



TUTORS' TIPS

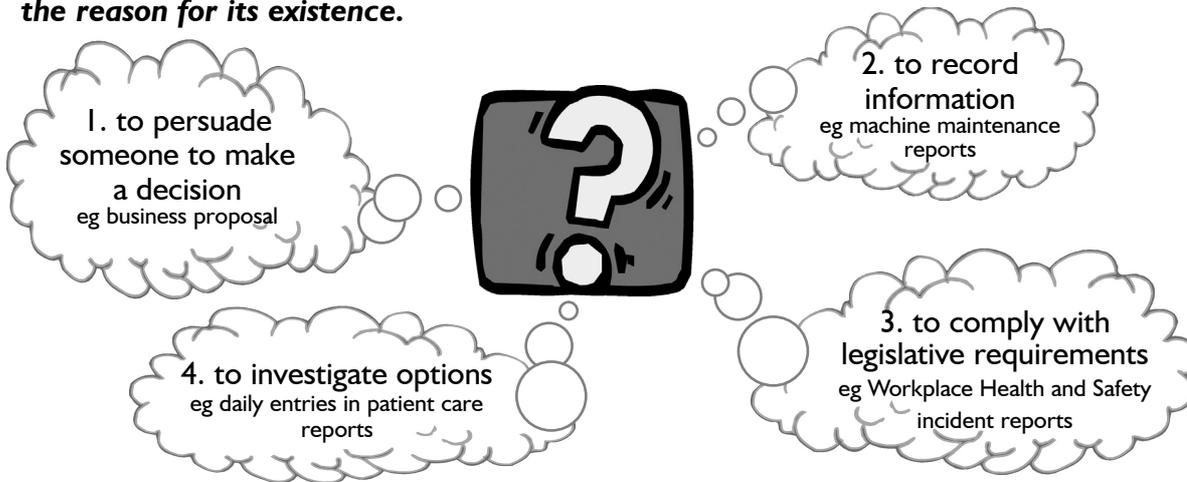
Writing Reports

Many thanks to the Brisbane South/Gold Coast Region of the Department of Education and Training for funding this month's edition.

Many occupations require people to write reports. Each occupation will have its own standards, guidelines and format. To help your student read and write reports, there are a few tips we can show them.

▶ Decide why the report is being written

Talk to the student about the types of reports they are familiar with. Establish the reason and the context. Each type of report will change, in structure, depending on the reason for its existence.



Encourage discussion and lateral thinking about different occupations and their reports by completing this exercise:

▶ Try matching these statements with these reporting reasons

1 - to persuade 2 = to record information 3 = comply with legislation 4 = to investigate

- ▶ an entry, by a nurse in a Nursing Home, on a patient's daily file
- ▶ a 10 page proposal, by a middle level manager, on a new business computer program
- ▶ an entry, on a prisoner's weekly file, recording behaviour
- ▶ an entry, on an overhead crane service sheet, by a mechanic

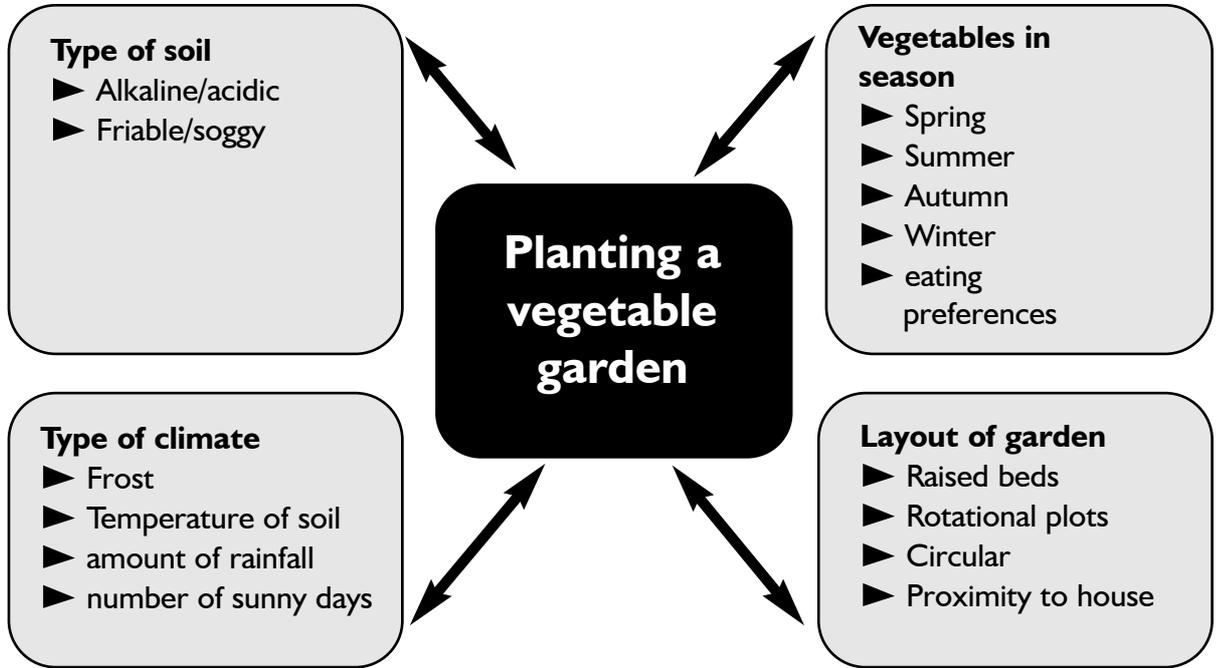
Discuss the probable format of each report type listed above. Discuss who will write it, who will read it, and what other features may exist.

