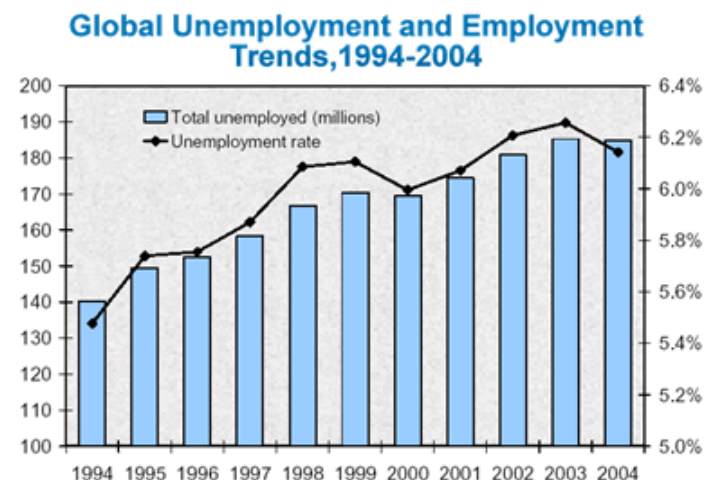
Do not use a graph or image just to decorate. Your decision to present information visually should relate back to your purpose and your audience. If you think that a visual element will make a difference to your reader's comprehension or reception of the information, then you should use it. If your reader has to guess why you've included a particular visual element, then it clearly is not serving your purposes and is instead a distraction.

### Determine what kind of visual element to use

Statistical information is often better presented in visual format, through graphs, charts, or tables. However, you have to decide what type of format is most suitable for your reader.

Look at the following two presentations of the same information. Which one shows the information in a more meaningful way? In this case, conveying trends related to employment and unemployment is integral to the purpose of the report. Which one gives a better sense of the idea of a trend?

Global Unemployment and Employment Trends, 199-2004		
Year	Total Unemployed (millions)	Unemployment rate
1994	140	5.5%
1995	150	5.7%
1996	153	5.7%
1997	158	5.9%
1998	167	6.1%
1999	170	6.15%
2000	169	6.0%
2001	172	6.1%
2002	180	6.2%
2003	185	6.25%
2004	184	6.15%



Source: ILO, *Global Employment Trends Model*, 2005; see also Technical Note in ILO, *Global Employment Trends* (Geneva, 2004).<sup>2</sup>

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## Clarification, simplification and emphasis

Complicated descriptions of information can confuse your audience if the information is not presented or explained effectively. Visuals like charts, diagrams, and flowcharts provide clarification of detailed descriptions and show relationships, trends, patterns, and processes.

However, at the same time you need to decide what level of detail will be most helpful and appropriate for your audience. The level of detail can also help determine what points of information you wish to bring out for your audience's attention. In this way, you can help your reader focus on a particular piece of data in the context of a more comprehensive set of information.

### Example 1: Highlighting what you want to emphasize

Compare the following two tables, which contain the same information. One has been formatted to focus the reader's attention on the economic and financial benefits; the other displays all the information as equal. Consider which is more effective.

Table 1.2. Total economic costs and benefits of eliminating child labour over the entire period (2000 to 2020), in \$billion, PPP  
(Percentage of aggregate annual gross national income in parentheses)

Region	Transitional countries	Asia	Latin America	Sub-Saharan Africa	North Africa and Middle East	Global
Total costs	25.6	458.8	76.6	139.5	59.7	760.3
Education supply	8.5	299.1	38.7	107.4	39.6	493.4
Transfer implementation	0.7	6.3	1.2	1.5	1.1	10.7
Interventions	0.4	2.4	5.8	0.6	0.2	9.4
Opportunity cost	16.0	151.0	30.9	30.1	18.8	246.8
Total benefits	149.8	3321.3	407.2	723.9	504.1	5106.3
Education	145.8	3307.2	403.4	721.8	500.2	5078.4
Health	4.0	14.0	3.8	2.1	3.9	28.0
<b>Net economic benefits</b>	<b>124.2</b>	<b>2862.4</b>	<b>330.6</b>	<b>584.4</b>	<b>444.4</b>	<b>4346.1</b>
	<b>(5.1%)</b>	<b>(27.0%)</b>	<b>(9.3%)</b>	<b>(54.0%)</b>	<b>(23.2%)</b>	<b>(22.2%)</b>
Transfer payments	13.1	125.8	23.5	29.1	22.1	213.6
<b>Net financial benefits</b>	<b>111.1</b>	<b>2736.6</b>	<b>307.1</b>	<b>555.4</b>	<b>422.3</b>	<b>4132.5</b>
	<b>(4.6%)</b>	<b>(25.9%)</b>	<b>(8.7%)</b>	<b>(51.3%)</b>	<b>(22.0%)</b>	<b>(21.1%)</b>

Table 1.2. Total economic costs and benefits of eliminating child labour over the entire period (2000 to 2020), in \$billion, PPP  
(Percentage of aggregate annual gross national income in parentheses)

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Interventions	0.4	2.4	5.8	0.6	0.2	9.4
Opportunity cost	16.0	151.0	30.9	30.1	18.8	246.8
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Education	145.8	3307.2	403.4	721.8	500.2	5078.4
Health	4.0	14.0	3.8	2.1	3.9	28.0

Net economic benefits	124.2	2862.4	330.6	584.4	444.4	4346.1
	(5.1%)	(27.0%)	(9.3%)	(54.0%)	(23.2%)	(22.2%)
Transfer payments	13.1	125.8	23.5	29.1	22.1	213.6
Net financial benefits	111.1	2736.6	307.1	555.4	422.3	4132.5
	(4.6%)	(25.9%)	(8.7%)	(51.3%)	(22.0%)	(21.1%)

This table is from Investing in Every Child: An Economic Study of the Costs and Benefits of Eliminating Child Labour, International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) 2003. Page 4.

