Nevertheless, the two plans show that some problems can be organized in more than one way. In such cases, you must compare the possibilities carefully to find the one that most helpfully presents the report information.

From Outline to Table of Contents

LO5 Turn an outline into a table of contents whose format and wording are logical and meaningful.

When you are ready to prepare the table of contents for your report, you will be, in essence, turning the outline that helped you write into an aid for the reader. Because it will be your public outline, the table of contents needs to be carefully formatted and worded.

True, you will probably design the table of contents late in the report-writing process. We discuss it here as a logical conclusion to our discussion of outlining. But if others involved in the project want to see a well-prepared outline before your report is done, you can use the following advice to prepare that outline.

Note also that what we say about preparing the headings for the table of contents also applies to writing the headings for the report sections. The two sets of headings, those in the table of contents and those in the report itself, should match exactly. Using Word's Styles to format your headings and its Table of Contents generator to create your table of contents will ensure this consistency.

Formatting Decisions. Whatever format you used for your personal outline, you now need to choose one that your reader will find instructive, readable, and appropriate. You create an *instructive* format by clearly indicating the hierarchy of the information. You should use form (font selection, size, style, and color) and placement (location and indentation) to distinguish among the levels of your contents, as illustrated by the table of contents of Chapter 12's sample long report (page 418). You make the format *readable* by using ample vertical white space between topics and enabling readers to see at a glance how the report is organized. Using leaders (dots with intervening spaces) between your topics and your page numbers can also enhance readability.

An *appropriate* format is one that your reader expects. Some business readers view the conventional outlining system (Roman numerals, letters, and Arabic numbers) and the decimal system (as in 1.2.1) as adding unnecessary clutter to the table of contents. Instead, they prefer the use of form and placement to show them how the parts relate to each other. However, in the military and some technical environments, the decimal system is expected, and in other contexts, your readers may want the full numerals and letters of the conventional system. In our examples, we use format rather than numbering to indicate levels of information, but be sure to use whatever format your readers will prefer.

Topic or Talking Headings. In selecting the wording for your table of contents headings, you have a choice of two general forms: topic headings and talking headings. **Topic headings** are short constructions, frequently consisting of one or two words. They merely identify the topic of discussion, as in "Cost" or "Space Requirements." **Talking headings** also identify the subject matter to be covered, but they go a step further: They also indicate what is said about the subject. In other words, talking headings summarize the material they cover, as in "Increase in Cost of Operation" or "Less Space Required."

The following table of contents is for a longer report recommending the site for a new food-processing plant. It uses headings that talk:

Introduction to the problem
- Authorization by Board Action
- Selection of the Potential Sites
- Reliance on Government Data
- Factors to Be Discussed

Community Attitudes Toward a New Plant
- Favorable Reaction of All Towns to a New Employer
- Mixed Attitudes of All Towns Toward Our Labor Policies

Labor Supply and Prevailing Wage Rates
- Prevalence of Unskilled Labor in San Marcos

Concentration of Skilled Workers in San Marcos
Mixed Pattern of Wage Rates

Nearness to Suppliers
Location of Ballinger, Coleman, and San Marcos in Farming Areas
Relatively Low Production Near Big Spring and Littlefield

Availability of Utilities
Inadequate Water Supply for All Towns but San Marcos
Unlimited Supply of Natural Gas for All Towns
Electric Rate Advantage of San Marcos and Coleman
General Adequacy of All Towns for Waste Disposal

Adequacy of Existing Transportation Systems
Surface Transportation Advantages of San Marcos and Ballinger
General Equality of Airway Connections

A Final Weighting of the Factors
Selection of San Marcos as First Choice
Recommendation of Ballinger as Second Choice
Lack of Advantages in Big Spring, Coleman, and Littlefield

This contrasting version uses topic headings:

Introduction
Authorization
Purpose
Sources
Preview

Community Attitudes
New Plant
Labor Policy

Labor Factors
Unskilled Workers
Skilled Workers
Wage Rates

Available Suppliers
Adequate Areas
Inadequate Areas

Utilities
Water
Natural Gas
Electricity
Waste Disposal

Transportation
Surface
Air

Conclusions
First Choice
Alternative Choice
Other Possibilities

Which of these versions is better? The answer depends on the situation. Talking heads would be appropriate if your readers are extremely busy, trust your judgment, and are likely to skim the supporting facts. Topic headings, because they do not announce the point of the section, are better for readers who want to see the facts before being told what to think about them.

