

How to Write a Policy Brief

What is a policy brief?¹

Succinct presentation of a problem, its context, and recommended action.

- 2 to 4 pages
- Easy to understand
- Goal is to prompt change

Who is the audience? How can I reach them?

- Technical knowledge
- Political or organizational culture/constraints
- Exposure to the issue
- Openness to change

What is the format?

Most policy briefs include some of the following sections:

- Informative & Engaging Title
- Executive Summary. *1-2 paragraphs, overview of problem and proposed policy action*
- Problem Statement. *Why should the audience care? Define the scope of the problem.*
- Policy Alternatives. *Describe current and proposed policy options.*
- Policy Recommendations. *Explain what steps must be taken.*
- Sources Consulted or Recommended.

How is it organized?

- Start with your conclusions
- Keep a logical flow
- Give visual cues (Headings, bullet points, highlight key points, white space, charts, graphics)

Want to learn more?

- Watch this [20 minute video](#) from Johns Hopkins
- Read this [policy brief guide](#) from the partnership for economic policy
- Click through IDRC's simple [power point](#) on how to write an effective brief
- Use this thorough [15 page guide](#) from Research to Action to write your first policy brief

Did you...

- ✓ avoid jargon?
- ✓ keep it short?
- ✓ start with a solution?
- ✓ use active voice?

¹ Adapted from "The Art and Craft of Policy Briefs: Translating Science and Engage Stakeholders" from Johns Hopkins School of Public Health.