

Suggestion for writing science assignments (EAS 372, 2017)

- Use informative *Headings* that help make your report coherent.
- Do start with an *Introduction*. This can be very brief. It may be a single sentence. More likely, it will be a paragraph. An obvious, safe opening is to inform the reader of the context and meaning of what s/he is about to read. For example a safe opening might be something like: “*This report documents an exercise in the interpretation of weather analyses. Part 1 focuses on the 1000-500 hPa thickness field and its interpretation. Part 2 focuses on the identification of zones of thermal advection.*”
- Make sure you “carry” the reader through the main body of the report, your *Results* (or perhaps it is your *Methods and Results*). Organize your Figures and Tables (probably in sequential order at the back) by giving them numbers and headings, and direct the reader to them by explicit statements in your narrative: *See Fig. 1 for the computed trends in q and \bar{T} .* Refer to your images and tables *in the order of their appearance* in the document.
- Close your report with some form of *Conclusion*
- An abbreviated form is fine (unless an “essay” style has been mandated), but it still needs to have an identifiable structure, it still needs to “flow” in a way that carries the reader.
- Even at the visual level, your report should have an evident structure. If it doesn’t look organized, it isn’t.
- Take command of the reader (in an appropriate, courteous way, of course). Tell him/her what to see, where, why.
- In addition to the issues of tidiness and structure, it is more satisfying to a reader if you provide a *reaction* to and/or *interpretation* of your findings. This need not be laborious.
- Be sure to edit your documents carefully for typos/mistakes of grammar or spelling — if time permits, ask a friend to check for you.
- In reporting results of calculations, give an appropriate number of significant figures, reflecting a realistic degree of exactness.
- Treat given limits (page count; number of allowed figures) as exactly that – upper limits. Such limits are given to avoid excess, and don’t imply the recipient of the document wants or expects the limit to be hit.