

apolitical

7 pro tips for a great Apolitical article

1. Keep it simple — and short

Focus your attention on one topic: better to nail one than skip over several. **700 words** — five or six minutes of reading time — is enough to do that. Short, snappy writing is most likely to get noticed, especially on social media. Think how busy you are: that's how busy every public servant who'll read your words is! One way of focusing the mind can be to think about the headline or how you would Tweet the piece once it's ready: what's the single key point that will make people desperate to read it?

2. Serve the reader

Lesson number one on most journalism courses: what matters most is what readers want to know. When picking a topic, think about what public servants around the world would want to read. Is it a subject that applies to at least several countries? Will it help public servants do their jobs better? Is it an argument they're likely to find inspiring — or that will provoke them to respond or act?

3. Be bold

Take this opportunity to really make your case. You don't need to launch a polemic, but you should be getting across a clear argument. If you're writing about a policy you helped deliver, what was the main reason it worked/failed? If you're naming an issue readers should be interested in, why is it important? In general, put your most interesting points high up the piece. Feel free to discuss your plan with us.

4. Make it concrete

Real-life examples, such as a short paragraph about a person affected by the topic, make posts much more memorable. One or two stand-out statistics can also jolt the reader's attention. Situate stats by comparing them to a global average, or make them meaningful to the reader by relating them to everyday values they can grasp quickly.

5. Avoid too many numbers, dates, acronyms, or jargon

It's important to keep your writing clear and accessible. One statistic can be powerful. But too many are confusing and the most important one may be forgotten — so think hard about when to use them.

Try to avoid terminology which is very subject-specific, and cut out jargon words or phrases which obscure literal meanings. Some examples of common buzzwords and phrases to avoid are “engaging stakeholders”, “siloed thinking”, “ideation”, “conditionality”, “holistic”, “contestability”, “building capacity” and “cascade down”.

6. Be as apolitical as possible

Try to focus on evidence and facts, rather than the politics that may surround these. We've found that often policy solutions are deliberately and unnecessarily politicised. And this narrows your audience and reduces the scope for a fact-based debate about what makes the lives of citizens better.

7. Never be afraid to ask for help

Writing is not easy — even when you know what you want to say. If you feel stuck, a second pair of eyes can often help you find your way back on track. You are always more than welcome to email Apolitical's member editor Anders Broend Christensen (anders.broend@apolitical.co) to brainstorm ideas or ask for feedback.