## Explanation and reinforcement

While visual presentations allow you to emphasize important points that might otherwise not be obvious in a written account, what you choose to include in your text will also serve to make your points more clearly understood. For this reason, what you write in the text that accompanies a visual element is important.

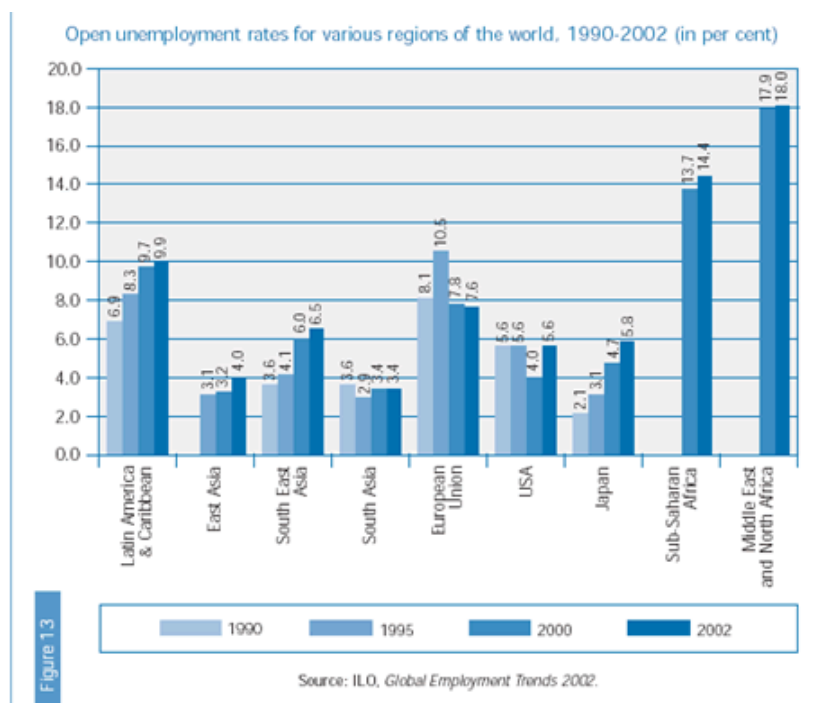
In the case of photographs and images, your purpose may simply be to convey an impression. Your written work will necessarily need to bring this out clearly in the text but a photo strategically placed can provide just the right amount of enhancement to make your text compelling.

## Making the graphic and the text work together

Text introduces the graphic and explains its significance, cross-referencing appropriately (e.g. Figure 1: Title of figure) and referring to the label (Figure 1, or Fig. 1). Notice how in this example, the text reinforces the idea of variation of unemployment trends.

### A Fair Globalization: Creating Opportunities for All

For the world as a whole latest ILO estimates show that open unemployment has increased over the last decade to about 188 million in 2003. However, employment performance over the past two decades has varied across regions (Figure 13). It is also noticeable that within the developing world unemployment rates have increased since 1990 in Latin America and the Caribbean and South-East Asia, and since 1995 in East Asia.



A Fair Globalization: Creating Opportunities for All. World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization. Page 40.

## Formatting considerations

### Placement

Ideally, you should place graphics just after the point where they are needed. If pagination makes this impossible, be sure to label accurately so that they can be easily found by the reader.

Notice in the following example of a "callout box" how the juxtaposition of two written elements visually enhances the reference to the Millennium Development Goals:

#### Achieving key goals

476. At the Millennium Summit, Heads of State and Government agreed to work together to build a safer, more prosperous and equitable world for all by 2015. They adopted eight global goals, all of them to be achieved by 2015. These goals commit the entire global community – rich and poor countries together. We regard them as a minimum for a decent world. We should move, on this foundation, towards a common understanding of a socio-economic floor for the global economy.

#### The Millennium Development Goals

In September 2000, 189 Heads of State and Government committed their countries – rich and poor – to meet a set of time-bound and measurable goals by 2015:

- Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- Achieve universal primary education
- Promote gender equality and empower women
- Reduce child mortality
- Improve maternal health
- Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
- Ensure environmental sustainability
- Develop a global partnership for development.

A fair globalization: Creating opportunities for all. Page 106.

### Size

Ideally you want illustrations to be between one half to one quarter of the vertical size of the page. You want them to fit on the page interspersed with text.



Twenty-three years of war have ravaged the mental health and psychosocial functioning of the people in Afghanistan. Killing, executions, massive persecution, forced internal displacement, fear associated with living in mined areas, and the latest escalation of violence have left an indelible mark on the population. In addition, the psychological impact of living in uncertainty affects at least three million Afghan refugees.

## Margins

Make sure that your graphics fit neatly and comfortably within standard margins. Don't have the graphic spilling over into the right or left margins. (You can, however, place images effectively outside the text frame if your page design has adequate white space available.)

