

Soft Skills
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Lecture - 32
Types of Report

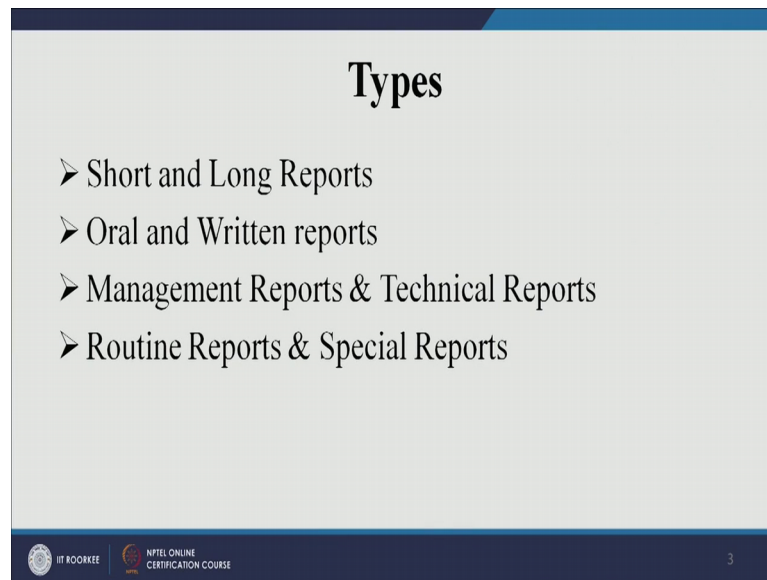
A very good morning to you all, we are actually discussing a series of lectures on Soft Skills. And as we said in the earlier talk, we are dealing with writing section where we are discussing report writing earlier we discussed what a report is and why it is important today to know the art of report writing, how a report is different from other forms of writing in the present lecture we are going to talk about the different Types of Reports.

As I said earlier a report is an only tangible product of a professional, but then what sort of reports do we come across and what sort of reports are we supposed to write can a report be short or long can a report be only informational or can it also analyze we will discuss and how depending upon the nature and the need reports vary in their features.

As we discussed earlier a report is actually written in response to a demand or a need, since it is a formal piece of writing it is actually this formality that makes various reports different from each other people may at times also wonder what should be the length of a report how long should a report be that will also depend upon the formality that will also depend upon the need.

Moreover if the flow of reports in a particular organization is very frequent naturally the length of such reports will be less, but here in a professional world of today you need to understand the differences between all sorts of reports; reports can be long reports can be short, reports at it is outset can either be written we have we have talked earlier that reports are written records, but then here we are also going to say that reports can also be oral, but then they will differ in terms of their approach. Reports can be Management reports and Technical reports, reports can be Routine and Reports can be Special.

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Let us try to understand all of them in a very elaborate manner now what are short reports imagine yourself going back to your school days remember you went to a school trip or a picnic and when you came back your teacher asked you to write a report, now such a report will be short very short it may even at times may not be more than one page because it is just a sort of description. So, when a report is short it has a sort of limitation, but on other occasions when you are sent from your organization to submit a report on the basis of the information available you may write a report which maybe a bit longer.

But then that also cannot come in the category of a technical report because a technical report will require lots of illustrations lots of supporting materials. So, a short report can be sometimes between 5 to 6 pages, sometimes depending upon the need it maybe 8 to 10 pages, when you are supposed to write a short report which we may also call a sort of informal report not many things are required in such a report. There may only be a sort of authorization since as we have discussed earlier you do not write a report because you want to write a report, you write a report because you are authorized by some of your seniors at times you are given the task of writing a report.

So, a letter of authorization will be there and they will also tell you the problem now you will decide how this problem will be dealt with and then you can give a conclusion, but then when it comes to recommendation it always depends upon the letter of the

authorization or the person who has assigned you the task of writing this report, whether a recommendation is required or not my sound advice to you all is do not recommend unless and until you have been asked to conclusion is because conclusion is based on the data that is available.

But when somebody gives a recommendation some way or the other some of your own thoughts also come into picture, that is why recommendation should not be written or should not be given unless and until asked for. Now the short reports are informal in nature we have in some of the previous lectures discussed a letter report and a memo report these are short reports, they come in the category of short reports as we have discussed a letter report will be in the form of a letter where there can be a salutation and a complimentary close.

