

How to Write an Executive Summary

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Overview

- What is it For?
- What Does it Do?
- How To Write It
- Elements of an Executive Summary

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What Is It For?

- **Summarize** large bodies of research
- Written for someone **who will not read the entire document**
- Intended as an **adequate representation** of the entire document, in a shortened form.
- Academic Research
- Field Research (User Testing)
- Scientific Data
- Process Books

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What Does it Do?

- Gives readers the **essential contents** of your document in a small quantity of pages (5-10% of the total document).
- Previews the main points of your document enabling readers to build a **mental framework** for organizing and understanding the detailed information in your document.
- Helps readers determine the **key results and recommendations** reported in your document.

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What Does it Do?

- Spells out any uncommon symbols, abbreviations, or acronyms
- Defines any unfamiliar methods or processes
- Allows the reader to draw conclusions and **make decisions** based on the data

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How To Write It

1. Write the Executive Report **after** writing the rest of the content and adequately structuring it
2. Scan your research to determine what the content, structure and length of the report would be.
3. Highlight key points; determine purpose/central theme of the report.
4. Review your research and determine what the key ideas or concepts are.
5. Group ideas in a logical fashion and prepare a bullet form outline of the summary.
6. Edit the outline to eliminate secondary or minor points; use your judgment to keeping the summary concise.
7. Determine whether subtitles, bullets, selective bolding or some other type of organizational structure will add to the clarity of your summary.
8. Write the summary in your own words, using a professional style.

*Adapted from Columbia University:
Executive Summary Guidelines*

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