This report has been prepared using the MS Word default template and provides details of the format expectations. If your company or boss requires a specific format, you should use that instead! You’ll see that this first paragraph under the title gives an overview of what is to come. This is your “introduction” and some would say it’s the most important paragraph in your entire paper.

Basic Format Features
Please notice business documents use “left justified” paragraphs, which means each paragraph is single spaced and has no indented first line. There is a space following every paragraph instead. This is just the opposite of an academic paper, which uses double spacing so a teacher has room to write comments between the lines. Besides the paragraph formatting, a business format also features headings and bullets, which will be demonstrated in the following subsections.

Subsection for Headings
See how the subheading here is a smaller font than the heading above? That tells the reader this is a subsection, not a brand new topic. If this were in an outline format, the heading is the “1” and the subheadings replace the “a)” and “b)” below it. Carefully formatted headings are very important because they show the organization of the report.

Many students ask when and where to put the headings. The answer involves thinking of them as the outline indicators. For every main point in the report’s outline, there should be a heading. Then, a rule of thumb says never provide more than three paragraphs before the reader gets either a subheading or another main heading. To put this in outline terms, there should never be an a) without a b), and there should never be a g). In the report, you’re using headings for the 1, 2, 3, and subheadings for the a), b), and c). Drafting the report in outline view makes the formatting process very easy!

Subsection for Bullet Points
Bullet points are an excellent tool several sub-subpoints or details, which are easier to read as a list than in a paragraph. There are some rules, however, that make your bullet points look businesslike instead of a lazy attempt to avoid writing a coherent paragraph.

- Never use bullet points without an introductory paragraph, as I just provided above.
- Be consistent in the formatting. Use all sentences with periods or none, but never mix.
- Try to avoid multiple line bullets, although if you do have a lot of complicated points, they should all be formatted with about the same number of lines. See how this bullet point is now “too long” compared to all the rest? Consistency is the key!!
- Be consistent with grammar, as well. If your first bullet starts with a verb, they all should.

Creating the Features
If you don’t know how to use the Styles in MS Word, you’ll give yourself some serious headaches trying to format a professional document. Be sure you’re smarter than the computer! Understanding the basics of styles can make you a more productive professional, and here’s the first of a few videos showing how to use the style ribbon to avoid some really big headaches.