The language will be the tone will be a bit informal likewise when you talk about a memo report which also comes in the category of short reports it will be written in the form of a memo there will be no complimentary close no salutation, but then while drafting such reports all you need to do is you are always to remember your purpose. I would like to emphasize time and again that before you write a report ask yourself why you are writing this report when you ask yourself why you are writing this report it will give an answer to so, many queries it will make your task easier rather. In terms of the approach, the length, language, you have to be very concise plain and direct and when you have written the short report please review before you send it because that will allow you to understand certain pieces of information which hamper or which can hamper the flow of reading.

If you come across such a situation where you feel that such pieces of information are blocking the flow put them in the appendix of the report, where which we which we call in a in a longer report or in an analytical report back matter where there will be several appendixes. So, put unnecessary materials in the appendix.

Next comes technical reports which you will come across every now and then being in an organization you will find that you are at times given the task of writing a report, hence it is very important to understand what is a technical report? Why do we call it technical and what are the specifications involved in it.

A technical report has to have a proper documentation. So, when I say documentation what I mean is it should have a proper structure and in structure it should follow a proper beginning, it should follow a proper prefatory material along with the discussion, the analysis, the illustrations, the supporting materials, and many more. In such a report I mean in a technical report discussions are very deep discussions are very detailed because you are doing it in order to analyze a problem and since reports will provide a solution to a problem the discussion has to be very clear elaborate logical systematic.

Moreover what is of at most importance is the data because in the definition we have already said a report is an official piece of writing, moreover it is actually a description based on the data analysis and this data has to be factual so, but then one has to understand much depends upon the data of the report is not it. Since data is very important you should know what are the sources of the data, because every curious reader would like to know the veracity of data I mean the validity of the data for that you need to understand the sources from where you have taken the data.

Sometimes it may appear that a report is simply the collection or simply the gathering of some other pieces of information from some sources which may not be reliable such a report may not be effective. As I said earlier reports enable decisions and since decisions are to be taken the data as well as its sources have to be very authentic otherwise any wrong decision that results out of a report may (Refer Time: 12:41) or may actually harm an institution.

And when you have got the data because there are various ways you will gather the data, you will collect the data, and once you have the data, what you will do is you will start analyzing the data, interpreting the data, sampling the data, in order to come to a proper conclusion and recommendation if required.

So, a technical report by its very nature is technical because it is elaborate, it actually tells a lot of discussion, it also tells you about why you are writing the report and why you are writing the report and what actually the person who has assigned the report wants you to cover in that report that will be discussed in such a report. Now when you are analyzing the data you will find suppose you are actually writing a report on the problem of pollution, you are writing a report on the disposal of garbage I mean these are some of the topics.

So, when you are writing such a report and you have got the data you need to analyze the data and to discuss it in the light of the information that you have got, but since this analysis will be longer what you will require is you will require that there has to be a proper division, because you will come across several you know items there will be several items and when you are analyzing what you are supposed to do is you are actually to divide it into several sections as well as several sub sections. When you are making a sort of analysis this analysis should be (Refer Time: 14:49) upon in such a manner that finally, it is paving way to reach a conclusion and as conclusion is based on the data which you have the conclusion has to be logical.

Moreover based on this conclusion and based on what you have been asked to do in the terms of reference what you what you are supposed to know is whether you are going to recommend some course of action or not, remember that you are not supposed to recommend unless and until you have been asked to and if you are giving the recommendation of course, your conclusion will be based on the discussion that you have made, but suppose you are going to recommend some action also it is quite important that the supporting materials are there.

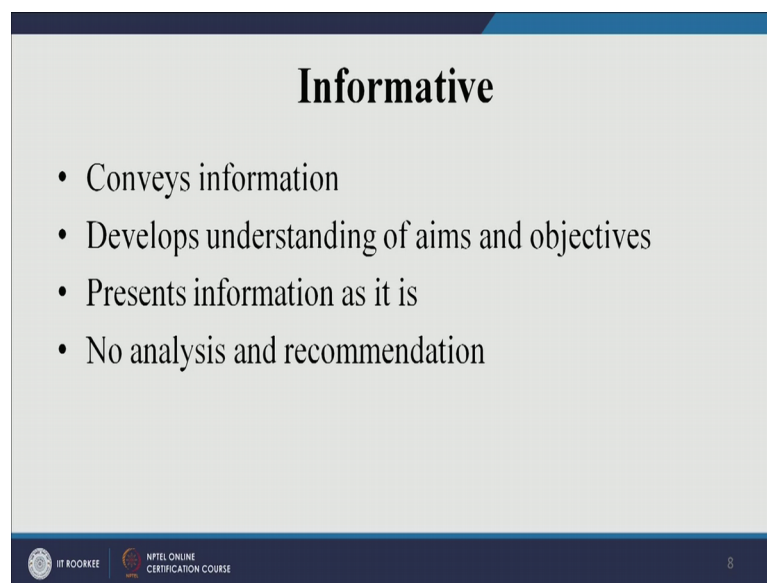
And the supporting materials can be of different sorts say the sources of data the method of data collection sometimes you are trying to suggest some course of action. So, for that also you need to provide some sort of support as we have discussed earlier and these supporting materials because maybe there are number of supporting materials, and if you put them all in the midst of the report that may block. So, let us try to see that these things are flust towards the back matter of the report.

