



Writing About Geography and Planning

I. General Purpose and Audience

Geographers write to communicate information about important issues, to communicate research findings or the results of scientific inquiry, to make sense of and/or evaluate the work of others, and to inform people about data and analysis underlying issues and principles. Geographers also communicate visually with maps. Researchers analyze patterns on Earth's surface and may focus on regional-spatial changes, human-environment interactions, developments in geographic information systems and science, and other topics. **Audiences** include geographers, environmental scientists and managers, government agencies, professors and fellow students, the media, and the general public.

II. Types of Writing

1. Reports / Research Papers / Lab or Field Work Reports
 - Title page/ abstract/ executive summary
 - Introduction
 - Materials and methods
 - Results (with graphics: maps, charts, etc.)
 - Discussion, interpretations, conclusions
 - References/ sources
 - Research procedures are explained in detail so that field work or analysis can be replicated
2. Research Proposals
 - Identify research problem, limitations of project, connections to wider field / objectives / methods / timeline / bibliography
3. Annotated Bibliography
 - Bibliographic information/ summary and evaluation
4. Summary of Articles
 - *Detailed* summary with no evaluation; condensed but detailed version of an article or manuscript (3-4 pages for a 20-page article, for example)
5. Literature Review
 - Background for project/ summary of publications/ analysis of scholarly literature / gaps in research
6. Critical Review

- Description and *brief* summary/analysis (strengths, weaknesses)/ evaluation
- 7. Posters (graphic and written communication)/ figures, tables and maps
- 8. Reflective letters
- 9. Emails / internal communication
- 10. Essays (with personal opinion)
 - Writer's place in geography
 - Regional description (characteristics of a region, jobs, livelihood, industry)
- 11. Portfolio for Employers (Senior Capstone)
- 12. Press Releases
- 13. Public and Oral Presentations

III. Types of Evidence

- Figures, tables, maps, histograms, charts, diagrams, databases, aerial photography, satellite images, etc.
- Primary and secondary sources
- Empirical evidence (data observed or experienced)
- Quantitative (countable): statistics, facts, examples, quotes from books, articles
- Qualitative (observable): interviews; observations and personal experience

IV. Writing Conventions

- Writing should be authoritative, coherent and concise.
- Thorough research lends credibility to author(s) or organization(s) involved.
- Report results fairly and reasonably.
- Active voice is preferred.
- Writing typically addresses five questions:
 - What was done?
 - Why was it done?
 - How was it done?
 - What was discovered?
 - What do the findings mean?

V. Terms / Vocabulary / Concepts

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| • Spatial Orientation/ Pattern | • Topographic Map | • Geographic Information |
| • Location Theory | • Thematic Map | • System (GIS) |
| • Human-Environment | • Symbolization | • Global Positioning System |
| • Interaction | • Coordinate System | • (GPS) |
| • Cartography | • Population Diagram | • Geospatial Data |
| • Reference Map | • (Pyramid) | • Geographic Model |

- Physical Geography
- Geomorphology
- Topography
- Climatology
- Hydrosphere
- Human (Cultural) Geography
- Sustainability
- Historical Geography

VI. Documentation Style

- Author-date (Harvard) system (See Hay 175-186)
- In-text references use author's surname, dates, page numbers.
- List of references include names, first initial, year, title, publisher, and place of publication.
- Documentation may follow Council of Science Editors (CSE) or the American Psychological Association (APA) format.
- See also AAG (Association of American Geographers @ AAG.org).

Sources consulted

Hay, Iain. *Communicating in Geography and the Environmental Sciences*. (3rd ed.) New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Northey, Margot, David B. Knight, and Dianne Draper. *Making Sense in Geography and Environmental Studies* (5th ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.



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