Parallelism of Construction. As a general rule, you should write headings at each level of the table of contents in the same grammatical form. In other words, equal-level headings should be *parallel* in structure. For example, if the first major heading is a noun phrase, the rest of the major heads should be noun phrases. If the first second-level heading under a major head is an *-ing* phrase, all second-level headings in the section should be *-ing* phrases.

This rule is not just an exercise in grammar; its purpose is to show similarity. As you will recall from Chapter 4, parallelism helps your readers understand which topics are alike and go together. If you state similar topics in different forms, your logic will become blurry, and your reader will have trouble following you. It is usually considered permissible to vary the form from one section and level to another; that is, the second-level heads in one section need to match, but they do not need to match the second-level heads in the other sections, and the third-level heads do not need to match the second-level heads. Just be sure that the headings on each level of each section are parallel.

The following headings illustrate violations of parallelism:

Programmer Output Is Lagging (sentence).
Increase in Cost of Labor (noun phrase)
Unable to Deliver Necessary Results (adjective phrase)

Making the headings all noun phrases would fix the problem:

Lag in Programmer Output
Increase in Cost of Labor
Inability to Deliver Necessary Results

Or you could make all the headings sentences, like this:

Programmer Output Is Lagging.
Cost of Labor Is Increasing.
Information Systems Cannot Deliver Necessary Results.

Here's a different kind of faulty parallelism:

Managers Prefer an Intranet
U.S. Employees Prefer a Social Media Site
A Newsletter Is Preferred by Overseas Employees

The third heading is "off." Can you see why? If you answered that it switches from active to passive voice, you're right.

Concise Wording. Your headings should be as concise as possible while still being clear and informative. Although the following headings are informative, their excessive length obviously hinders their communication effectiveness:

Personal appearance enhancement is the most desirable feature of contact lenses that wearers report.
The drawback of contacts mentioned by most people who can't wear them is that they are difficult to put in.
More comfort is the most desired improvement suggested by wearers and nonwearers of contact lenses.

Obviously, the headings contain too much information. Just what should be left out depends on your judgment. Here is one possible revision:

Most Desirable Feature: Personal Appearance
Prime Criticism: Difficulty of Insertion
Most Desired Improvement: Comfort

In your effort to be concise, should your headings omit a, an, and the, as some of the examples above do? Authorities on readability recommend including these words in body text, but there appears to be no consensus on whether to use or omit them in headings and titles. See what your teacher or boss prefers, and whichever way you choose, be consistent throughout your report.

Variety of Expression. In the wording of headings, as in all other forms of writing, you should use some variety of expression. Repeating words too frequently makes for monotonous writing. The following outline excerpt illustrates this point:

Oil Production in Texas
Oil Production in California
Oil Production in Louisiana

As a rule, if you make the headings talk well, there is little chance of monotonous repetition. The headings in the preceding example can be improved simply by making them talk:

Texas Leads in Oil Production.
California Holds the Runner-up Position.
Rapidly Gaining Louisiana Ranks Third.

The table of contents is an important preview of your report. Your goal is to use headings that will make it interesting, precise, and logically structured.

LO6 Write reports that are focused, objective, consistent in time viewpoint, smoothly connected, and interesting.

WRITING THE REPORT

By the time you write your report, you will have already done a good deal of writing. You will have written—and probably rewritten—problem and purpose statements to guide you through your research. You will have collected written data or recorded your findings in notes, and you will have organized your interpretations of the data into a logical, reader-centered structure. Now it is time to flesh out your outline with clearly expressed facts and observations.

When you draft your report, your first priority is to get the right things said in the right order. As Chapter 6 advises, you should not strive for a perfect draft the first time around. Understand that some pieces will seem to write themselves, while others will be much more difficult. Allow yourself to move along, stitching together the pieces. Once you have a draft to work with, you can perfect it.

