

# HOW TO WRITE A REPORT: THE FOUR BASIC PARTS

## 1. OVERVIEW:

The overview is a brief summary which tells the reader quickly what the report is all about. It identifies the purpose and the most important features of the report, states the main conclusion, and sometimes makes recommendations. It does this in as few words as possible, condensing the report to several key sentences. It is usually best to write the overview last after you have written the background, discussion, and conclusion because only then will you have an overview yourself. Remember: The overview may be written last, but it is always placed **first** in the final report.

## 2. BACKGROUND:

The background sets the scene for your reader. There is no need to confuse the overview with the background if you remember that the overview provides a **brief summary of the entire report**, whereas the background **introduces the subject** and explains the **reason** for the report. According to the requirements of your report, the background should try to answer such questions as Who? What? Why? Where? and When? The background information should place your reader mentally in the picture before he/she has to consider your findings and conclusions.

## 3. DISCUSSION:

The discussion presents your findings. You should have as much evidence (facts, arguments, details, data, and results) as a reader will need to understand the subject. You must develop these findings in an organized, logical manner to avoid confusing your reader. You should also present your findings imaginatively to hold his/her interest. During the discussion, you may want to use **headings** and **subheadings** if you are discussing different aspects of the subject. Each **heading** or **subheading** must be an informative mini-title, summarizing the material covered in the paragraphs it is meant to introduce.

## 4. CONCLUSION:

Conclusions briefly state the major points that can be drawn from the discussion. If there is more than one conclusion, state the main conclusion first, and the remaining conclusions in decreasing order of importance. Although recommendations are not a necessary part of a report, you may include a discussion of your recommendations in this part of the report.

*For more information consult:*

*Blicq, Ron S. Technically-Write! Communicating in a Technological Era. Scarborough: Prentice-Hall, 1987.*