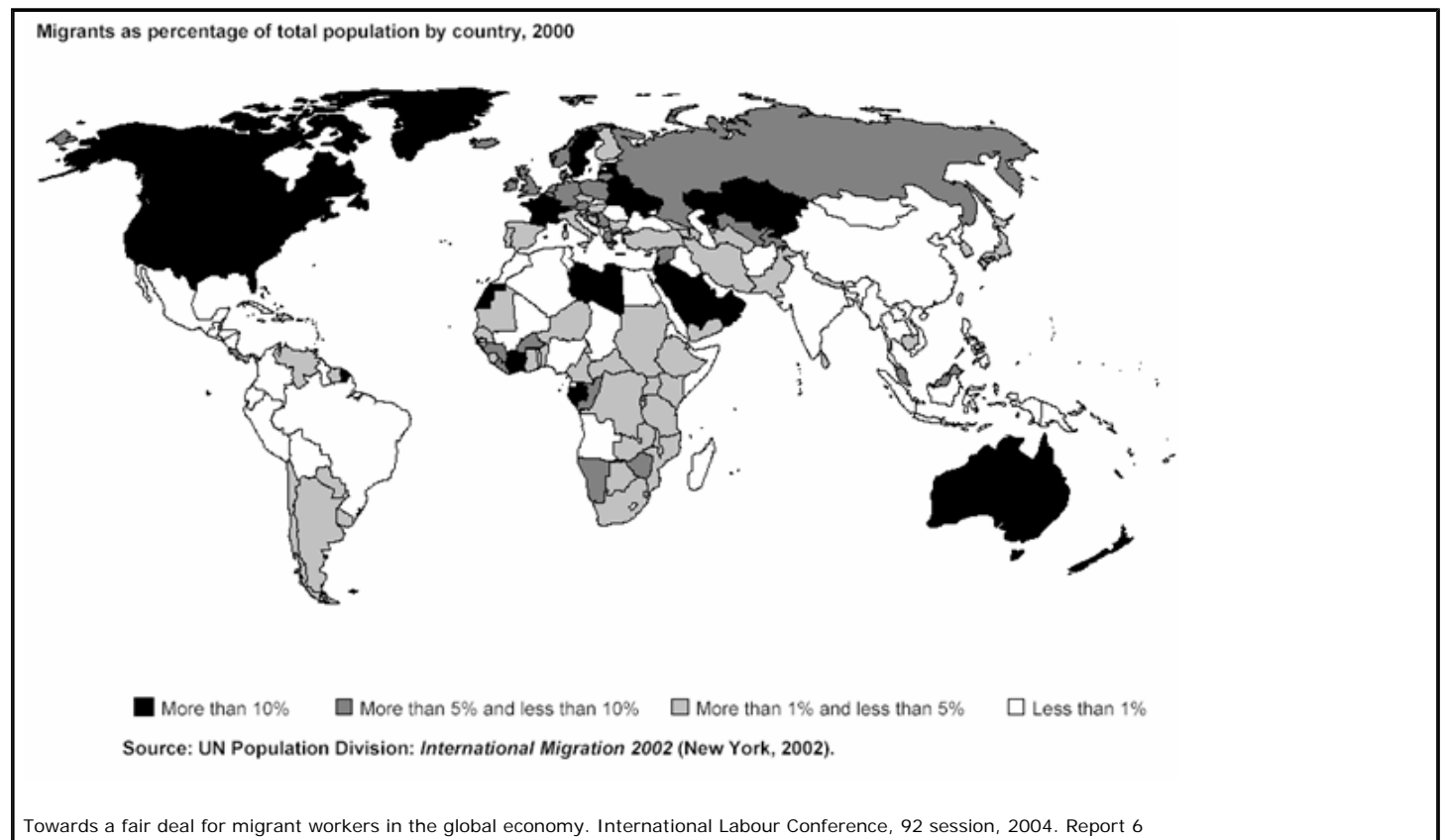
Allow the equivalent of at least two blank lines above and below the graphic.

## Level of technical detail

Pitch your graphics at the right level for your readers. No chip circuitry diagrams for computer beginners!

## Key

If the graphic has shadings, colours, line styles, or other details that have a special meaning in the illustration, these should be indicated in a key in an unused corner of the illustration that deciphers their meaning.



## Title

Except in special cases, graphics should have titles, and these titles should be numbered (Figure 1, Figure 2, and so on). Tables and figures should use separate numbering sequences. In long reports, figures are often listed in their own table of contents.

## Tables

Given the nature of ILO reporting, the most likely need you will have for graphics is the presentation of statistics or figures in a table format. Tables are also the easiest visual to create with your standard word processing software.

Because tables can contain quite a lot of information in a short space, don't let your readers figure the information out for themselves. Make reference to the table in the text just preceding it. Explain the general significance of the data in the table. Use your text to highlight significance: don't repeat the contents of the table verbatim in the text.

Tables are very useful for portraying exact or detailed values. However, they are also useful for creating associations between short descriptions of text. For example, the following table is used to show a range of initiatives under the same programme:

