

## Policy Briefs

Policy briefs serve to describe the rationale and evidence behind a specific programmatic or policy decision (34). Policy briefs are usually very short, spanning about one page, and typically target policymakers who have limited time to make a practical decision (34). The policy brief is similar to a policy memo, but the policy brief focuses more on an argument (35). Each instructor might have specific information that would like included in the brief, so be sure to inquire with the instructor or the assignment rubric.

Though policy briefs address a specific policy recommendation, they often examine the issue from a broad perspective and consider different policy options (34). They should be broad enough that anyone involved in the policy-making process, including policymakers, NGOs, and lobbyists, can both understand and utilize them to make policy decisions (36).

### Contents

Policy briefs should include the following components (34):

- A brief, catchy title.
- Background on the problem/topic, including the importance of the issue and why it must be addressed urgently.
- Information about the evidence or alternatives of the policy.
- Realistic (and limited) recommendations that can be easily understood.
  - Be sure to include who is in charge of implementing the recommendations and what is required to implement them.
- A clear path for readers to make a decision on the policy.

### *Approaching a Policy Brief:*

A good policy brief contains a well-organized argument that is based on a careful analysis of relevant facts. It is intended to convey your conclusions effectively and persuasively. However, it is not a simple list of issues, nor is it a one-sided propaganda piece. It must reflect a rational, defensible, and well-organized thought process. Here are some tips to approaching a policy brief (3):

- Solve the policy problem before you start to write.
- Organize your brief in a persuasive, logical manner. Your goal should be to lead your audience to the same conclusion you have reached. Building a detailed outline of your brief after you have solved the problem but before you start writing may help you organize your arguments.
- Clearly identify the problem you are addressing, your approach to solving it, and the major factors you have considered during your analysis. Do all of this in the first paragraph of the policy brief. It may also be appropriate to briefly state your recommendation or conclusion in this first paragraph.
- Only include relevant information in your brief. Extraneous information will distract your audience and detract from your effectiveness.

- Graphics and data can be very effective but only if they directly support your arguments and are well explained. Before using fancy graphs, tables and charts ask yourself if they will mean anything at all to your audience and if they support your argument.
- Ensure that your thought process is logical and the conclusion you reach is consistent with all of the information you have presented.
- The conclusion of your brief is not the time to raise additional questions or to introduce new ideas.

For more information, visit the following resources:

- [Writing Effective Reports from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN](#)
- [Policy Brief Guidelines from the International Debate Education Association](#)