

- **What results have you produced?** The results you produce in one reporting period may influence the shape of work in future periods. Also, even when you are still in the midst of a project, readers will want to know about any results they can use in other projects now, before you finish your overall work.
- **What progress do you expect during the next reporting period?** Again, your readers' interests will focus on such management concerns as schedule and budget and on the kinds of results they can expect.
- **How do things stand overall?** This question arises especially in long reports. Readers want to know what the overall status of your work is, something they may not be able to tell readily from all the details you provide.
- **What do you think we should do?** If you are experiencing or expecting problems, your readers will want your recommendations about what should be done. Your ideas about how to improve the project will also be welcome.

SUPERSTRUCTURE FOR PROGRESS REPORTS

Learn More

Remember that a superstructure is not an outline; you may combine the elements of a superstructure in many ways (see page 557).

The conventional superstructure for progress reports provides a very effective framework for answering your readers' questions about your projects:

SUPERSTRUCTURE FOR PROGRESS REPORTS	
REPORT ELEMENT	READERS' QUESTION
Introduction	What work does your report cover? What is the purpose of the work?
Facts and Discussion	
Past Work	Is your work progressing as planned or expected? What results have you produced?
Future work	What progress do you expect during the next reporting period?
Conclusions	In long reports—How do things stand overall?
Recommendations	What do you think we should do?

GUIDING YOU THROUGH THE PROCESS OF PREPARING PROGRESS REPORTS

When creating progress reports, writers perform the same activities as when they are preparing any workplace communication: defining the communication's objectives, conducting research, planning, drafting, and revising. The following sections

suggest ways of performing these activities that are especially suited to writing progress reports.

Defining Your Report's Objectives

When defining the objectives of a progress report, focus on the specific ways your readers will use the information you provide. Are they principally interested in whether your projects are on schedule? Then let them know while trimming other information. Do they want to use your latest findings or results in their own work? Then describe your outcomes and accomplishments in enough detail to enable them to build their own work on yours.

Many organizations have strong conventions, even printed or online forms, for writing progress reports. When defining your progress report's objectives, learn your readers' expectations.

The Writer's Guide for Defining Your Communication's Objectives (page 70) will help you identify the additional information about your report's purpose, readers, and context that is needed to fully define its objectives.

Conducting Research

Employees rarely need to conduct research when writing progress reports. However, you may find it helpful to “research” your memory by making a few notes about what you want to say before you draft. These notes could help you focus on making your most important points directly and succinctly. Brevity is a virtue in progress reports.

Planning

One goal when writing progress reports is to finish your writing quickly (and well) so you can return to the work on which you are reporting. A key to writing rapidly is to plan a simple organization for providing the information your readers need. Here are three of the many organizational plans you might use.

If you are reporting on a single project, you might organize in this way.

- I. What are the major events that happened during the most recent time period
- II. What major events do I expect to occur during the next time period

Erin used this organization when reporting every two weeks on her assignment to increase efficiency at her employer's steel mills. Figure 26.1 shows the outline of her report for the two weeks in which she discovered employees at one plant were taking too long to change the blade on a hot saw, which is a machine that cuts the white-hot ingots of metal.

If you are working on two or more projects simultaneously, you can expand the organization Erin used.