As we have said reports can be short and long and reports can be technical, now any technical report can also be that also can be categorized into 2. First is that it maybe informative remember you are following a course where the teacher takes your attendance, the teacher keeps a record of your attendance, and towards the end of the semester he actually recommends or in the midst of the semester he also recommends whether you should be allowed to continue in this course. Now how does the teacher come to know he actually comes to know by having a look at your attendance records likewise now this piece of information here you are providing some sort of action some action will be taken, but all reports may not enable us to take some action there maybe reports which simply maybe informative in nature.

Now, what is an informative report an informative report as the term itself says is simply a piece of information, you simply want to know the market survey and you for that you have supplied a questionnaire or you have collected a data through some other sources suppose somebody is going to have a sort of lab report I mean laboratory report, sometimes you are going to take stock of an inventory, sometimes you are going to make a sort of inspection. So, you are going to now in such pieces of information you will find that you do not have to make much use of language there are certain columns every organization will have a sort of proforma, where certain items will be there and all you need to do is you simply need to tick you are not going to recommend any action in many of the cases. So, this is what an informative report and do it simply conveys information and it also develops aims and objectives of an organization or of a particular product.

I mean you are not the person who will recommend some action you are simply going to understand the trend and for that this proforma has to be filled out.

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Informative

- Conveys information
- Develops understanding of aims and objectives
- Presents information as it is
- No analysis and recommendation

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So, an informative report presents information as it is there is no further analysis as we have discussed in our technical report, that is why an informative report maybe shorter an informative report maybe shorter suppose you went to see the activities or suppose you went to see the flow of traffic on a on a particular square on a particular say road. So, what you will do you will simply go there and watch and after watching you will

come and you will put it you are not going to recommend any action. So, for that there is some other person who will recommend some action.

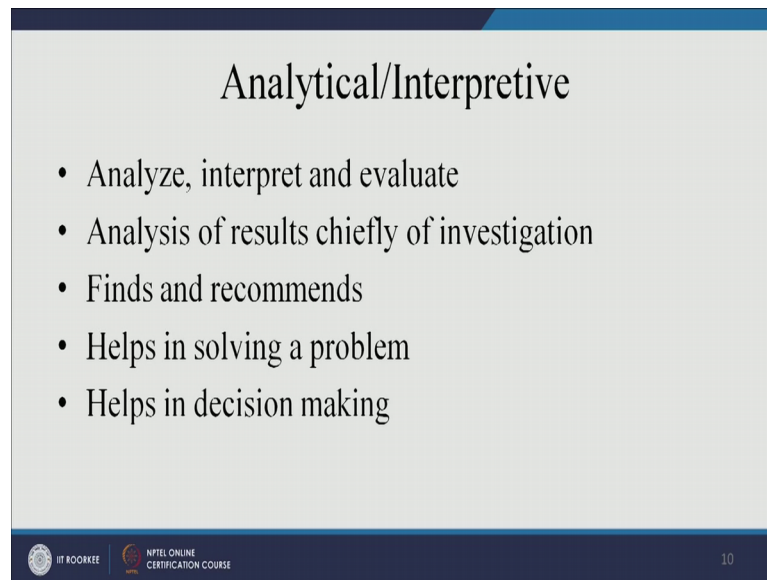
So, an informative report it simply presents the information as it is not as what it should be. There is some examples of informative report that maybe we may also call it periodic reports for a for an organization which say has it is report say weekly, no it may attendance report maybe weekly, inspection report maybe monthly by monthly.

