Technical report planning - create an outline

Prepare a working title → Describe your overall message → Write a preliminary Table of Contents
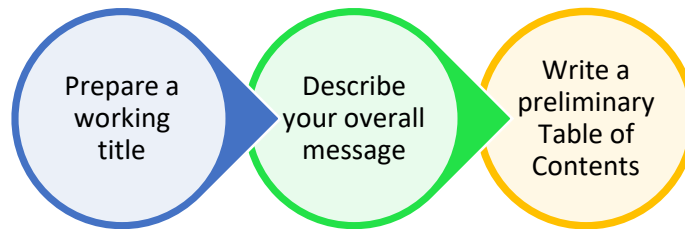
Step 1: Start by proposing a "working" title for your report.

This title will likely change many times before your report is complete but you need to have a working title in mind before you can focus your report writing efforts.

- Make it descriptive. Your title needs to communicate the overall purpose of the report.
- **Example**: "*Pavement Composition Analysis*" does not provide enough detail. Something like, *"Pavement Composition Analysis of Various Sections of the Trans-Canada Highway on the Avalon Peninsula"* would be much better.

Step 2: Write a 1 paragraph answer to this question:

 If someone who has just read your report was asked what the report was about, what would you want them to say?

Even though you have not written your report yet, answer this question, as best you can, before you can move on.

- ➢ If you **can** answer this question easily, go on to step 3.
- ➢ If you **cannot** answer this question easily, you are not ready to write your report and need to focus your efforts on defining and describing exactly what your report is going to be about.

Step 3: Decide how you need to order your content and write titles for all the level 1 headings (main sections/chapters) that will end up in your Table of Contents.

Section 1
Section 2
Section 3
Section 4
Section 5

Add or take away main sections, as needed.

Step 4: Expand your outline to include the necessary subsections to support your main sections. You may have more or fewer sub-sections for each chapter, depending on your report topic.

Section 1 1.1 1.2 1.3 …
Section 2 2.1 2.2 2.3 …

Section 3

3.1

3.2

3.3

…

Section 4

4.1

4.2

4.3

…

Section 5

5.1

5.2

5.3

…