

Final Report

The Liquid Gold competition brief contains the following statements.

- Your **Final Report** will describe, with engineering drawings, your group's entry in the competition. It should be as brief as you can make it and still convey all aspects of your group's effort including planning, construction, preliminary testing etc. The report should be ready in draft form on the day of testing, to be augmented with details of the group's final result and with a brief commentary on the results achieved by all other groups.

As part of your **Final Report** you should prepare a two-page electronic document illustrating your entry suitable for posting on the web. The top ten entries will be invited to submit this to me following the competition.

I have been asked to enlarge on my expectations for the Final Report. I make the following points.

You should always ask yourself who will read the report; what their level of expertise will be; their familiarity with the subject matter. In this case it will be clearly aimed at me. Since that is the case the report will not have to explain in great detail what the competition is all about but it should contain a brief explanation for the benefit of other readers. You should ask yourself what I would like to know about your participation in the competition. You should tell me about things that I don't know.

I will be most interested in your entry. The best way you can show me that is to include engineering drawings (and possibly photographs) so that you can explain what the entry is like and how it is intended to work. What were the underlying principles? Did it work? How successful was it? As they say 'a picture (translate this as "drawing") is worth a thousand words'. Were there particularly ingenious ideas that you used to achieve the result? How did you ensure that it worked as you intended? Were there unanticipated events that caused your entry to malfunction? Could you see ways of ensuring that "next" time it would definitely work?

Even though you went through many different ideas and potential designs I am not greatly interested in these. I mentioned "... planning, construction, preliminary testing etc" above. I'm only interested in specific things you did, not generalities that everybody does. I expect you used Gantt charts and team constitutions etc. etc. I don't see any need for you to include such things in the body of the report although you could include them in Appendices. I'm unlikely to read appendices unless there is something unusual about what you include that catches my attention, and I won't consider them very closely in arriving at a final assessment. I've already noted that the report should be as brief as you can make it.

What did you learn from taking part in the competition? Do you have any comments to offer about the running of the competition? Please be assured that constructive comments and suggestions (and well-supported criticisms) are welcomed and will improve your assessment.

It takes time to prepare a report and even more time to prepare a brief report. Don't imagine that I will be impressed with a voluminous report. Remember that I have the task of reading 38 reports and I will respond most positively to reports that make my job easier, faster, more interesting and enjoyable. I love to hear about good ideas.

Before you launch into writing a report you should imagine what the Table of Contents will contain. By listing the sub-headings you can start to develop the framework for the report and decide where items will go. I will very soon "switch-off" if you give me stream-of-consciousness writing, ie putting in stuff as you just think of it. That is incredibly boring.

Make sure that you write paragraphs that contain just two or three short sentences that all relate to the topic of the paragraph. Take great care with spelling and grammar. It is really off-putting to find numerous errors, though sometimes amusing to find malapropisms but they don't add value. If possible get someone you know who has a good grasp of English to read your report and proof-read for errors (but only after you have been through it as carefully as you can to make it your best effort). If they don't understand what it is about then you have more work to do on it.

You may be surprised to know that I think the Introduction and Conclusions should be the last things that you write. A good Introduction and a good Conclusion are very important.

Finally, let me tell you what I do with a report when I first pick it up. I look at the outside cover. I see who wrote the report and who the group and its members are. I notice how it is bound and whether it appeals to me or not. Catch my attention and you're already at first base. Next I flick through the pages, often working from the back to the front. I stop at any diagrams or pictures or figures and get a sense of what they are about. I skim through the conclusions and the introduction and by now I've decided whether I really want to read the report or not. If I don't want to read it then my assessment task is a serious chore and your mark will reflect that.

I have said it before but I emphasise again that you must read and re-read the competition rules and conditions until you understand every word. This is like the barrister's brief. It tells you what you must and must not do. Before you finalise your report it would be very wise for you to review these notes to ensure that you have given me what I want to the best of your ability.

RJWheen
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