A. How to write a business report

A report is a formal written text prepared by one person or group of people who have collected or researched information about a specific subject. It is usually written for someone to read it in a formal impersonal style. A business report is divided into three main sections (introduction, main body, final paragraphs) and sub-sections:

• **Introduction: Terms of Reference** – This section gives background information on the reason/purpose for the report. It usually includes the person requesting the report.
• **Main body: Procedure** – The procedure provides the exact steps and methods used for the report.
    Findings – The findings point out discoveries made during the course of the report investigation.
• **Final paragraphs: Conclusions** – The conclusions provide logical conclusions based on the findings.
    Recommendations – The recommendations state actions that the writer of the report feels need to be taken based on the findings and conclusions.

– Reports should be concise and factual. Opinions are given in the "conclusions" sections. However, these opinions should be based on facts presented in the "findings".
– Use simple tenses (usually the present simple) to express facts.
– Use the imperative form (Discuss the possibility…; Give priority…; etc.) in the "recommendations" section as these apply to the company as a whole.
– A report can also have numbers or bullets to list different points.
– It can have illustrations and diagrams to make points clearer.

PLANNING A REPORT

Step 1
Think about the **purpose** of your report. Having a clear idea of the purpose of a report is very important as this will influence the report content and style, so before starting writing ask yourself the following questions: "Who is it for?" "Why is it needed?" "What type of information is needed?" "What will the report be used for?"

Step 2
Identify **key points** and collect **relevant information**. Write on paper anything that you think could be relevant and, if you need specific information, collect it at this stage. Don't worry about ordering your notes.

Step 3
Decide on the **sequence** of the main points of your report. Order the points in a logical sequence. Each point will form the basis of each paragraph. Make notes about what you want to say in each paragraph.

Step 4
Decide if and where you need **illustrations** and **diagrams**. Look briefly at the content of each paragraph and decide if a diagram or a picture would help make the point clearer.

Step 5
Write a working **plan** for your report.
Write down the **title** and give each section a **heading**. Decide on the main points to be included in the **introduction** and the **conclusion**. Organize the **content paragraphs** and add the notes you have made about each content paragraph. Check again that the sequence is logical.

WRITING A REPORT
This is the final stage. After you have written the working plan, you are finally ready to start writing. Write your report in a coherent and accurate way, using appropriate linking words and correct spelling, grammar and punctuation.

EDITING YOUR WORK
The editing stage is when you check your work for mistakes and correct them. Check your spelling grammar and punctuation. Read your work again and make sure each sentence has a subject; make sure your subjects and verbs agree with each other; make sure that each sentence makes sense. Make sure your report has a logical progression.

Example Report

EMPLOYEE BENEFITS SATISFACTION

Terms of reference
Jennifer Green, Director of Personnel has requested this report on employee benefits satisfaction. The report was to be submitted to her by 28 May.

Procedure
A representative selection of 15% of all employees were interviewed in the period between 1st April and 15th April concerning:
1. Overall satisfaction with our current benefits package
2. Problems encountered when dealing with the personnel department
3. Suggestions for the improvement of communication policies
4. Problems encountered when dealing with our HMO (Health Maintenance Organization)

Findings
1. Employees were generally satisfied with the current benefits package.
2. Some problems were encountered when requesting vacation due to what is perceived as long approval waiting periods.
3. Older employees repeatedly had problems with HMO prescription drugs procedures.
4. Employees between the ages of 22 and 30 report few problems with HMO.
5. Most employees complain about the lack of dental insurance in our benefits package.
6. The most common suggestion for improvement was for the ability to process benefits requests online.

Conclusions
1. Older employees, those over 50, are having serious problems with our HMO's ability to provide prescription drugs.
2. Our benefits request system needs to be revised as most complaints concerning in-house processing.
3. Improvements need to take place in personnel department response time.
4. Information technology improvements should be considered as employees become more technologically savvy.

Recommendations
1. Meet with HMO representatives to discuss the serious nature of complaints concerning prescription drug benefits for older employees.
2. Give priority to vacation request response time as employees need faster approval in order to be able to plan their vacations.
3. Take no special actions for the benefits package of younger employees.
4. Discuss the possibility of adopting an online benefits requests system to our company Intranet.

Activity
1. Write a report on students' satisfaction with the equipment of your school.