Since it is from one period to another we may also call it periodic reports likewise readership surveys suppose a new magazine it wants to know because it is the magazine does not have much reader now. So, what it will do is it will actually have a sort of readership service and would like to see how many people read a particular journal or a newspaper, then employee booklet us you will find here you will come across lots of rules and regulations for example, the prospectus of a particular institution that may also come under informative report here not much is given about the action or something like that, It simply allows you to understand the aims and objects.

Even an organization you know the website that you go to have some information about a particular organization that is also a sort of informative report, then committee reports, that will also be a sort of informative report, policy statements sales reports, credit reports, production reports, all these come under the category of informative reports. Now such pieces of information may at times be also very routine in nature, but then another sort of technical report which is of at most importance and use is analytical or interpretive.

Now, how is this report different from an informative report while an informative report simply puts the information as it is an interpretive report it actually interprets, analyzes, and it evaluates based on the data that it has it will put a lot of interpretation and while it interprets it also comes to know about some other things also I mean which may not be very specific, but it gives you some amount of information about some other aspects also and this analysis is (Refer Time: 22:42) of investigation say for example, a new product has developed certain deficiencies and for that of a report is to be written. So, everything will be taken into consideration as to why this happened and you know for coming to a solution it is only an analytical report or an interpretive report that can help you come to a solution.

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The slide features a title 'Analytical/Interpretive' at the top center. Below the title is a bulleted list with five items. At the bottom of the slide, there are two logos on the left: 'IIT ROORKEE' and 'NPTL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE', and the number '10' on the right.

Analytical/Interpretive

- Analyze, interpret and evaluate
- Analysis of results chiefly of investigation
- Finds and recommends
- Helps in solving a problem
- Helps in decision making

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And it is once again an analytical report that will help you understand or that will help you come to up an action.

Whatever action may be taken, it simply finds an it moves one step further that it recommends some action, and since it is based on a problem the analysis will not only help you to reach a conclusion, but it may also suggest or recommend some course of action on the basis of which some decision may be taken. So, an analytical report can also help in taking certain decisions all you need to understand is as a report writer you must take into consideration the approach that you are not biased the data you have, but while you are interpreting that data please keep your personal bias out of this discussion an interpretive report will be elaborate in nature meaning there by it will be very descriptive it cannot be confined to 8 or 10 pages rather it can go sometimes to 30 to 35 pages depending upon the nature of the problem.

Now, all these people who are working professionals they might know it better that when a new recommendation comes say for example, pay recommendation comes the pay committee or the pay recommendation committee puts into consideration all sorts of situations and then finally, they come up with certain recommendations and they submit this recommendation to the government, which on it is now it is once again it is for other people for the government or for other people who are at the decisive role they only can

take certain decision, but then based on the recommendations which the report writer has already given.

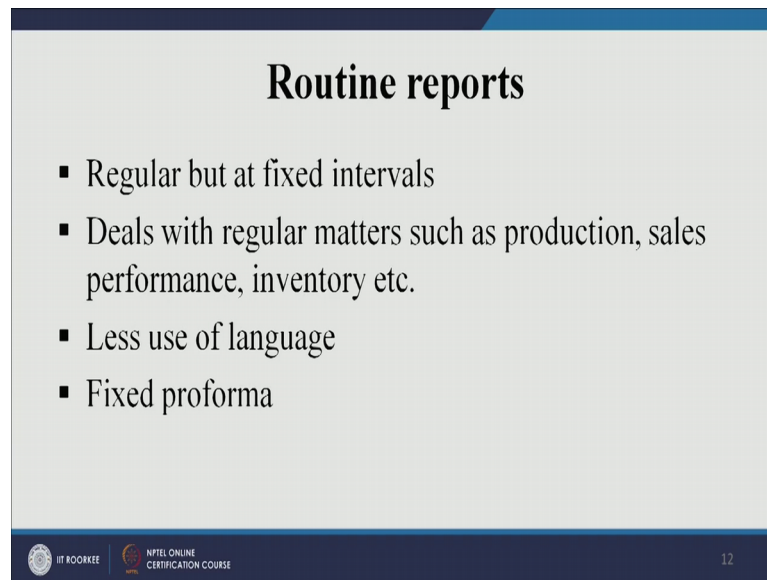
So, the data has to be analyzed logically because much depends on how you are analyzing and when you are analyzing you must ensure that it should be in the greater common good based on the data because you know you are the person who are going to recommend some action.