**Table 1: Crisis programme initiatives: major sub-components and means of action**

	Knowledge and tools development	Advocacy and resource mobilisation	Capacity building of the Office and constituents	Country needs assessment and programme formulation
<b>Early Warning and Prevention</b>	Making use of decent work indicators and others to develop a barometer to track and predict potential eruption of a crisis and alert constituents and the Office.  Creating tools that would assist constituents to detect early warning signs	Promoting social dialogue, social inclusion and employment as a means to prevent igniting social and political turmoil.	"Training of trainers" Training constituents and the Office to build capacity to detect early warning signs.	Making use of the designated crisis focal points world-wide to stay informed about the political/social/economical climate in crisis-prone countries.
<b>Crisis preparedness</b>	Develop rapid data collection/assessment methods  Mobilize and participate in research networks to throw light on pertinent research topics that are highly relevant for defining a comprehensive crisis response.  Undertake topic-specific research to further refine the IFP's approach, e.g., the study conducted on the role of the private sector in crisis response (Gujarat, India).	Active networking and exchanging information with international agencies, regional banks, and the donor community to keep abreast of recent developments.	Build capacity for crisis prevention and preparedness through training  Mainstream capacity and concerns for crisis response to all programmes in the regions and in HQ through the designated focal point system.	Coordinate interventions with other agencies through active participation in inter-agency sub-committees and networks.
<b>Emergency rehabilitation and development</b>	Develop tools and for rapid needs assessment, crisis response modules, and specialized manuals that address the role of cooperatives, and/or crisis response,	Mobilize resources (through the RAF and external sources) to ensure rapid resource availability and allocation.	Build capacity for crisis response through training.  Mobilize the Office and constituents to coordinate in the crisis	Organize and send rapid needs assessment teams to crisis affected locations and develop response projects

An independent evaluation of the InFocus Programme on Crisis Response and Reconstruction (Oct, 2003) page 7.

## Graphs and charts

Software packages like Excel make it easy for writers to insert professional-looking graphs into Word reports.

Graphs make it visually easier for the reader to grasp general trends. However, for some readers who need the detail of actual figures, a table may be better. Always choose a method of presenting information graphically that fits with the reader's needs.

### Types of graphs

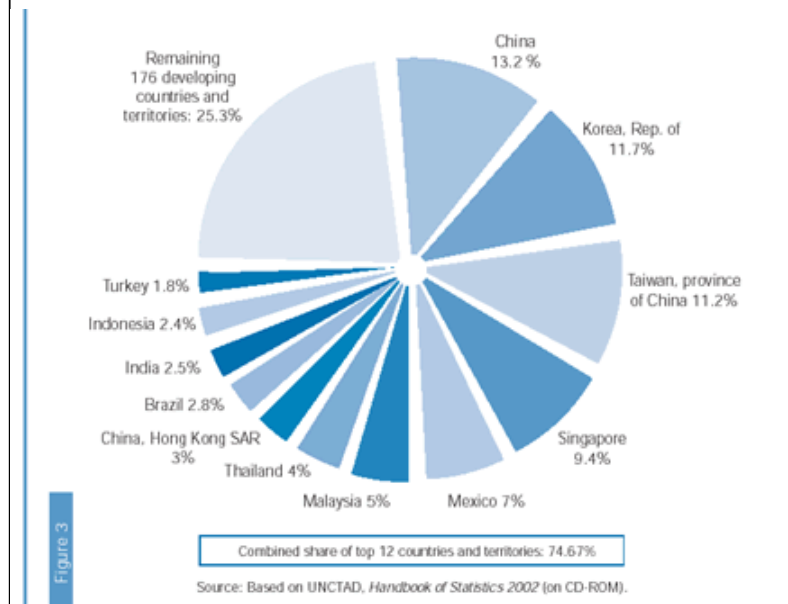
Excel gives you access to a large range of graph types. Not all types are suitable for all tasks. The following gives you some guidance on which of the main types to use in various circumstances and shows some effective UNAIDS examples.



**Pie graphs** may be used to depict proportions that make up a whole, such as budget categories, or survey breakdowns such as below. Use pie graphs to show data as percentages of a whole, or in other words, in proportions.

### Key characteristics of globalization

138. This trade expansion did not occur uniformly across all countries, with the industrialized countries and a group of 12 developing countries accounting for the lion's share. In contrast, the majority of developing countries did not experience significant trade expansion (Figure 3). Indeed, most of the Least-Developed Countries (LDCs), a group that includes most of the countries in sub-Saharan Africa, experienced a proportional decline in their share of world markets – despite the fact that many of these countries had implemented trade liberalization measures.



Fair Globalization. Page 25.

**Bar graphs** (histograms) may be used to show comparisons, distributions, or category tabulations. Although they are also sometimes used to show values that change over time, bar graphs usually compare discontinuous events, showing the differences between events, rather than trends.

The example below illustrates the distribution of work. The bars are used both to convey quantitative values and to compare the values between men and women.



