

# Writing a Research Report

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## Caves

### INTRODUCTION

Attention-grabbing beginning

In Mark Twain's book *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, Tom and Becky spend three dreadful days in a winding, confusing cave. No matter how they try, they cannot find a way out until the last minute. Today *spelunking*, the American word for exploring caves, is a popular pastime around the world. Experienced guides lead adventure-seeking groups of people through these mystifying underground worlds, pointing out anything of interest and leading them to magnificent caverns.

Main idea statement

Before you dive headfirst into these wonderlands, you might want to know a little bit about them.

### BODY

Heading #1:  
How caves are formed

Caves are usually formed out of limestone by surface water leaking through cracks in the rock. Above the surface the water gathers carbon dioxide from the air, making a weak acid that eats away at the rock. Over the centuries the water hollows

Description

out the rock, leaving behind a cave. The largest cave chamber

Example

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Facts

in the world is the Sarawak Chamber in the Gunung Mulu National Park in Malaysia. It is 2,300 feet long, has an average width of about 985 feet, and at no point is it less than 230 feet

Fact

high. Some caves are one chamber. Other caves consist of a series of chambers that are all connected in some way, known

Example

as a *cave system*. The longest known cave system is the Mammoth-Flint Ridge Cave System in Kentucky.

Heading #2:  
Features of caves

When people think of caves, they think of caverns filled with pillars protruding from the floor and ceiling. The pillars protruding from the ceiling are called *stalactites*. Stalactites form when water droplets containing limestone sediments drip from the ceiling, always leaving behind a slight trace of rock.

Facts

Clearly, the making of a stalactite is not an overnight process.

Facts

The pillars protruding from the ground are called *stalagmites*. Stalagmites form when water droplets that drip from the ceiling or from the tips of stalactites land on the cave floor and leave mineral deposits. Again, this process takes time. When a cave floor can hold no more water, it is called a *water table*.

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Heading #3:  
Types of caves

Description

Description

Description

Most people think of caves as a cavern or series of caverns and tunnels that are very damp. The truth is, though, that there are really many types of caves. Limestone caves, as described above, are the most commonly known caves. Lava tube caves are caves formed during a volcanic eruption when the surface of a lava stream dries and the still-liquid lava beneath drains out from under it. Another type of cave is the Eolian cave, or wind cave. These caves are formed by wind whipping sand against a cliff side, hollowing out weak places in the rock. Tectonic, or fissure, caves form when the slipping movement of bedrock layers makes narrow cavities underneath the ground. Ice caves are formed in glaciers when spring meltwater gushes through tunnels in the ice, leaving behind green and blue caves of ice. Sea caves are formed by waves crashing into rocky coasts, eroding away weak spots in the rock. Underwater caves are caves of any type that have flooded with water. Underwater caves are especially popular among thrill seekers and tourists. It's not hard to see why. It's just like exploring a regular cave, with the added freedom of being able

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CONCLUSION

Echo of  
introduction

to get close to ceiling formations and being able to go up shafts without the danger of falling.

Now that you've heard all about caves, all you want to do is go out, find a cave, and go spelunking. You can't wait to see the beautiful cave formations, to explore the unexplored, and to conquer the unknown. Just remember to bring a guide, a flashlight, and a little bit of food; otherwise, you may have about as much fun as Tom and Becky did!

Works Cited

Butzer, Karl. "Cave." World Book Encyclopedia. 1997 ed.

Wood, Jenny. Caves: An Underground Wonderland. Milwaukee: Gareth Stevens Children's Books, 1991.