It is not so a whether all the recommendations that you have suggested will enable, but of course, some of the recommendations may be taken seriously. So, an interpretive report is more objective and it is more scientific in nature and you will also find since this is elaborate, since this report is quite longer, sometimes the report writer because you know not every person is interested in reading everything and since is time taking an elaborate or analytical report requires a lot of time. So, basic professionals what they do is they will look at some of the graphic details which are in the form of illustrations. They will they will simply comes to analysis and then they will see how it has been done through certain tables and charts.

So, illustrations are very important in an analytical report. So, make use of illustrations, but when you are making use of illustrations you should see the relevance. If it is of relevance because you know visuals they actually are more important than the written ones and they are easy to understand.

For example, if you are mentioning the employment trends of a particular organization or if you are mentioning the trend of people living a particular organization that can be very well through certain drafts or through certain charts. Hence you have to be very particular when you are making use of illustrations, next comes routine reports.

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Routine reports

- Regular but at fixed intervals
- Deals with regular matters such as production, sales performance, inventory etc.
- Less use of language
- Fixed proforma

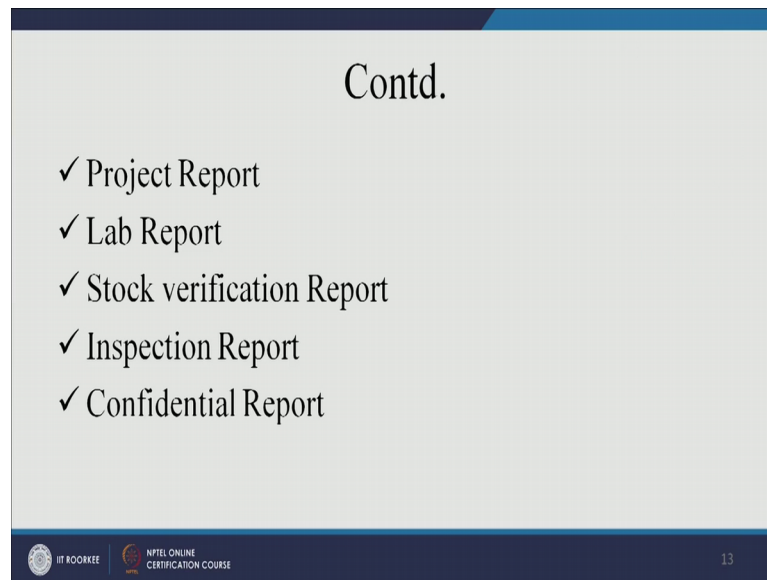
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Once again the term Routine itself suggests that such a report is of routine nature. Now, this routine report has got a sort of regularity; regularity in terms of frequency as I said earlier it may be written in a month or in 2 months time sometimes in a week or a fourth night. So, such a report is regular, but at fixed intervals that is why these reports they actually deal with regular matters regular matters of the organization say for example, finance, production, sales, performance, inventory, these now why are these important they are important to make the internal people aware of what is happening how they are progressing and moreover when this routine report you will find in many organizations they have got annual reports.

These annual reports they are nothing, but a compilation of data and data of the period in which that has been reported. So, every organization has got annual reports and in such reports you will find use of language is less and the proforma is also fixed. Here you do not have a much autonomy either with language because it has got a proforma and you are simply going to fill out certain pieces of information or you are going to tick. So, it has got a fixed proforma and the use of language is less, but then we cannot say that this routine report is not a important, it is as important as interpretive report because it tells not only the internal people, but also the outside agencies what this organization does.

Say for example, when you are doing a project suppose you have got a project.

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So, every 6 months they send you a proforma and in this proforma you are to you are actually to update how much of work has been done, how much of work is remaining likewise when you are writing a lab report you are once again going to fill out certain things every organization every year or say every 6 months they are also going to have a sort of stock verification.

So, that they should come to know what things are needed and what things usually have got to be abandoned, this is very important otherwise what will happen you will have lots of things and it will appear to be a big mess because reports actually help you not only convey, but it actually helps you communicate for further business. Then we have inspection report you actually want to check in big organizations you will find from time to time they actually change certain things in certain products, how do they do it that is on the basis of the inspection recently you might have read in certain newspapers that some of the some of the car making companies they are actually going to withdraw certain facilities and in addition they are going to provide some new facilities so, how do they come to know it they actually come to know it only through a report which actually tells them.

Then as I said earlier that if an employee is to be promoted or is waiting for a promotion for them also we actually require a sort of confidential report of course, this appears to be very routine in nature, but it actually analyzes and it tries to evaluate the performance of

an employee and for that various organizations have various proformas, where they see your skills, your publications, your performance, your work place behavior, there are several categories depending upon and varying upon the needs.