Figure 3

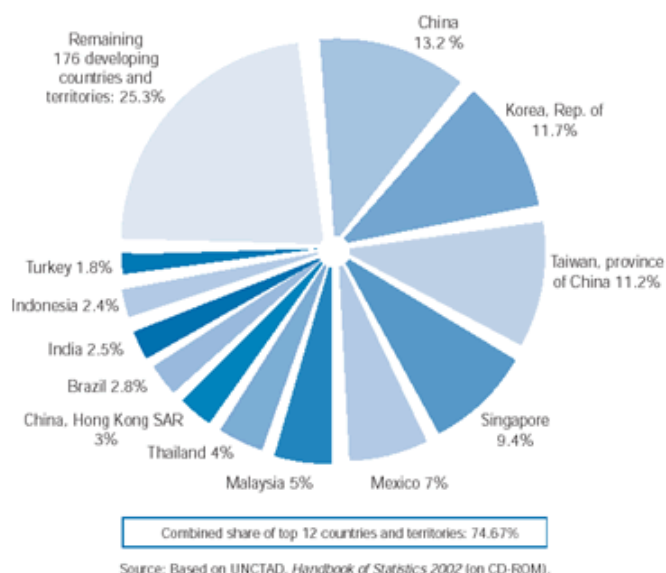
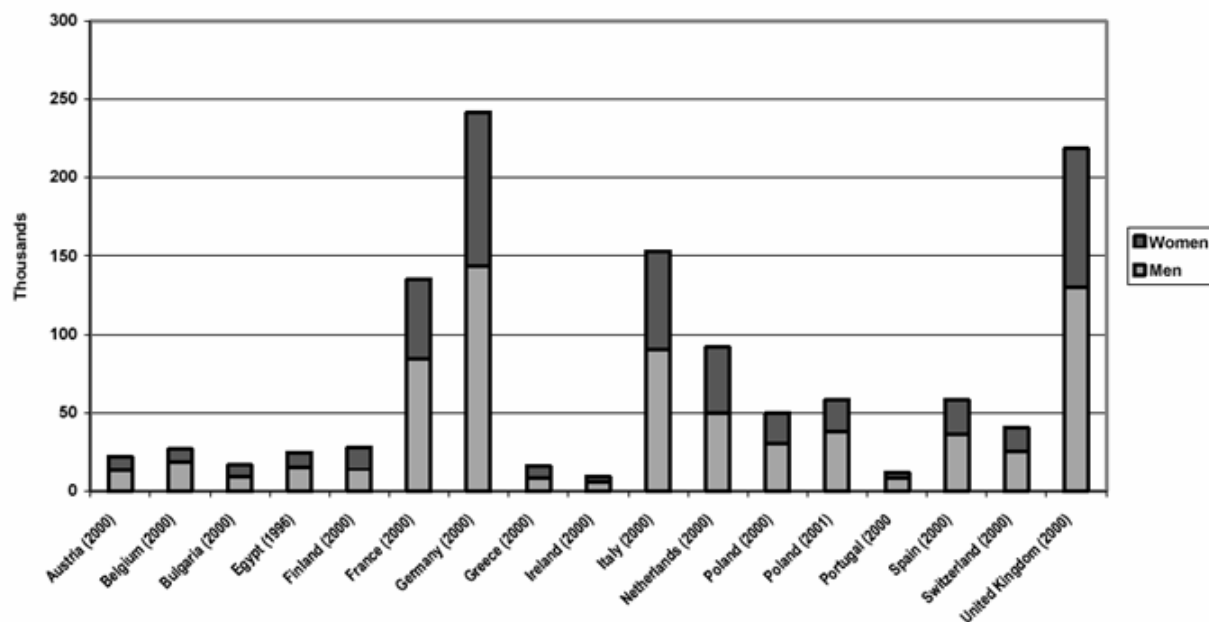


Figure 6.1. Gender distribution among writers and creative or performing artists, selected countries



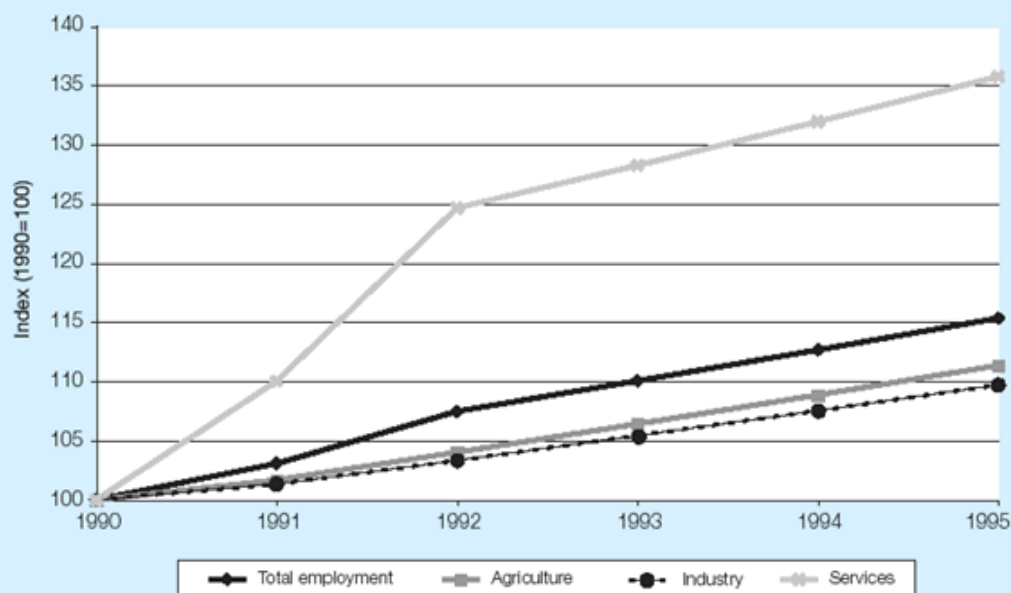
Source: Compiled from the ILO SEGREGAT database.

The future of work and quality in the information society: The media, culture, graphical sector. Report for discussion at the Tripartite Meeting on the Future of Work and Quality in the Information Society: The Media, Culture, Graphical Sector Geneva, 2004. Page 82.

**Line graphs** are a large family of graphs (varieties are scatter line graph, curve graph, line chart, vector graph, comparison graph, dual line graph, multiple line chart, overlapped line graph, compound line chart, area chart) that display qualitative information by means of lines; they are extremely versatile and are therefore used extensively.

As the following example illustrates, line graphs are best for showing continuous data over time set against a common scale.