When revising, let the advice in the previous chapters be your guide. As with all the business messages previously discussed, reports should communicate as clearly and quickly as possible. Your readers' time is valuable, and you risk having your report misread or even ignored if you do not keep this fact in mind. Use both words and formatting to get your contents across efficiently.

You can help your reader receive the report's message clearly by giving your report some specific qualities of well-written reports. Two critical ingredients are a reader-centered beginning and ending. Such characteristics as objectivity, consistency in time viewpoint, coherence, and interest can also enhance the reception of your report. We review these topics next.

Beginning and Ending

Arguably the most critical parts of your report will be the beginning and ending. In fact, researchers agree that these are the most frequently read parts of a report. Chapter 12 goes into detail about report beginnings and endings, but some general advice is in order here.

Whatever other goals it may achieve, the opening of your report should convey what problem you studied, how you studied it, and (at least generally) what you found out. Why? Because these are the facts that the reader most wants to know when he or she first looks at your report.

Here is a simple introduction that follows this pattern:

> In order to find out why sales were down at the Salisbury store, I interviewed the manager, observed the operations, and assessed the environment. A high rate of employee turnover appears to have resulted in a loss of customers, though the deteriorating neighborhood also seems to be a contributing factor.

In a formal report, some brief sections may precede this statement of purpose (for example, facts about the authorization of the study), and there might be extensive front matter (for example, a title page, letter of transmittal, table of contents, and executive summary). What follows the purpose statement can also vary depending on the size and complexity of the report (for example, it may or may not be appropriate to go into more detail about the research methods and limitations or to announce specifically how the following sections will be organized). But whatever kind of report you are writing, make sure that the beginning gets across the subject of the report, what kind of data it is based upon, and its likely significance to the reader.

Your ending will provide a concise statement of the report's main payoff—whether facts, interpretations, or recommendations. In a short report, you may simply summarize your findings with a brief paragraph, since the specific findings will be easy to see in the body of the report. In a longer report, you should make this section a more thorough restatement of your main findings, formatted in an easy-to-read way. Both the gist ("so what did you find out?") and the significance ("why should I care?") of your report should be clear.

Being Objective

As we have said, a good report is objective; it presents all relevant facts and interprets them logically, without bias. Your objectivity should be evident in both your content and your writing style.

Objectivity as a Basis for Believability. An objective report has an ingredient that is essential to good report writing—**believability**. Powerful assertions made in emotionally charged language may at first glance appear to strengthen your report. But if bias is evident at any point in a report, the reader will question the credibility of the entire report. Maintaining objectivity is, therefore, the only sure way to make report writing believable.

The Question of Impersonal versus Personal Writing. Recognizing the need for objectivity, early report writers worked to develop an objective style of writing. Since the source of bias in reports was people, they reasoned that objectivity was best attained by emphasizing facts rather than the people involved in writing and reading reports. So they tried to take the human beings out of their reports. The result was **impersonal writing**—that is, writing in the third person, without *I*, *we*, or *you* perspectives.

In recent years, some writers have opposed this approach. They argue that **personal writing** is more forceful and direct than impersonal writing. They point out that writing is more conversational and therefore more interesting if it brings both the reader and the writer into the picture. They contend that objectivity is an attitude—not a matter of pronoun use—and that a report written in the personal style can be just as objective as a report written in the impersonal style. These writers argue that impersonal writing frequently leads to an overuse of the passive voice and a dull writing style. (While this last claim may be true, impersonal writing need not be boring. One has only to look at the lively style of many newspaper articles to see that impersonal writing can be interesting.)

As with most controversies, the arguments on both sides have merit. In some situations, personal writing is better. In other situations, impersonal writing is better. And in still other situations, either type of writing is good.

Your decision should be based on the facts of each report situation. First, you should consider the expectations of those for whom you are preparing the report. If your readers prefer an impersonal style, use it—and vice versa. Then you should consider the

Formal, Informal, or Somewhere in Between?

As the next chapter points out, the format and makeup of your report will signal its level of formality. But you will also need to decide how formal your report will be on the stylistic level. Compare the following three versions of the same point:

- The study revealed that 20 percent of the participants were unaware of Jacob's Foods.
- Our study revealed that 20 percent of the participants were unaware of your store.
- We found out that 20 percent of your market had never heard of your store.

