

The Language of Approximation

In report writing it is good style to use 'approximation' in the Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations. Approximation means describing numbers or statistics by using a fraction that is similar to the exact number; e.g. using 'about one-third' instead of 34.76%, or an easy-to-remember number such as 'just under one million' instead of '997,652'.

There are a number of reasons for doing this. Firstly, it is easier for people to understand and remember. Secondly, the numbers or statistics may be more detailed than necessary.

Modifiers:

about, almost, around, barely, far, hardly, just, little, much, nearly, somewhat, well, ...

Here are some examples:

65 %			1,043	
28 %			115	
21 %			9	
49 %			2	
74 %			4	
33.3333 %			6	
92 %			749,982	
98.5 %			1,256,890,534	
0,001			99 %	
41 %			63 %	