Basic Checklist for Writing Engineering Reports:

Formatting and Organization
Is there a template? Follow that exactly. If not:
- Title Page – including names, group, title, date, class
- Page numbering – Numbering starts at 1 after the Title Page
- Table of Contents
- List of Figures
- List of Tables
- Sections – topics are broken down into categories and subcategories with numbered sections.

Figures and Tables
- Referenced in Text
- Placed in the Body of Text near to where they are referred to
- Legible, easy to read, not confusing
- Only relevant information should be placed in the body of the report. The rest of the information should be included in Appendices
- Headings on Tables go above the table. Note: Tables in Appendices also need headings
- Captions on Figures go below the figure. Note: Figures in Appendices also need captions

Audience
- Who is going to read this?
- Change tone, level of detail, and technicality of report appropriately

Writing
- Tense correct?
- Spelling and Grammar checked over?
- Answered all the Questions?
- Concise? No unneeded or repetitive words
- Eliminate or integrate phrases in parentheses
- ‘Fluffy Language’ – Use your brain, not a thesaurus. Use words that make sense, not just sound impressive.

References and Referencing
- Should be done throughout the body of the report
- Properly formatted - both APA and IEEE are useful/acceptable referencing formats
- Only include references actually used and cited in the report

Appendices
- Title for each appendix
- Referenced in Body of Report
- Insert comments to help reader understand what it is and why it is included

Totally Unacceptable
- Notebook or loose leaf paper
- Tape, glue or other adhesives
- Pencil
- Handwritten text or drawings, unless they are scanned in and imported into the document
**Tense:**

By the time you get to writing a report, generally the experiment is done. Use **past tense** to talk about things that are already finished.

“The requirements of the project were...”
“We decided...”

The report, theories and permanent equipment still exist and, therefore, should be described using **present tense**.

“The objective of this report is...”
“Newton’s Law is...”
“The testing machine **exerts** force...”

If it is a progress report with an incomplete project, or there are plans for future actions, use **Future Tense** to describe these.

“We **will** purchase materials...”
“The model **will** be tested...”

**Spelling and Grammar**

The easiest way to check your report is to read it, out loud. Then print it off and read it again. If you do not consider English and/or grammar to be one of your strengths, make sure someone else who does reads it through. Make sure that there is correct punctuation, complete sentences, and that you are on the lookout for words that are real words, but are inappropriate. For example: “This design was chosen over the **otters.**”

ALWAYS get a friend, colleague or teammate to read your work. If it is written by you, or read enough times, your brain can trick you into thinking something is correct or clear when it is not.

*Note: IF* your reviewer has **NO** suggestions, they probably have not read it very thoroughly. Due to differing writing styles, there will always be something they would change, even if it is only due to personal preference.

The Writing Centre on Campus is a free service to students who want to improve their writing skills. While they do not proofread or edit, they will meet with you individually and teach you to write better.

[http://www.dal.ca/campus_life/student_services/academic-support/writing-and-study-skills.html](http://www.dal.ca/campus_life/student_services/academic-support/writing-and-study-skills.html)

**Answer the Questions:**

**Why?** Why did you do what you did? Requirements, Motivation

**What?** What was it that you actually did? Methodology and Processes

**How?** How did you carry out the process? How did you reach each of your decisions? Justification

**So What?** What are your conclusions? What does that mean? What is the significance of the decisions you made or the experiments you carried out?