Did you notice the decreasing level of formality? What accounts for the differences? Be sure to choose a style that matches the relationship you have with your readers and their preferences. But whatever style you choose, write clearly and readably.

formality of the situation. In general, personal writing is appropriate for informal situations and impersonal writing for most formal situations.

Here are contrasting examples of the personal and impersonal style:

Personal	Impersonal
Having studied the advantages and disadvantages of using coupons, I recommend that your company not adopt this practice. If you used coupons, you would have to absorb their cost. You would also have to hire additional employees to take care of the increase in sales volume.	A study of the advantages and disadvantages of using coupons supports the conclusion that the Mills Company should not adopt this practice. The coupons themselves would cost extra money. Also, use of coupons would require additional personnel to take care of the increase in sales volume.

Notice that both versions are active, clear, and interesting. Strive for these effects no matter which style you choose.

Being Consistent with Time

A report that has illogical time shifts—for example, one that says "The managers responded . . . " (past tense) in one place but "The employees say . . . " (present tense) in another place—confuses the reader. Thus, it is important that you maintain a **consistent time viewpoint.**

You have two main choices of time viewpoint: past or present. Although some authorities favor one or the other, either viewpoint can produce a good report. The important thing is to be consistent—to select one time viewpoint and stay with it. In other words, you should view all similar information in the report from the same position in time.

If you adopt the **past-time viewpoint**, you treat the research, the findings, and the writing of the report as past. Thus, you would report the results of a recent survey in past tense: "Twenty-two percent of the managers *favored* a change." You would write a reference to another part of the report this way: "As Part II *indicated*, . . ." Your use of the past-time viewpoint would have no effect on references to current and future happenings. It would still be proper to write a sentence like this: "If the current trend *continues*, 30 percent *will favor* a change by 2015." Prevailing concepts and proven conclusions are also exceptions. You would present them in present tense. For example, you would write "Solar energy *is* a major potential source of energy" and "The findings *indicate* that managers are not adequately trained."

Writing in the **present-time viewpoint** presents as current all information that can logically be assumed to be current at the time of writing. All other information is presented in its proper place in the past or future. Thus, you would report the results of a recent survey in these words: "Twenty-two percent of the managers *favor* a change." You would refer to another part of the text like this: As Part II *indicates*, . . ." But in referring to an earlier survey, you would write: "In 2009 only 12 percent *held* this opinion." And in making a future reference, you would write: "If this trend continues, 30 percent *will hold* this opinion by 2015."

Including Transitions

A well-written report reads as one continuous story, with the parts smoothly connected. Much of this flow is the result of good, logical organization. But more than logical order is needed in long reports. As you will see in Chapter 12, a special coherence plan may be needed as well. In all reports, however, lesser transitional techniques are useful to connect information.

As Chapter 4 explains, transitions are words or sentences that show the relationships between parts of a sentence, paragraph, or document. In reports, they may appear at the beginning of a part as a way of relating this part to the preceding part. They may appear at the end of a part as a forward look. Or they may appear within a part as words or phrases that help move the flow of information.

Sentence Transitions. Throughout the report you can improve the connecting network of thought by using sentence transitions. They are especially helpful between parts of the report.

In the following example, the report parts are connected by sentences that make a forward-looking reference and thus set up the next subject. As a result, the shift of subject matter is smooth and logical.

> These data show clearly that alternative fuel cars are the most economical. Unquestionably, their operation by gas and hydrogen and their record for low-cost maintenance give them a decided edge over gas-fueled cars. *Before a definite conclusion about their merit can be reached, however, one more vital comparison should be made.*

The final sentence above clearly introduces the subsequent discussion of an additional comparison. Here is another example of a forecasting sentence:

> *. . . At first glance the data appear convincing, but a closer observation reveals a number of discrepancies.*

The reader knows to expect a discussion of the discrepancies next.

Placing topic sentences at key points of emphasis is another way of using sentences to link the various parts of the report. Usually the topic sentence is best placed at the paragraph beginning. Note in the following example how topic sentences maintain the flow of thought by emphasizing key information.

