

Briefing Memo Checklist

Top matter

- Includes date and full names and titles of author and recipient
- Subject line is specific and informative

Introductory paragraph

- Clearly states the purpose of the memo
- Tells why it's written now (e.g., why issue is important, why a decision must be made)
- States the conclusion

Content

- Level of background information is appropriate for the recipient
- Leaves out unnecessary information
- Addresses relevant contextual factors (e.g., political, organizational, stakeholder views)

If the purpose is to summarize research:

- Main purpose of the study is stated clearly and concisely
- Main findings are presented clearly and concisely (not copied from the article)
- Important limitations of the research are noted
- Implications (and, if appropriate, recommendations) are clearly linked to findings

Organization and flow

- Each paragraph relates to the purpose of the memo
- Headings identify the focus of the sections and relate to one another
- Information is sequenced in a way that makes sense
- Conclusion follows from the body of the memo and restates the main point(s)
- Reasonable amount of white space (e.g., margins, paragraph spacing)
- Visual cues guide the reader (e.g., headings, judicious use of bullets)

Clarity and conciseness

- No unnecessary words or phrases
- Avoids jargon and complex words when simpler words are available
- Uses active voice
- Sentences have clear subject-verb relationships

Overall

- Main points are clear and memorable after just one reading
- The tone is professional (e.g., lets the facts speak for themselves)