### 1. Total and sectoral employment (index 1990=100, 1990-1995)



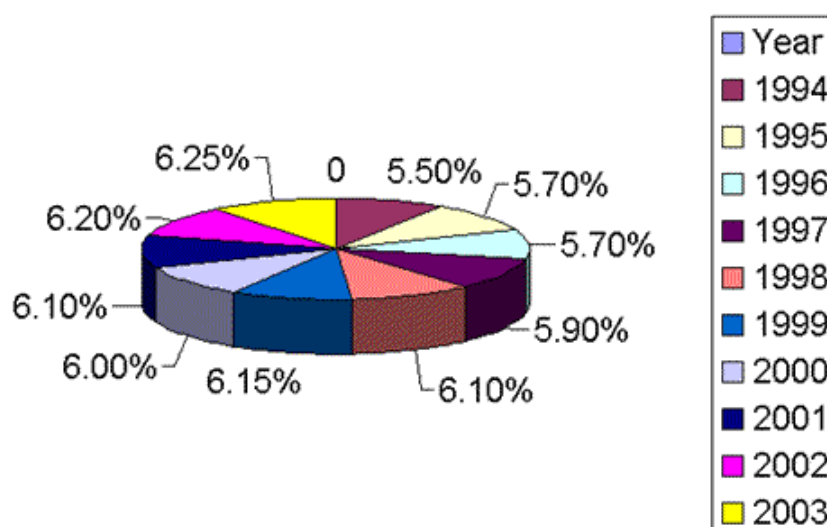
WORLD EMPLOYMENT REPORT 2004-05 Employment, Productivity and Poverty Reduction Released 7 December 2004. Page 52.

## Activity 8: Improving visual elements

The following examples demonstrate the ineffective use of visual elements for a report. Try to determine what is wrong with each example and how it could be improved.

### Example 1

Global Unemployment and Employment Trends, 1994-2004



#### Assessment

**Ineffective:** The span of ten years does not really indicate parts of a whole. As well, the percentages are indicative of a trend rather than an accumulated total of 100%. Finally, there are too many colours to make for useful distinctions of information.

#### Improvement

The same information here is displayed in a line graph, which is used to show the variations

in the unemployment rate over time. A trend is evident from the presentation.

### Global Unemployment Trends, 1994-2004



## Example 2

Number of people employed in the manufacturing industry between 1994-98

Work category	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	Average in per cent
Management	25	31	36	46	52	2.1
Skilled labour	124	140	181	278	296	11.5
Casual labour	1 001	1 125	1 346	2 181	1 992	85.8
Others	8	13	20	7	7	0.6
Total	1 158	1 309	1 583	2 512	2 347	100

### Assessment

**Ineffective:** The shading is not used to distinguish the rows of information very well. It includes the top row, which is used to identify the categories.

There is no formatting applied to distinguish the categories or the total.

The table needs to be numbered and identified as a table for better referencing in the text.

### Improvement

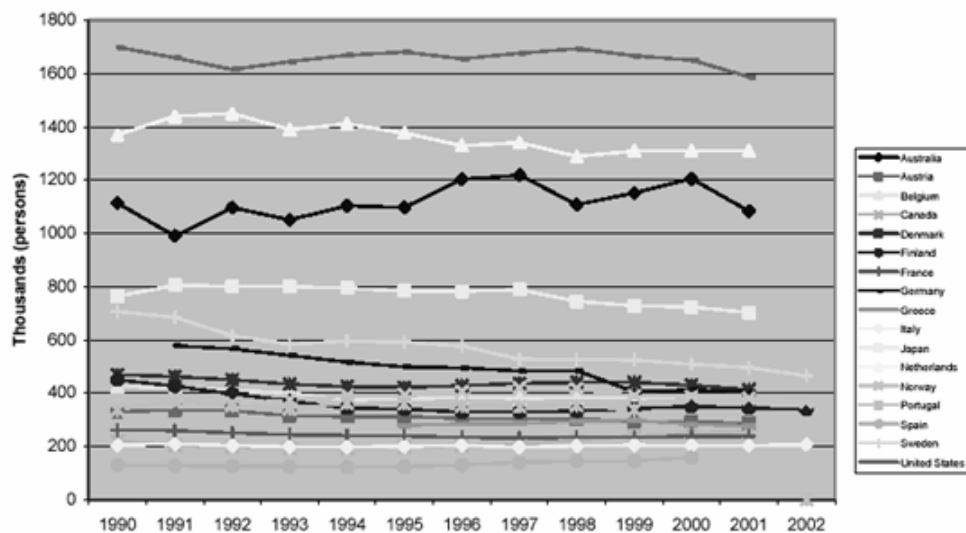
The shading is used here to separate out the categories from the information. The table is not so big that each row or column needs to be differentiated from the rest.

**Table 3: Number of people employed in the manufacturing industry between 1994-98**

Work category	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	Average in per cent
Management	25	31	36	46	52	2.1
Skilled labour	124	140	181	278	296	11.5
Casual labour	1 001	1 125	1 346	2 181	1 992	85.8
Others	8	13	20	7	7	0.6
Total	1 158	1 309	1 583	2 512	2 347	100

### Example 3

Figure 4: Total employment in private education, 1990-2002



[Assessment](#)

[Improvement](#)

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### Assignment preparation task 12: Using visual elements

Examine your report to see if any points could be presented graphically. If so, incorporate a suitable graphic.

Record in your **Reflections** file any observations you have about this step. Also, record the length of time taken for this step.

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## SECTION 4: EDITING YOUR REPORT

### Overview

Good organizing and drafting skills will ensure that you can write a report that has a coherent structure and has been well thought out and planned. Throughout the process it is important to keep both your reader and your primary purpose in writing the report in mind. The sections of this module up to this point have been developed to support your work in achieving your purposes for your readers.