> *The Acura accelerates faster than the other two brands, both on a level road and on a 9 percent grade.* According to a test conducted by *Consumer Reports*, Acura reaches a speed of 60 miles per hour in 13.2 seconds. To reach the same speed, Toyota requires 13.6 seconds, and Volkswagen requires 14.4 seconds. On a 9 percent grade, Acura reaches the 60-miles-per-hour speed in 29.4 seconds, and Toyota reaches it in 43.3 seconds. Volkswagen is unable to reach this speed.
>
> *Because it carries more weight on its rear wheels than the others, Acura has the best traction of the three.* Traction, which means a minimum of sliding on wet or icy roads, is important to safe driving, particularly during the cold, wet winter months. Since traction is directly related to the weight carried by the rear wheels, a comparison of these weights should give some measure of the safety of the three cars. According to data released by the Automobile Bureau of Standards, Acura carries 47 percent of its weight on its rear wheels. Nissan and Toyota carry 44 and 42 percent, respectively.

Choice Lines Gleaned from Accident Reports Submitted to Insurance Companies

- Coming home, I drove into the wrong house and collided with a tree I don't have.
- The other car collided with mine without giving warning of its intentions.
- I thought my window was down, but found it was up when I put my hand through it.
- I collided with a stationary truck coming the other way.
- A pedestrian hit me and went under my car.
- The guy was all over the road. I had to swerve a number of times before I hit him.
- I pulled away from the side of the road, glanced at my mother-in-law, and headed over the embankment.
- I was having rear-end trouble when my universal joint gave way, causing me to have this accident.
- My car was legally parked as it backed into the other car.
- I told police that I was not injured, but on removing my hat, I found that I had a fractured skull.
- I was sure the old fellow would never make it to the other side of the road when I struck him.
- The pedestrian had no idea which direction to run, so I ran over him.
- The indirect cause of this accident was a little guy in a small car with a big mouth.
- The telephone pole was approaching. I was attempting to swerve out of the way when it struck my front end.

Transitional Words. Although the most important function of transitions is to connect the major parts of the report, transitions are also needed between the lesser parts. If the writing is to flow smoothly, you will need to connect clause to clause, sentence to sentence, and paragraph to paragraph, as Chapter 4 advises.

Numerous transitional words are available. The following list shows such words and how you can use them.

Relationship	Word Examples
Listing or enumeration of subjects	In addition
	First, second,. . .
	Besides
	Moreover
Contrast	On the contrary
	In spite of
	On the other hand
	In contrast
	However
Likeness	Also
	Likewise
	Similarly
Cause–effect	Thus
	Because of
	Therefore
	Consequently
	For this reason

Relationship	Word Examples
Explanation or elaboration	For example To illustrate For instance Also Too

Helpful as transitions are, you should use them only when they are needed—when including them would provide a useful preview or leaving them out would produce abruptness. For example, avoid such boring, unnecessary transitions as "This concludes the discussion of Topic X. In the next section, Y will be analyzed."

Maintaining Interest

Like any other form of writing, report writing should be interesting. Actually, interest is as important as the facts of the report because communication is not likely to occur without it. Readers cannot help missing parts of the message if their attention is allowed to stray. (If you have ever tried to read dull writing when studying for an exam, you know the truth of this statement.)

To write interestingly, avoid business clichés and unnecessarily abstract language. Remember that behind every fact and figure there is life—people doing things, machines operating, a commodity being marketed. A technique of good report writing is to bring that life to the surface by using concrete words and active-voice verbs as much as possible. Keeping your wording efficient also helps maintain the reader's interest.

But you can overdo efforts to make report writing interesting. Such is the case whenever your reader's attention is attracted to how something has been said rather than to what has been said. Effective report writing simply presents information in a clear, concise, and interesting manner. Report-writing style is at its best when the readers are prompted to say "Here are some interesting facts" rather than "Here is some interesting writing."

COLLABORATIVE REPORT WRITING

LO7 Prepare reports collaboratively.