Now based on this ACR at times you know many organizations call it ACR and will confidential reports. So, it actually helps in analyzing or in understanding the capability of an employee. So, this is annual this is annual confidential report of an employee.

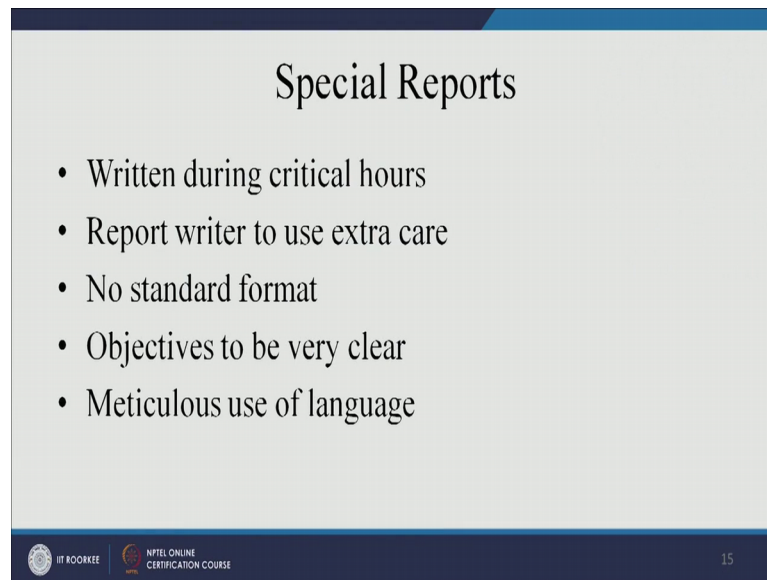
So, all these reports they appear to be routine in nature, but still they are very important my dear friends, and then we also should understand another category of report which is management report. Now this Management Report is Non-technical in Nature, it is it is different from the technical reports this report may not be that you know longer, it maybe at times shorter because it is only the top people who want to know certain things and since it is non technical. Once again here more use of illustrations is important than you know not much of explanation is required in such a report it is often said that once a management report is submitted depending upon the requirement or depending upon the urgency the managers would like to see the technical report.

So, the readers of such reports specially the managers and others they are only interested in the finer parts of the report, they only want to see the conclusion what is there they may not, but then at times they may also would like to see how such a conclusion has been made and for that they may go to have a look at the technical report.

In such a report specially in a management report the language is very restricted and the tone is at times journalistic, we shall have a detailed discussion on how language can be used in a report because you know when you are writing a report you also understand who your readers are we have talked about who your readers are much depends because since action is to be taken much depends upon the background, age, test, preferences, of the readers of a report.

My dear friends at times in organization some critical junctures are there say something you know some mis happening is there, during such moments also a report comes into force such reports are called special reports which are written only during critical hours here you do not have you know much autonomy, but then it there is time limitation also and the report writer, has to be extra vigilant, extra diligent, extra intelligent, extra careful.

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The slide is titled "Special Reports" and features a bulleted list of five points. The background is light gray with a dark blue header and footer. The footer contains logos for IIT Roorkee and NPTEL Online Certification Course, along with the page number 15.

- Written during critical hours
- Report writer to use extra care
- No standard format
- Objectives to be very clear
- Meticulous use of language

For this there is no standard format is up to the report writer, but report writer can in such a situation use his own caution and is (Refer Time: 35:33) with the language because the objectives here are very clear and in such a situation because some action will be taken the report writer has to be very careful.

So, how he very meticulously uses the language is of prime importance so, but then such a report the frequency of such reports is quite less because it occurs or the need of writing such a report, occurs only during aberrations or when some mis happening is there and all.

So, while writing this report you need to exercise your caution and your linguistic ability. You know you may come across all sorts of reports once you are a professional and in an organization, but please do remember when you are writing a report let us try to understand that we need to be extra vigilant and extra careful, and in this regard a quote appears to be very pertinent the quote by (Refer Time: 36: 41) and Christian which says a report is like a bathing suit it covers everything that has to be covered, but nothing more. The meaning is a report should not have any unnecessary any irrelevant material, but only materials which are required only information which actually will help and not harm.

I hope by now you are in a position to understand the various types of reports and in the next lecture we shall be talking about these strategies as to how we should start or initiate the process of report writing.

Thank you very much.