This section, on the other hand, focuses on your editing skills – that is, making your draft ready for its final presentation. This involves reviewing your work with close attention to make your writing clearer, more accurate and precise, and to remove any barriers that may cause difficulties for your readers and distract them from your purpose.

To complete this section, you will return to your assignment report for a final review. The section provides a list of editing and writing resources and checklists for macro and micro-editing as discussed in Module 1.

---

### Striving for brevity, maintaining comprehensiveness

Summarizing skills are needed for more than writing summaries. The ILO writer is constantly faced with the problem of compressing large amounts of information into relatively small documents: notes for the record, minutes of meetings, and country reports.

As well, when writing official reports that are published by the Organization, you have likely agreed beforehand on a

recommended word count. If your report has run beyond that agreed word count, you need to employ strategies that will get your report down to the proper size. This often involves applying summarizing skills as well as removing parts of your work that do not serve your purposes.

Here are some tips for reducing your word count. These are really a variation of the skills needed to create summaries for your report, such as an abstract or executive summary.

- “Brevity is achieved by selection rather than compression.” This quote by the journalist and writing instructor Donald M. Murray is probably the best advice on this subject. If you need to cut back, you are going to have to decide what stays and what goes. Whittling away at your text sentence by sentence cannot reduce your word count effectively enough to make a difference in the length of an entire report.
- Set a definitive goal for your word count reduction. For example, you may decide to reduce a section or page by 30%. Knowing how much you need to reduce by will help you decide how and where to cut back.
- Determine your main idea of a section or paragraph and cut out the extraneous parts. You will find it more effective to reduce entire paragraphs and sentences rather than just words.
- At the sentence level, look for [long-winded expressions](#), [redundancies](#), [repetition](#) and [noun-based phrases](#). Use your skills to turn these into more direct and succinct sentences.

---

## Editing and proofreading

You are almost at the end of this journey. It's time to take a final critical look at the report you have produced, a good draft of which should be complete at this stage and its various parts reviewed and improved (introduction, conclusion, recommendations, executive summary). The time taken to work on the preceding section has given you the opportunity to distance yourself from your draft. You should now be able to make the shift from a writer view to a reader view in order to edit and proofread well.

### Macro-edit

Approach your first draft with the objective of improving its quality. Convince yourself that you are your own most critical reader. You should do the following:

- Search for omissions and errors of fact.
- Eliminate unnecessary and repeated material.
- Be critical of your major findings and conclusions.
- Identify points that need more support or less support. If you lack information, make notes on the draft about the lack and where to find what is required.
- Be ruthless about cutting: your readers will thank you for it.

Remember: it has been said that a writer's best tool is the wastepaper basket.

The following checklist should help you review your overall structure and organization of your report.

Macro-editing checklist	
Have I worked out my statement of purpose and the report's purpose?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Is the information all relevant to that objective and purpose?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Is it arranged in the best possible way to obtain my desired response from my readers?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Have I cut out everything that is not immediately relevant to the report's purpose?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Are all the facts accurately reported?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Have I included all the required facts?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Have I allowed bias and prejudice to affect my selection of facts?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Are my opinions supported by facts?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Does my report hang together as an effective piece of writing?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Will it efficiently get my recommendations accepted and/or my desired response from my reader(s)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes

---

## Final checklists

### Micro-editing

Micro-editing was presented in the first module in considerable detail. If you need to review the things to look for when micro-editing, review the last section of Module 1.

Ensure that all the mechanical elements in your draft are correct: sentence structure, grammar, punctuation, spelling and word usage.

One way to ensure this consistency is to use a checklist to help you define what you need to look out for as you edit your report. Some departments may already provide a checklist for you that you can submit along with your report. For example, click [here](#) to see the OFFDOC checklist for manuscripts that are ready for submission. If you are submitting to OFFDOC you must ensure that you have satisfied all the requirements demanded of you as a report writer.

For those who do not have one, consider the following sample checklist as a good starting point. You can add or change anything to suit your own purposes.

<b>Micro-editing checklist</b>	
<b>Writing style</b>	
Have I avoiding using any unnecessarily difficult words, phrases or jargon?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Have I been as concise as possible in word usage?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Have I used verb-based and active constructions where possible?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Have I avoided pretentious language?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
<b>Writing weaknesses to watch out for</b>	
Have I taken care to avoid the following weaknesses of writing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• passive voice</li><li>• parallel structure</li><li>• discriminatory language</li><li>• wordiness</li><li>• repetition</li><li>• redundancy</li></ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Have I numbered tables and figures sequentially, and referred to them by the appropriate number in the text?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes

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### Assignment preparation task 13: Proofreading

Module 1 provided some guidelines on proofreading techniques to help you catch the detailed editorial errors that can make a document look unprofessional or hastily written.

[Click here to revisit the proofreading tips given in Module 1.](#)

Finally, after you have completed all macro- and micro-editing tasks, you will need to proofread your report.

Following is a brief [checklist](#) of items to include for proofreading. Remember to check with your department to see if there is a checklist available to you.

<b>Proofreading checklist</b>	
<b>Style</b>	
Is my style consistent throughout?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes

Have I used a standard style for my references and citations (i.e., the Harvard style)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Does the format I have used conform to acceptable ILO standards?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Have I formatted my work consistently (numbering, figures, tables, etc.)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Is my draft free of spelling, grammatical and punctuation errors?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Are my pages numbered?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Have I followed a consistent style for using abbreviations? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have I spelled them out the first time?</li> <li>• Have I kept a list to insert in an appendix to my report?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
<b>Numbers</b>	
Have I spelled out all numbers from one to ten in the text?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Have I written numbers greater than ten in numeric form?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
<b>Visuals</b>	
Have I used graphics, boxes, figures, and tables to draw attention to specific information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Have I labelled them properly?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes

Record in your **Reflections File** any observations you have about this step. Also, record the length of time taken for this step.

