How to Write a Research Report and Give a Presentation

A. Darwish

Things to Remember When Starting A Presentation
• Start with something to get your audience’s attention.
• Tell your audience what your argument will be.
• Tell your audience how you are going to develop that argument.

Presentation Outline
Writing a Research Report
• Getting started and planning
• Sections of a typical report
• Presentation of text, maps, and illustrations
• Referencing

Presenting Your Research
• Strategies for presentation
• Designing visuals for your presentation

Writing a Research Report:
Getting Started
• Your Report Should
  – Report on the research project
  – Use research findings to develop some conclusions
  – Develop an argument about your findings

Writing a Research Report:
Getting Started
• Questions your report should address
  – What was the research problem?
  – Why is this problem important?
  – How does the project fit into the context of other research?
  – How did you investigate the research problem?
  – What are your findings?
  – What do these findings tell you?
  – What do you conclude?
Writing a Research Report:
Getting Started

• Writing is an iterative process.
  – Therefore you do not have to start at the beginning!
• Whatever you do….
  Just start writing!

Writing a Research Report:
Getting Started

• Additional Tips
  – The value of reflective free writing
  – Discovering new insights while writing
  – Don’t seek perfection
  – Be prepared to junk whole sections

Writing a Research Report:
Getting Started

• Steps in writing
  – Free writing
  – Develop an overall argument (Try writing a thesis statement or abstract.)
  – Develop an outline
  – Write
  – Revise, Revise, Revise, Revise
    • Go back and rewrite introduction if necessary

Writing a Research Report:
Getting Started

• Developing an argument
  – Link theory with research to justify your conclusions
  – Argument should link sections of your report into a coherent story.

Writing a Research Report:
General Format

• Front matter
  – Title Page
  – Acknowledgements page
  – Abstract
  – Table of Contents
  – List of Tables
  – List of Figures
Writing a Research Report:

General Format

• Body of the report
  – Introduction
  – Literature review
  – Methodology
  – Results
  – Discussion
  – Conclusions

• End matter
  – Appendices
  – Endnotes
  – Reference list
    • Save time and develop your reference list as you write!

Writing a Research Report:

Sections of the Report

• Title
  – Keep it short
  – Use a subtitle if necessary
  – Interesting or amusing titles are better

Writing a Research Report:

Sections of the Report

• Abstract
  – A 200-300 word non-technical summary of your research project.
  – Questions to answer:
    • What is the research problem and why is it important?
    • What did you do and why?
    • What did you find?
    • What do your findings mean?

Writing a Research Report:

Sections of the Report

• Introduction
  – Address the topic in the first sentence
  – Introduce the topic by means of an example to illustrate theoretical points
  – Outline your general argument and your paper
Writing a Research Report:
Sections of the Report

- Literature Review
  - A discussion of findings from other researchers
  - Critical appraisal of other’s theories
    * You should compare and assess other’s results.
  - Provides external context for your project
  - Justifies your project

- Methodology
  - Details method and procedures
  - Discusses the reasons for choosing your methods and procedures

- Contents of a methodology section
  - Rationale for methodological approach
  - Hypotheses
  - Description of study area
  - Demographic details of study population
  - How the population was selected
  - Description of types of data and sources
  - Description of methods and procedures for obtaining data
  - Description of methods and procedures of data analysis

- Results
  - Details the main findings
  - Provides a summary explanation of results
  - Accept or reject hypotheses if you have any

- Discussion
  - Develop a logical argument about what your results mean.
  - Your results provide evidence to illustrate and support your argument.
  - Identify potential errors--What might invalidate your results? How might you improve research design?

- Conclusion
– A restatement of the research problem
– A summary statement of main findings and their significance.
– Shortcomings of the research
– Agenda for future research

Writing a Research Report:
Presentation

• Presentation of the text
  – Wordprocessed
  – Double spaced
  – Times Roman or other serif font for easy reading of body text
  – The particular style you use isn’t important as long as you…
    • use consistent section headings

Writing a Research Report:
Presentation

An Example Section Heading Scheme

Introduction
  This is the introduction. Isn’t it great? I think it is. Blah blah blah
  Do to do de do. Text text this is wonderful text. Blah blah blah
  Blah blah blah

Cyber-regional Geography
  This paragraph is all about cyber-regional geography. Itsn’t it a great
  paragraph. Do Dah, de de. alsk’ alsk’ goi aslk oig I fhla the the look at this
  It great in terms of a paragraph

The Gary Cyber-region
  This is a third level heading. Doesn’t it look great?
  Don’t you think it looks wonderful

Writing a Research Report:
Presentation

• Tables, Diagrams, Photos, and Maps
  – Use when relevant and refer to them in the text.
  – Redraw diagrams rather than copying them directly.
  – Place at appropriate points in the text.
  – Select the most appropriate device.
  – List in contents at beginning of the report.

Presenting Your Research

• Why do you have to do a research presentation in this class?
  – Experience for graduate school
  – Experience for a future job

Presenting Your Research

Approaches

• Reading your presentation
  • Can be done well by skilled presenters
  • Usually isn’t done well
• Needs to be written the way that you would talk
• 7 pages double spaced = 15 minutes

• Speaking extemporaneously
  • Doesn’t work if you are nervous and can’t think of what to say
  • Generates more audience interest

Presenting Your Research
The Format of an Oral Presentation

• Describes essential aspects of the research
  – Explain the research problem and its importance
  – Explain the research setting (a map is usually necessary!)
  – Explain what you did and why
  – Explain the results
  – Conclude

• You may only be able to present a small portion of your research
• Sometimes you only have time to provide one or two illustrations of your findings
• In professional meetings lasts 15 minutes with 5 minutes for questions/discussion
• Don’t be afraid to allow time for discussion!

Presenting Your Research
General Tips

• Dress nice (note the guys above with ties!)
  Unless you are a radical Marxist then a tie might be too much, but a casual sport coat, jeans, and tennis shoes are appropriate.
  – If in Hawaii nice shorts and an Aloha shirt might work--but make sure your belly button doesn’t show.
  – Dress to match the occasion.

Presenting Your Research
General Tips

• Speak slowly and clearly
• Don’t fidget
• Don’t stand still like a statue
• Use a podium to hold your notes
• Set a stop watch to gage time

Presenting Your Research
Designing Presentation Graphics

• Graphics should be visible from far away
• Serif fonts are easier to read than Sans-Serif Fonts
• Make sure your text contrasts with your background
• Make sure your maps and illustrations are of professional quality
• Do not expect people to read stuff off the screen--read it for them
• Do not show large tables of data. Provide a hand out or create a summary table with relevant results highlighted.

Presenting Your Research
Designing Presentation Graphics

• Do not use too many slides (unlike this presentation)
• Keep information on slides to a minimum
• If you want your audience to listen to you insert a blank slide
• Use large print
• More than four lines of text are hard to read on a screen (see previous slide)

Presenting Your Research
Designing Presentation Graphics

• Don’t use yucky backgrounds
• Make sure text contrasts with background
• Tacky clip art stinks
• Use an easy to read and consistent font.

Don’t make spelling mistakes

Presenting Your Research
Designing Presentation Graphics

• Maps are nice

Presenting Your Research
Designing Presentation Graphics

• In a presentation you can use photos that might not have made it into your written report.

Presenting Your Research
Designing Presentation Graphics

• Use the Master Slide in Power Point to get a consistent style

The End

• End with a blank slide so that the Power point screen isn’t the last thing people see
• Don’t start packing up, you’ve got questions to answer
• Most people are afraid of questions, but you know you’ve done a good presentation if you get good questions!

The End