

How to Write a Policy Brief

It is important that your brief is just that—brief! Politicians are busy people and are unlikely to read a long or wordy document. And yet—you need to produce something that has legitimate sources and is based on solid scientific data. So, while it is “brief” it must be very carefully researched.

Fortunately, we’ve created TEMPLATES of policy briefs that pull together important components that you can use —**you should feel free to download these from ResearchGate, insert your own data, and share this with your local leaders.**

It is important to:

- Keep to 3-5 pages in total for your brief
- Use bullet points, graphs, and bolding to grab the reader’s attention
- Politicians often communicate in sound bytes—use bolding and bulleting to emphasize the “takeaway” message
- Make it jargon-free and easy to understand
- It is not the same type of material you would share with funders, academics, or a group of your peers
- Help the politicians understand why they should care about the issue

What kind of policy brief do I want to write?

The core idea of this study is that we use the collection data to better understand the problem of marine litter or riverine litter in your community. You should use your results to tailor your report (and your policy recommendations).

The most common types of debris can be divided into the following categories

- Commercial fishing
- Recreational fishing
- Municipal or community waste
- Manufacturing
- Shipping

Your brief will focus on one of these types (as your debris will include more of one of these types).

A template for each of these types of debris are posted on ResearchGate.

Your brief should include the following sections:

- ❖ Description of the problem of marine debris
- ❖ Explanation of why marine debris is a problem
- ❖ Your results
- ❖ What does this tell us?
- ❖ Policy Recommendations
- ❖ Sources

Steps to completing a policy brief:

1. Decide which type of debris your collection includes
2. Focus on the 1 or 2 most prominent types of debris
3. Access the template on ResearchGate
4. Incorporate your local data into the template
5. Share the results with policymakers

Steps to sharing your brief:

1. Complete your brief using the template on ResearchGate
2. Make an appointment with local politicians or community leaders
3. Create a succinct presentation that shares the most important findings
4. Practice your presentation many times before the meeting

5. Present the results to local politicians

6. Follow up to ask them if they have made changes !