

# Day 9: Policy Writing

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# Road map

- Learn about different types of policy writing
- Brainstorm effective writing practices

# Effective Writing

What are the key elements of effective writing?

# Not the same as academic writing (Pennock 2011)

- Different audiences and skills
- Academic Research Paper
  - Develop and test hypotheses
  - Identify and adjudicate scientific controversies
  - Persuade that you are correct
- Policy Writing
  - Often Shorter
  - Still requires research synthesis
  - Persuade someone to take action

# Types of Policy Writing

- Memos
- Briefs
- Research Reports

# Memos

- Very short (1-2 pages, single column)
- Wide use in government, business, and law
- Inform and persuade
- Deal with single problem, or make 1-2 recommendations

# Policy Briefs

- “Short, neutral summary of what is known about a particular issue or problem” (Eisele, n.d.)
- Purpose: “succinctly evaluate policy options” (Eisele, n.d.)
- Range in length (1 to many pages)
- Two types: advocacy and informational (balanced)

# Research Report

- Like an academic paper, but...
  - Not testing a theory
  - Geared towards practitioners, not other researchers
  - Often still making an argument (Forecasting Example), but can be just informational (ICMA example)
- Still need to be ethical, follow good research practices



# Smith Example

What principals can we take away from Smith Chapter 4 for good policy writing?

# How Do You Become a Good Writer?

Read and write!

# Your Research Report

## Structure

- Introduction of the Problem
- Evaluation of the environment and the problem
- Present potential alternatives (use Eightfold Path structure)
- Analyze the alternatives
- Make recommendations
- Conclude

Aim for roughly 15 pages

# Smith Checklists and Questions

- Viewpoint 4: The Process and Checklists (Canvas)
- Guiding questions on Pages 68-70
- Example 3 of Chapter 4

# Executive Summary

- What everyone is likely to read
- Two pages
- Summary of project, background of topic, process of research (if original data collection), findings and conclusion, recommendations for action
- Keep simple and short sentence structure
- Don't use technical jargon
- Use active voice

See readings and examples on Canvas for more resources

# General Advice for Effective Writing

# 1. Audience

## Who will read what I write?

- Am I writing to a specific individual? A diverse group?
- How much do they know about my subject?
- What is their reason for reading my work?
- What is their attitude toward me and my work?

## 2. Purpose

### Why should they read what I write?

- What do I want my readers to do after reading my work?
- Am I trying to explain? Convince?



# 3. Message

## What do I have to say to them?

- What is my main idea?
- What important points do I want to include?
- What specific details should I include to illustrate my points?

## 4. Style and Tone

### How can I best communicate to them?

- Is formal or informal language appropriate?
- Do I want to sound passionate? Matter-of-fact?
- Persuasive? Unbiased? Authoritative? Funny?

# Process

Start with all of the information you can gather on your particular topic (an outline). Get a handle on the nuances of your policy. Then begin distilling the information down into the most vital points.