

# **Reports and Essays: Key Differences.**

This handout describes general features of academic reports and essays. It is likely that

A report usually contains tables, charts and diagrams.	Essays do not usually include tables, charts, or diagrams.
Reports usually include descriptions of the methods used.	Essays should not usually refer to the methods you used to arrive at your conclusions.
The discussion in a report often includes comments on how the research could be improved and extended, and may include evaluation of the methods and processes.	Essays do not usually reflect on the actual process of researching and writing the essay itself.
Reports sometimes include recommendations.	Essays do not include recommendations.

Table adapted from Cottrell, 2003, p. 209.

## The structure of reports.

Most reports use an **IMRaD** structure: **I**ntroduction, **M**ethods, **R**esults and **D**iscussion. Here are some common sections that also appear in reports. Please note that there are alternative terms for some sections.

### Table

**Discussion, sometimes called Analysis or Interpretation.**

This analyses the results and evaluates the research carried out.

**Conclusion.**

This summarises the report, and usually revisits the aims and objectives.

**Recommendations.**

If required, this is where the writer uses the results and