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University of Nottingham: Policy academy programme

Webinar 3: How to write a policy brief

1. Those six little rules

The Economics, 2013

While George Orwell's six rules for writing are important, this piece makes the case that that language is no place for absolute laws.

<https://www.economist.com/blogs/prospero/2013/07/george-orwell-writing>

2. Active and passive voice

University of British Columbia, 2013

Communicating science effectively is an important part of being a good scientist. Why removing the passive voice from your writing is important and how to do it.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FHPQpgkNjb0>

3. Style guide: how to write one

On Think Tanks, 2016

A style guide helps your organisation use a consistent voice – and you should seriously consider creating one

<https://onthinktanks.org/resources/style-guide-how-to-write-one/>

4. Improving the quality of a think tank's publications: lessons from CIPPEC

On Think Tanks, 2012

How one think tank improved the quality of their publications.

<https://onthinktanks.org/articles/improving-the-quality-of-a-think-tanks-publications-lessons-from-cippec/>

5. Policy briefs as communication tools for development research

Overseas Development Institute, 2008

Policy briefs are often recommended as a key tool for communicating research findings to policy actors but there has been little systematic research in the development field about the communication needs of developing country policy-makers and how such research can be used to inform policy brief content and design. This paper provides new insights.

<https://onthinktanks.org/articles/improving-the-quality-of-a-think-tanks-publications-lessons-from-cippec/>

6. What difference does a policy brief make?

Overseas Development Institute, 2008

Using a randomised control design, this study explored the effectiveness of one popular research communication tool, a policy brief, and queried whether different versions of a brief bring about different results.

<https://www.ids.ac.uk/projects/exploring-the-impact-of-research-communications-what-difference-does-a-policy-brief-make/>

7. A policy brief is just a piece of paper – it doesn't DO anything on its own

On Think Tanks, 2012

Most communication outputs aren't very impactful without a strategy. It is a shame, then, that these outputs tend to be listed as deliverables in contracts with funders and thus tend to become viewed as an 'end' rather than a 'means to an end'.

<https://onthinktanks.org/articles/a-policy-brief-is-a-piece-of-paper-it-doesnt-do-anything-on-its-own/>

8. Are top academic and aid institutions getting away with bad writing?

FP2P blog, June 2017

A blog which looks at some of the common issues in academic writing. It also pulls out some useful tips from Paul Romer and George Orwell.

<https://oxfamblogs.org/fp2p/are-top-academic-and-aid-institutions-getting-away-with-poor-communications/>

Examples of objective/synthesis policy briefs:

<https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/2555.pdf>

https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/bitstream/handle/123456789/13921/IDS_Disability_Briefing_Final.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

Examples of advocacy policy:

<http://www.lse.ac.uk/GranthamInstitute/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Climate-change-governance-in-Tanzania-challenges-and-opportunities.pdf>

<https://www.oecd.org/policy-briefs/greece-addressing-migration-challenges-beyond-the-current-humanitarian-crisis.pdf>

<https://www.afidep.org/resource-centre/downloads/policy-briefs/stepping-up-investments-in-human-capital-development-to-unleash-rwandas-demographic-dividend/>

https://set.odi.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/SET-Briefing_Kickstarting-ET-in-Rwanda_Final.pdf