Technical Report Writing

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Department of Electrical Engineering
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Reports (seminar reports, thesis reports, technical reports) are very important documents. You need to allocate substantial time for report preparation.

- the current status of the topic (literature survey), including problems which need to be addressed
- the progress that you have made toward the goal of solving those problems
- possible directions for future work on the topic

We will discuss some practices which can help in preparing a good report.

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Report organisation

* Make a list of broad topics you are planning to cover in your report and order them in a logical sequence.
* Make an estimate of how many pages each topic would require.
* Using the above information, plan out the contents of each chapter, i.e., which broad topic(s) it should cover.
* For each topic, make a list of sub-topics, if any.
* Decide on sections and sub-sections within each chapter.
* In the beginning of any chapter, it is generally a good idea to add a brief introduction (what is this about?) and then start the sections. The same is true about sections and sub-sections.

If your report is part of an evaluation, remember that the evaluation is based on the content and not on the number of pages!
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Writing style

Clarity is very important. You need to go through the report carefully and make sure that there are no ambiguities.

If you are reporting experimental results, for example, you must specify all relevant parameters related to fabrication or measurement (unless the IP needs to be protected).

Your report must have a logical flow (order); otherwise, it is harder for the reader to appreciate the contents.

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Add a space after a full stop, comma, colon, but not before.

Add a space before an opening bracket (except in mathematical symbols).

Units: Leave a space between the number and the unit, e.g., 10 mA, not 10mA.

Do not allow the number and unit to be separated across lines.

Latex: use \, or \( \tilde{ } \)

Word: use cntrl-shift-space

Abbreviation of “milli” or “kilo” should be in roman (or sans serif in presentations), not italic, e.g., 10 kΩ and not 10 \( \Omega \).

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\(p = qr\) and \(p = q \times r\) are fine but not \(p = q \star r\).

The correct way of referring to a figure is Fig. 4 or Fig. 1.2 (note that there is a space after Fig.). The same applies to sections and equations, e.g., Sec. 2, Eq. 3.1.

Use of hyphen: If two words form a single adjective, a hyphen is required; otherwise, it should not be used, e.g.,-

- A short-channel device shows a finite output conductance.
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- Several devices with short channels were studied.

The correct way to describe the base doping density of a BJT would be \(1.5 \times 10^{17} \text{cm}^{-3}\) and not \(1.5 \times 10^{17} \text{cm}^{-3}\) or \(1.5e17 \text{cm}^{-3}\).

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Use symbols only if really required. It is often adequate to join the data points with straight line segments and drop the symbols.

Do not use very large symbols; avoid clutter.

If you want the reader to compare two plots, try to arrange them next to each other, as far as possible.

Avoid screen dumps. It is usually possible to create a data file and then use a plotting package to create a pdf or eps file for your report.
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Avoid screen dumps. It is usually possible to create a data file and then use a plotting package to create a pdf or eps file for your report.
References

Citing a reference (IEEE style):

- The threshold voltage is a strong function of the implant dose [5].
- Genetic algorithms [1]-[4] have been used in a variety of applications.
- There have been several studies [1], [3], [7] on ...

Note that there must be a space before the bracket.

If figures, equations, or remarks are taken from some reference, the reference must be cited right there, even if you have cited it earlier.

In some cases, in addition to citing the appropriate reference, you may also need to get authorisation from the publisher/authors. It may otherwise amount to copyright infringement.

Follow some standard format while writing references. For example, you could look up IEEE guidelines for citing journal papers, books, conference papers, URLs, etc.

The order of references is very important. In the list of your references, the first reference must be the one which is cited before any other reference, and so on.

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Latex related points

Do not use double quotation marks to open a quote. If you do that, you get "this". Use the single opening quotes (twice) to get "this".

Spell check in Latex: the command ispell -t xxx.tex will perform spell check, ignoring Latex keywords.

Learn to use bibtex to manage your references. It will save a significant amount of effort in the long run.

Avoid hard numbers. Let Latex figure out the numbers for references, figures, tables, chapters, sections, etc.

The combination of Latex and TicZ is useful for preparing figures.

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If your work is based on or is supported by the work of other students (past or present), you must include their names in your acknowledgment. If you have used some code from the internet or from another researcher, it must be clearly mentioned in your report.

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