Add up the time taken you have taken to complete all the steps in producing your report.

Make a final comment on the overall process and record any lessons learnt.

[You are now ready to submit your report to your tutor for feedback and assessment.](#)

## ASSIGNMENT 2B

Your assignment consists of a short report or extract of a larger report that you have written. There is no set prescribed length or number of words. However, if you anticipate that your report will lie outside the range of 4-10 pages, [contact your tutor](#) to ensure the scope is appropriate.

The Assignment Preparation Tasks throughout this module have been designed so that you can develop your report as you work through the module. By the end of this module you should have completed the following components that are required for your assignment. Click on the link of each item in the list to return to that section of the module if you need to complete these components:

- a statement of purpose
- [a Reader Analysis Form](#)
- a detailed outline
- a final draft
- a short reflection on the report writing process undertaken and insights for future report writing (A preformatted Word file, [Reflections](#), has been provided for this task.)

### The performance criteria

Your report should:

- show a clear statement of purpose;
- be appropriate for its intended readers;
- contain well-constructed paragraphs;



- have headings of up to three levels;
- show appropriate organization;
- include a summary, introduction and conclusion, and recommendations if required;
- be written in clear and concise language appropriate to its purpose and reader;
- be proofread and be free of spelling, grammatical or other errors;
- be well presented and in accordance with ILO format requirements (if the type of report has an ILO set format).

### Editing submissions

Your tutor will work with you to help you meet the criteria outlined. Your tutor may ask you to do further editing after your first submission. That is a normal part of professional writing, and should not give you cause for concern. You have the opportunity to re-submit each assignment twice. Your tutor will give you feedback on your assignment. If your work requires editing after the first or second submission, you can rework the assignment in the light of the feedback and resubmit.

### Assignment 2b preparation tasks

These are located throughout the module. They are designed for you to work on them as you come to them during the course of your studying through the module.

- [Choosing a report](#)
- [Defining your purpose](#)
- [Reflecting on the process of writing](#)
- [Analysing your readers](#)
- [Organizing](#)
- [Drafting](#)
- [Assignment Preparation Task 7](#)
- [Writing Introductions](#)
- [Writing conclusions](#)
- [Writing recommendations](#)
- [Writing an executive summary](#)
- [Using visual elements](#)
- [Proofreading](#)

### Assignment 2b checklist

Submit the following checklist with your assignment.

<a href="#">a purpose statement</a> : As a result of reading...	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
a completed <a href="#">Reader Analysis Form</a>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
a detailed outline	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
a final draft which includes: a summary <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a summary</li> <li>• an introduction</li> <li>• a conclusion</li> <li>• recommendations (if appropriate for the type of report)</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
your completed <a href="#">Reflections File</a> .	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
(If you have chosen to revise an existing report, you should include the original pre-revised report instead of an outline.)	

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## Module 2b Activity Map

<a href="#">Activity 1: Establishing main points</a>
<a href="#">Activity 2: Ordering ideas</a>
<a href="#">Activity 3: Organizing a longer report</a>
<a href="#">Activity 4: Using headings</a>
<a href="#">Activity 5: The functions of an introduction</a>
<a href="#">Activity 6: Evaluating a conclusion</a>
<a href="#">Activity 7: Improving recommendations</a>
<a href="#">Activity 8: Improving visual elements</a>

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### Course resources

#### **[PUBL Guide for Authors](#)**

This guide is produced by the Editorial Unit of the Bureau of Publications. It provides a concise set of guidelines for preparing a document for publication within ILO. By following these guidelines, authors can contribute to a more efficient editing process for their work.

#### **[ILO House Style Guide](#)**

This document provides considerable guidance on the style and mechanics of English-language writing, including spelling, punctuation, formatting, citations, copyright, and much more.

#### **[The Deluxe OFFDOC Guide for Report Writers](#)**

This is a temporary document for use until the new version of the ILO House Style Guide becomes available. It provides a very useful checklist for authors to review before submitting their manuscript for editing. The checklist contains a list of editorial points to consider as well as some practical advice on the process of writing and editing at ILO. Probably most useful for writers is the concise list of tips to keep in mind when writing and editing a report.

### Web resources

#### **The Internet English Grammar**

<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/internet-grammar/>

This site is both a self-study course and a comprehensive resource of information on English grammar, designed primarily for university undergraduates. It covers the basic functions and forms of words and moves on to more complex units such as phrases, clauses, and sentences. The site includes a large glossary and several interactive exercises.

#### **Guide to Grammar and Writing**

<http://cctc2.commnet.edu/grammar/>

Excellent site especially for sentence and paragraphing help.

#### **Guide to Grammar and Style**

<http://andromeda.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/Writing/s.html>

Alphabetical arrangement — good quick resource.

#### **The Blue Book of Grammar and Punctuation**

<http://www.grammarbook.com/>

A comprehensive on-line book covering many common problem areas, including punctuation. (Skip the promotional first page.)

#### **The University of Calgary: The Basic Elements of English Grammar Guide**

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/UofC/eduweb/grammar/>

Comprehensive site for grammar and punctuation help. Includes self-marking exercises.

#### **William Strunk Jr: The Elements of Style**

<http://www.bartleby.com/141/index.html>

One of the oldest and best style guides around.