

Executive Summaries Checklist

The main difference between an abstract and an executive summary is the purpose that it serves.

Is it intended to **guide the reader toward a decision**? If so, then it functions as an **executive summary**.

- Have you arranged it in one of the following two ways?
 - In the same order as the document, but with extraneous details omitted, using the subheadings from the document as a framework.
 - In an order that meets the needs of non-expert readers, using headings that guide the reader toward the information that will facilitate an informed decision.
- Regardless of the arrangement you have chosen, does your executive summary include the following key information?
 - The main purpose of the document.
 - The primary point the document is intended to make.
 - Conclusions.
 - Recommendations.
- Have you used a format that allows you to highlight the key points in the summary?
- Have you included visuals? If so, do they contribute to the reader's understanding of the content of the document?
- Have you checked for the following problems, which tend to undermine the effectiveness of an executive summary?
 - Too much information.
 - List syndrome.
 - Inconsistent terminology. Have you inadvertently introduced any new technical terms in the executive summary that were not used in the report?
 - Cut and paste style. Have you carefully edited your executive summary so that it flows smoothly from point to point?
 - Overly technical language.
- Have you avoided metaphors, analogies, and other shortcuts that might not translate well or be understood by readers whose first language is not English?