

Case Writing Tips

The case assignment is to generate classroom cases on relevant topics to the students. It is a brief case (3-5 pages) rather than a long ten-page case with data analysis.

The William Davidson's Institute at the University of Michigan states:

A business case study confronts students with a real-life dilemma and engages all their abilities to solve its challenges. In presenting a specific business or policy situation—one that does not have an obvious solution—the case provides information for classroom discussion and other study. A good case study stimulates an educated conversation and the building of business knowledge.

Writing a case involves four steps:

1. Identify the topic and purpose of the case.
2. Research the topic. Sources include the internet, personal interviews, and books/journals.
3. Organize the case for a first draft.
4. Revise the case. (Often many times until it is “just right”!)

Considerations when writing a case for class:

1. **Determine the kind of case will you write:**

- a. *Does your case provide a **decision situation** on a relevant topic?* An interesting case will provide a situation where a manager or organization has a problem that students would analyze and provide recommendations.
- b. *Does your case provide a **business model** that other organizations could emulate?* A case that tells a story of a successful business will challenge students to discover best practices for a sustainable and ethical business.

2. **What will the target audience gain from the case?** Will the target audience want to read the case? Is there a hero (case protagonist), a dilemma and potential solutions? Alternatively, is there a lesson learned from the case? How does the case fit in our class learning objectives and topics?

3. **Does your case refer to a recent or local situation?** Students may be more comfortable with a case about a local company or a local industry. Likewise, if an issue is current or in recent years, it is much more interesting than if the case is from decades past.

4. **Does your case include relevant, but effective information?** A case that is only prose (written words) is more difficult to make sense of than if the case includes photos, graphs, and numerical data. A good case requires research! Where will you get the information?

5. **Is your case concise and to the point?** Cases should introduce the facts of the case without being wordy. While some cases provide extraneous information so students need to select relevant information, brief cases should be more direct.

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Structure of a mini-case:

<u>Element:</u> (recommended length)	<u>Description:</u>
Introduction (1/2 -1 page)	The introduction defines the problem or company to be examined and explains the parameters or limitations of the situation. Provide the context for the situation. Include the situation’s time frame, location, the purpose of the company or organization, relevant business factors, and the goal of the protagonist.
Overview (1-2 pages) (Background)	The overview provides a scenario of the situation and offers more detail about the various players in the scenario, including the organization, its employees or other people involved with the issue in question. Consider all stakeholders that should be included in the case. If multiple companies are featured – provide brief background information on each of them. Consider regulatory, professional, technical or theoretical issues that arise from the situation. Give enough information for the students to make a decision/recommendation without making a solution too obvious. If needed, include graphics or tables such as budgets, organizational charts, mission statements or technical specifications.
Status report (1 page) (Current Situation)	Flowing from the overview, the status report describes the organization’s actions, on the matter. Think of the overview as the background information on the organization/issue and the status report as the current situation. What policies or procedures are in place about the issue, or how have they addressed the issues to date?
Case problem (1/2-1 page)	Conclude the case with the case problem, which require the learner to analyze or solve a particular question. Case problems can: 1. Ask learners to play the role of the protagonist (manager) and ask what they would do next about a specific problem or situation. 2. Set a task, such as asking learners to prepare a report recommending an action for review by a key official or management. 3. Illustrate a scenario and ask learners to analyze the faults and recommend how it should have been handled. 4. Ask learners to identify the critical success factors of an organization and consider how they apply in other contexts (ie. different industries, different countries).

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