In your business career, you are likely to participate in numerous collaborative writing projects, and the end product of many of them is likely to be a report. Group involvement in report preparation is becoming increasingly significant for a number of reasons. For one, the specialized knowledge of different people can improve the quality of the work. For another, the combined talents of the members are likely to produce a document better than any one of the members could produce alone. A third reason is that dividing the work can reduce the time needed for the project. And fourth, many different software tools allow groups to collaborate easily and well from different places.

Determining the Group Makeup

The first step is to decide who will be in the group. The availability and competencies of the people in the work situation involved are likely to be the major factors. At a minimum, the group will consist of two. The maximum will depend on the number actually needed to do the project. As a practical matter, however, a maximum of five is a good rule since larger groups tend to lose efficiency. All major areas of specialization needed to investigate the problem should be represented by the team members.

In most business situations the highest ranking administrator in the group serves as leader. In groups made up of equals, a leader usually is appointed or elected. When no leader is so designated, the group works together informally. In such cases, however, an informal leader usually emerges. Especially with group writing projects, it is a good idea to have one person in charge of overseeing the entire process.

Does Your Group Have Emotional Intelligence?

Ever since the publication of Daniel Goleman's *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ* in 1995, companies have been looking for ways to cultivate the emotional intelligence (EI) of its members.

But groups can enhance their collective EI, too. According to Vanessa Urch Druskat and Steven B. Wolff of the *Harvard Business Review*, "Group EI norms build the foundation for true collaboration and cooperation—helping otherwise skilled teams fulfill their highest potential."

What kinds of things should a group do to channel its members' insights and emotions into positive results? Here's a partial list from Druskat and Wolff:

- Encourage all members to share their perspectives before making key decisions.
- Handle confrontation constructively. If team members fall short, call them on it by letting them know the group needs them.
- Regularly assess the group's strengths, weaknesses and modes of interaction.
- Create structures that let the group express its emotions.
- Cultivate an affirmative environment.
- Encourage proactive problem solving.

And try to keep things fun. In one company, the industrial-design firm IDEO, participants throw stuffed toys at anyone who prematurely judges ideas during brainstorming sessions.

SOURCE: "Building the Emotional Intelligence of Groups," *Harvard Business Review* 1 Mar. 2001, HarvardBusiness.org, Harvard Business Publishing, Web, 8 July 2012.

Creating the Ground Rules

In organizations where teamwork is common, the ground rules for participation in a group may be understood. But students and working professionals alike may find it helpful to establish explicit guidelines for the participants.

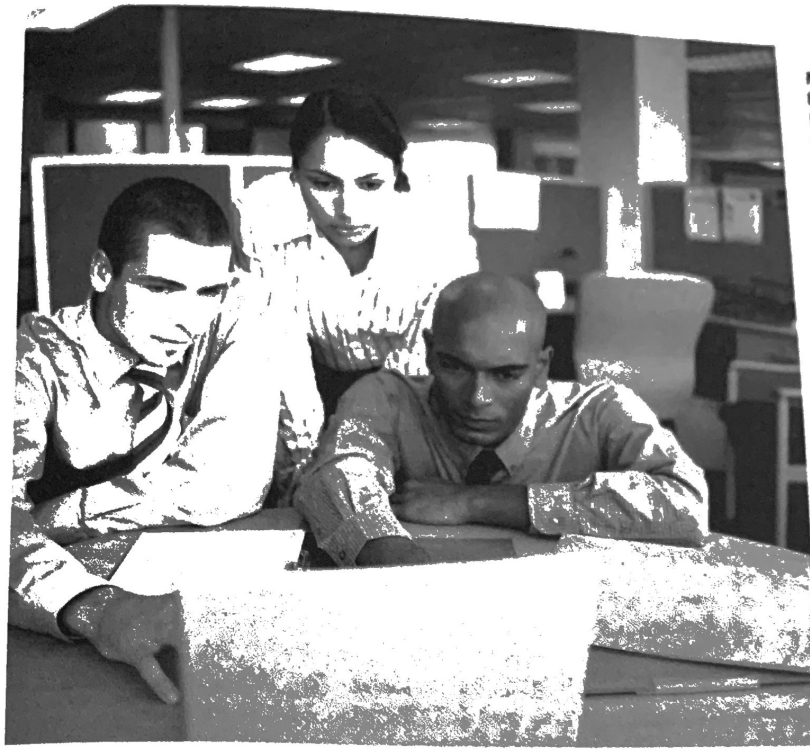
Some rules may govern the members' interactions. For example, a rule might be "Listen respectfully and actively to what others are saying, without interrupting." Or it might instruct members to use "I" language ("I think . . .") rather than "you" language ("The problem with your idea is . . .") when disagreeing. Others might cover more logistical issues, such as conscientiously doing one's share of the work, keeping the group informed if problems arise, and being on time with one's contributions.

