
Write an Executive Summary

In business courses, you are often asked to include an executive summary in your report. By following the process below, you will be able to write an effective summary that clearly presents the findings of your project.

What is an executive summary?

An executive summary provides an overview for someone who does not have time to read the full report. It discusses the managerial implications of your report: basically what managers or other people who have the authority to approve your report need to know. An executive summary is not the same as an introduction; rather, it is a summary of the main ideas in the full report, focusing on your findings and recommendations.

What does an executive summary include?

Most executive summaries include the following sections:

- Summary of purpose: Why did you create this report?
- Overview of key findings: Include methods, data/evidence, and results.
- Identification of conclusions: What is the result of your analysis?
- Overview of recommendations: What action steps should business leaders take now?

Note: The four sections above are those most often included in an executive summary. Review your assignment guidelines carefully to check any requirements specific to your project.

An executive summary is typically 10% of the length of your total report. For example, if your full report is 10 pages, your executive summary should be one full page.

After writing your executive summary, review it carefully to ensure that your reader can fully understand the main points of your report, even if they do not review the full document.

When should I write the executive summary?

Write the executive summary last, after you have completed the rest of the report. You can only accurately summarize the report after it is fully written.

How do I format an executive summary?

To begin, type “EXECUTIVE SUMMARY” in all uppercase letters and centered. Follow this heading with paragraphs that include the above information (purpose, key findings, conclusions and recommendations), but do not use first-level headings to separate each item. Each paragraph of information should be single-spaced with double spacing between paragraphs. Everything except for the title should be left-aligned.

Writing executive summaries is a key professional skill. By developing strong professional communication skills, you will be able to present your ideas in a way that motivates others to take action and implement your ideas.

References:

Adapted with permission from: Cruthers, A. (2019). *Business writing for everyone*. Retrieved from <https://pressbooks.bccampus.ca/arley/>