Preliminary Parts of Formal Reports

As you learned in Chapter 11, preliminary parts are included in a formal report for a variety of purposes. They may add formality to a report, emphasize report content, and aid the reader in locating information in the report quickly and understanding the report more easily. Like the title page, table of contents, table of figures, and executive summary, these preliminary parts may add value to a formal report.

**Half-Title Page**

Often called a *title fly*, the *half-title page* is a single page containing only the report title. This page simply adds formality and enhances the appearance of a report. In less formal reports, including letter and memorandum reports, the half-title page is omitted.

**Authorization**

An *authorization* is a letter or memorandum authorizing the researcher to conduct a specific research project. The authorization is included as a formal part of the report and follows the title page. If no written authorization is provided, authorization information may be included in the letter of transmittal or the introduction. This information might include a clear description of the problem, limitations restricting the research, resources available, and deadlines.

**Transmittal**

As a report becomes more formal, the writer may attach a *letter of memorandum of transmittal*. The transmittal serves two purposes: (1) to present the report to the one who requested it, and (2) to provide the conclusion from an analytical study or highlights from an informational report. If the writer has prepared a report for a person or a department inside the company, the writer uses the memorandum format for the transmittal. A consultant preparing a report for another company or client arranges the transmittal in a letter format.

The transmittal letter or memorandum is the writer’s opportunity to speak directly to the reader in an informal tone. Thus, the writer may include first- and second-person pronouns in the transmittal. If the report includes an executive summary or a detailed introduction, the transmittal is short. Use the deductive approach and follow these suggested steps:

1. Let the first sentence present the report and remind the reader that he or she requested it.
2. Explain the subject of the report in the first paragraph.
3. Present brief conclusions and, if called for, the recommendations.
4. Close cordially. The closing paragraph may also express appreciation for the cooperation given by the company.