Ideally, the group will generate its own ground rules to which all members will agree. Some instructors find that actually drawing up a contract and having each member sign it is a good way to get group work off to a good start and prevent problems down the line.

Choosing the Means of Collaboration

Not that many years ago, groups needed numerous face-to-face meetings in order to get their work done. Today there are many other venues for group interactions. Your group should put careful thought into the choice of media that will enable effective collaboration while taking into account members' time constraints, distance from each other, and technological preferences.

If possible, you should have at least two face-to-face meetings—one at the start of the project and another near the end (for example, when doing the final revisions). But the bulk of the collaborating may take place by email, by discussion board, or through such online collaborative authoring tools as Google Docs or wikis (see Chapter 17).



Many reports written in business are produced in collaboration with others. Although you will do some work individually, you can expect to plan, organize, and revise the report as a group.

You might even use a live-meeting application or Skype to converse with each other. Whatever tools you use, it is vitally important that you choose them consciously and create any ground rules that will apply to their use.

Making a Project Plan

Especially when the desired outcome is a coherent, effective report, the group should structure its tasks to meet the project's goals. Using the steps discussed in the next section and any additional considerations, the group should prepare a timeline that clearly states or shows the deadline for each task. A Gantt chart can be very useful along these lines (see Chapters 14 and 17), but even a simple list or table can suffice. In addition, your plan should make clear who is responsible for what. If your group has taken an inventory of its strengths before its planning, you can match members up with what they do best (for example, doing research or revising a document).

Your plan can also describe in some detail the desired form and style of the final document (such as which template it will use or whether or not it will use "you"). The more the group determines such matters up front, the less scrambling it will need to do at the end to generate a coherent, consistent-looking report.

Researching and Writing the Report

However the group decides to operate, the following activities typically occur, usually in the sequence shown.

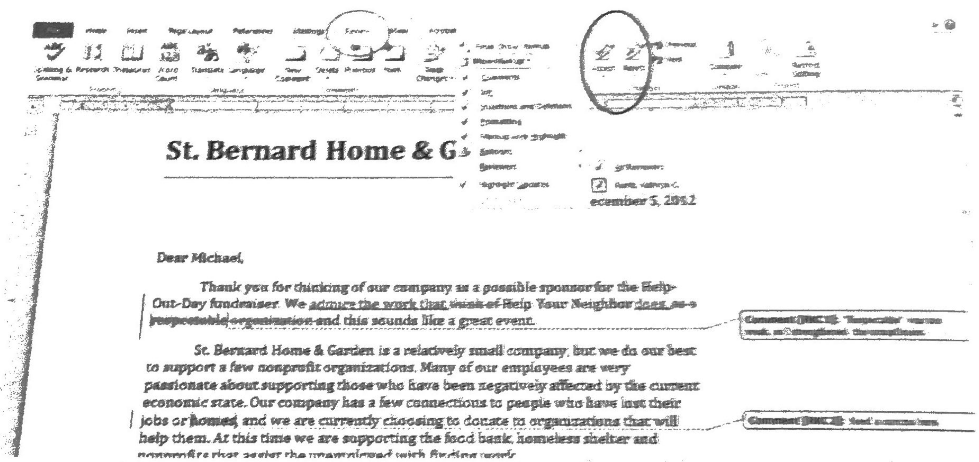
1. *Determine the Problem and Purpose.* As in all report projects, the participants must determine just what the report must do. Thus, the group should follow the preliminary steps of determining the problem and purpose of the project as discussed previously. They also need to develop a coherent, shared sense of the report's intended readers and their needs.