structure
Report
ation
ormation
Spell
structu
stru
ma
ort
elling
structure
Infor
ellin
Rep
uct
Infor

▶ Brain storm the content

▶ Report Writing Exercise:

Build on the student's general knowledge by brainstorming possible topics for inclusion. Model a brainstorming process by using the following:



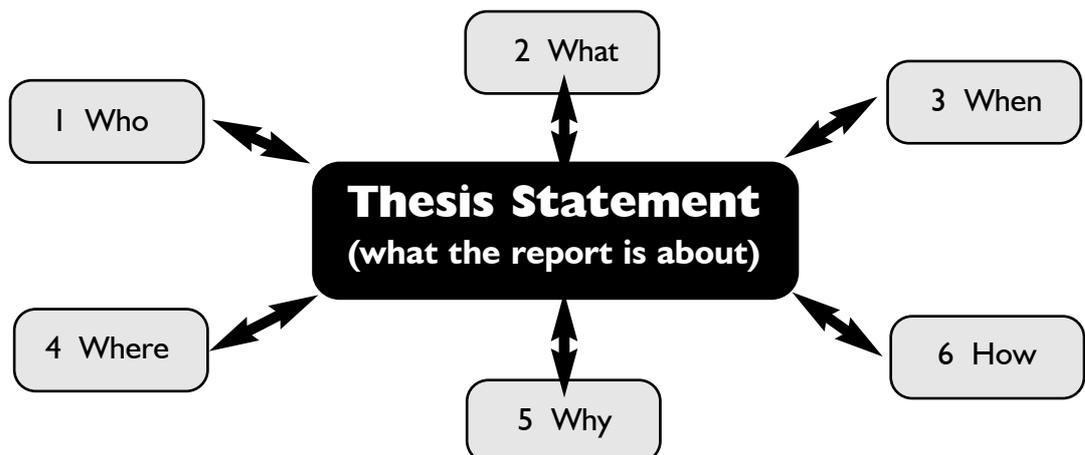
After demonstrating the brain storming method, move to the student's report. Ask the following questions:

- ▶ What is the central issue?
- ▶ What do you want to achieve?
- ▶ What are the associated factors?

▶ Research your information

Sometimes, a more detailed collection of information is required. Encourage the student to investigate more than one source of information so the report has validity.

▶ **One of the best methods of collecting information is to use the 5W-H method.**



Lead the student, through questioning and discussion, to find answers to these questions - and more. Depending on the length and type of report, the answers could be quite comprehensive.

- ▶ Who did the action? Who needs to know?; Who is writing the report?
- ▶ What happened? What was the result?; What action was taken?
- ▶ When did it happen? When is the deadline?; When were others informed?
- ▶ Where did it happen? Where were all the objects/people named in the report?
- ▶ Why did it happen? (we may not know if this requires making a judgement outside of our experience/knowledge)
- ▶ How did it happen? What time sequence was involved?



▶ Decide on a basic structure

If the report you are working on is intended to persuade someone to make a decision, the following format may be helpful.

Place the researched information on a series of cards, grouped by category of information similar to the brain storming. This makes it easier to change the order of information from one category to another.

▶ Planning

Examine and analyse a range of different reporting models. If your organisation does not already have a preferred style, select a style that most suits the purpose and audience of the report.

▶ Introduction

to establish credibility. What is your (student's) professional position, experience and education/training? Be careful not to operate outside of your expertise.

▶ Problem

to establish the present situation. This should be an analysis of the current situation and why it is not working, or why it is costing too much, or why it is contributing toward an unsafe environment, etc.

▶ Solution

to establish the proposed changes. Having done your homework, and found a possible solution, it needs to be stated clearly and objectively.

▶ Discussion

to establish advantages/disadvantages and associated costs to the proposed solution. This is where you will bring up the anticipated objections and your answer to those objections. You will be guiding the reader through the decision making process so that they are more likely to agree with you by the time they have read all of your information.

▶ Conclusion

to establish final word, including recommendations. This should be a summary of what you said. A final word to leave in the reader's mind.

structure

Report

ation

formation

Spe

struct

stru

orma

ort

elling

structure

Infor

elling

Rep

uct

Infor

▶ Watch your language

When the information is written, objectively critique for the right kind of language. Report writing should be objective, even if the purpose is to persuade.

Model objective language using the examples below. Then, ask the student to write more objective statements. It is quite a skill to be truly objective!

▶ Which of these statements is objective...?

- I saw a white powdery substance on the floor

I saw cocaine on the floor
- I fixed the carburettor

I removed the jets, cleaned the ports and replaced the gasket
- Mrs Plane was raising her voice and complaining about the quality of the food

Mrs Plane was being difficult at lunch time



▶ Edit your results

Finally, check the details.

- ✓ Check for spelling, grammar and punctuation
- ✓ Check that the writing meets the purpose for which the report is required
- ✓ Check the style and tone of writing