

Findings, limitations, recommendation — in that order and separable

Somebody will read only the recommendation, somebody else only the limitations, and a third person will forward one paragraph with no context. Write the report so each of those readings is survivable, because all three happen to every report.

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Lesson 5 of 8

Dashboards and Reporting — The report around it

What this lesson covers

- Who reads what
- The order the platform's reports use
- The recommendation paragraph
- Limitations that are not apologies
- The three sentences every report needs
- Length, and what to cut
- Report it whole
- What comes next

Who reads what

Reader	Reads	Needs
The decision-maker	The recommendation	What to do, and what it costs
The technical reviewer	The limitations and the annex	Whether to believe it
The donor	The summary	Whether the money did something
Whoever forwards it	One paragraph	That paragraph to be true alone

Who reads what

- Write for the fourth — A report whose paragraphs survive being separated is a report that survives its own circulation, . . .

The order the platform's reports use — Example

```
## Recommendation  
## What changed in the measurement  
## The ranking  
## Why the list can be defended  
## Water quality, reported separately  
## What this does not establish  
## Recommended next steps
```

The order the platform's reports use

- The recommendation is first — Not the methodology, not the background — the thing you are asking someone to do
- "What this does not establish" is a numbered section, not a footnote — It is where the technical reviewer goes first,...
- The methodology is not in the report at all — It is in the indicator definitions document, linked, because a reader who...

The recommendation paragraph

- What to do — A verb and an object
- Why these and not others — One sentence of criterion, not a summary of the analysis
- What it costs, or what it displaces — A recommendation with no cost is a wish
- What would change it — The condition under which this advice stops being the advice — which is what makes it a...

The recommendation paragraph — Example

Rehabilitate water points in the six communities listed in section 3.

They are the six with the highest combined need score: households above the thirty-minute collection threshold, households below the Sphere quantity minimum, and households on an unimproved source. The score is defined in docs/indicator-definitions.md section 4.

This is the full rehabilitation budget for the cycle. Three of the six were not in the previous list, which was ranked on improved-source counts.

If the second survey round shows the three new communities improving without intervention, the list should be recomputed before the following cycle.

The recommendation paragraph

- The third paragraph is the one that gets the recommendation accepted or rejected — because it says what changes rather. . .

Limitations that are not apologies

- Not this — "The data have some limitations and results should be interpreted with caution." This says nothing and reads. . .
- This — "Water quality was tested in 33.4% of households"

Limitations that are not apologies

Weak	Strong
"Small sample in some areas"	"Three communes have fewer than 200 screenings; their intervals are twice as wide"
"Data quality issues"	"One team's mean sits beyond the SMART concern threshold; its clusters are excluded from the prevalence"
"Results are indicative"	"This survey cannot distinguish one commune from its neighbour; it can distinguish these three from the district median"

Limitations that are not apologies

- A quantified limitation is a finding — It tells a reader what the analysis can and cannot support, which is more useful. . .

The three sentences every report needs

- The estimate with its interval, in programme units — "19.4 percentage points, or 38 cases that did not reach a service."
- The smallest effect the design could detect — "This evaluation could not have detected anything below 4.9 points."
- What the analysis cannot rule out — "Effects between zero and three points — the range the programme is arguing about — . . ."
- Most reports have the first and not the second or third — and the absence of the second is what lets a null result be . . .

Length, and what to cut

- Four to six pages for a programme report — and the discipline is in what is not there

Length, and what to cut

Cut	Because
The methodology section	It is the definitions document, linked
The literature review	Nobody reading this is deciding whether the field is real
Every chart that does not carry a finding	A chart is a claim; a decorative one is a claim about nothing
The background on the crisis	The audience lives there
Anything the annex holds	That is what an annex is

Length, and what to cut

- The one thing never to cut is the "does not establish" section — It is the first thing an editor reaches for and the...

Report it whole — Example

Report structure

Recommendation (1 page), what changed in the measurement, the ranked list, why the list can be defended, water quality reported separately, what this does not establish, next steps.

Methodology is not in the report. Indicator definitions, with numerator, denominator and standard for each of nine indicators, are in docs/indicator-definitions.md and linked from the recommendation.

Each section is written to be readable alone, because the recommendation will be forwarded without the rest of it.

The report states the interval on every estimate and names one thing the analysis cannot establish for each of its three findings.

Report it whole

- "Written to be readable alone" is a testable claim — Send one section to somebody and ask what it says

What comes next

- A report that states its limitations invites a reviewer to check them.

Read the full lesson, with runnable code

[https://data-analysis.cassion.dev/courses/dashboards-and-reporting/
dash-05-the-narrative-report](https://data-analysis.cassion.dev/courses/dashboards-and-reporting/dash-05-the-narrative-report)