Comment and Review Tools Help Writers Track Changes to Their Documents

The commenting and reviewing tools in most word processors help people work together on documents asynchronously. When others review content and edit your document digitally, the commenting tool allows them to express opinions and concerns while the tracking tool makes their editing changes clearly visible. The tools allow you to accept or reject their suggestions individually or en masse.

In the example shown here, the reviewer clicked Word 2010's Review tab, circled in red, to reveal the commenting and reviewing tools. By clicking "Track Changes" (highlighted on the toolbar), the reviewer had Word keep track of all changes being made to the document as well as any comments being added. Word's tracking system allows reviewers to use a variety of colors so that others can easily determine whom the changes belong to. The commenting tool identifies each reviewer, too. Clicking on "Reviewers" in the dropdown menu will show which people have reviewed the document.

When the writer opens the reviewed document, he or she will see all the comments and edits. The "Accept" and "Reject" options (circled in dark blue), which also appear when you right-click on a given edit, enable the writer to keep the desired changes and remove the rest.



2. *Identify the Factors.* The group next determines what needs to be studied in order to achieve the report's purpose. This step involves determining the factors of the problem, as described earlier in the chapter. An advantage of collaboration is that several minds are available for the critical thinking that is so necessary for identifying the factors of the problem.
3. *Gather the Needed Information.* Before the group can begin writing the report, it must get the information needed. This activity can include any of the types of research discussed in Chapter 13. In some cases, however, group work begins after the information has already been assembled, thus eliminating this step.
4. *Interpret the Information.* Determining the meaning of the information gathered is the next logical step for the group. In this step, the participants apply the findings to the problem and select the appropriate information for the report. In doing so, they also give meaning to the facts collected. The facts do not speak for themselves. Rather, group participants must think through the facts, identify their significance, and interpret them from the readers' points of view.

5. *Organize the Material.* Just as in any other report-writing project, the group next organizes the material selected for presentation. They will base the report's structure on time, place, quantity, factor, or other relationships in the data.
6. *Plan the Report's Components and Style.* A next logical step is planning the makeup of the report. In this step the formality of the situation, the anticipated length of the report, and the intended audience need to be considered (see Chapter 12). In addition, the team needs to agree on such matters as the report's style, the kinds of headings to use, and whether to use the present- or past-time viewpoint.
7. *Assign Parts to Be Written.* After the planning has been done, the group next turns its attention to the writing. The usual practice is to assign each person a part of the report.
8. *Write Parts Assigned.* Following comes a period of individual work. Each participant writes his or her part. Each should apply the ideas in Chapters 3–5 about word selection, sentence design, paragraph construction, and tone.
9. *Revise Collaboratively.* The group meets and reviews each person's contribution and the full report. This should be a give-and-take session with each person actively participating. It requires courteous but meaningful criticisms. It also requires that the participants be open minded, remembering that the goal is to construct the best possible document.
10. *Edit the Final Draft.* After the group has done its work, one member is usually assigned the task of editing the final draft. This editor gives the document a consistent style and serves as the major proofreader. However, since the document reflects on all members, they should assist with the final proofreading.

If all the work has been done with care and diligence, this final draft should be a report better than anyone in the group could have prepared alone.

THERE'S MORE . . .

How can you find out if your reader read your report? What are six team personality types? Scan the QR code with your smartphone or use your Web browser to find out at www.mhhe .com/lesikar13e. Choose Chapter 11 > Bizcom Tools & Tips.

SUMMARY BY LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Your work on a report begins with a business problem, which will determine your report's purpose.
   - Get the problem in mind by gathering all the information you need about it.
   - Develop a problem statement from the information.
   - Then write a purpose statement that will capture the goal of your research and your report.
   - Understand that you may need to revise your problem and purpose statements as you proceed with your research.

Write clear problem and purpose statements.

2. From the problem statement, determine the factors involved.
   - These may be subtopics in information reports.
   - They may be hypotheses (possible explanations) in problems requiring a solution.
   - They may be bases of comparison in problems requiring evaluations.

List the factors involved in a problem.