apolitical

The Apolitical template for writing excellent list articles

This template will help you write an effective list article. If you don't think this is the right format for your article, please visit our contributor page and see our other templates.

What is it?
A list article — also known as a 'listicle' — is a quick and easy way to provide an overview of a given topic using bullet points.

What is it good for?
This format excels because of its simplicity: by breaking the article down in sub-topics, you make it easy for the reader to navigate, and you will be surprised by how much information you are able to include without making the article feel dense. The format also forces you to divide your writing into individual bullets points, which can make the writing process easier.

The format is versatile, and you can use to hone in on problems, solutions, ideas, cases, trends, and even people.

What is it not good for?
A list is not ideal if you want to go deep and explore a complex topic, or if you feel like you are unable to isolate the individual elements in the topic. If that is the case, the explainer format may be a better fit for you.

What are some good Apolitical examples?
Lists are some of the most popular Apolitical articles, and there are many great examples to choose from. Some of the most popular lists written by our members include:
- Here are the 7 skills you need to collaborate in government
- The top 5 trends of data and AI in 2019
- 6 ways behavioural science can boost green policymaking

How long does it take to make one of these?
A list can be one of the quickest articles to write. Experienced writers may be able to write a list in just a few hours, while new writers may need a couple of days to do it.

Detailed production guide:

Below is a chronological outline of what a 700-900 words list article can look like. The list is popular because it is versatile and simple. In fact, there are only 3 elements to it:
- Intro
- Body of text in bullet points
- Outro

Intro

> The purpose of the intro is to grab the attention of the reader and set the tone for the rest of your article. There are many ways you can do that, but some effective methods include:
> - [Leading with a surprising statistic or fact.](#)
> - [Describing a vivid scene](#)
> - [Making an assertive statement that sets the tone for the rest of your article.](#)
>
> **The most common mistake we see among new writers is to open the article with the background.** If you find yourself doing that, ask yourself: why is this important to me? That passion will often resonate with others and be a good place to begin your article.

In addition to grabbing the attention of the reader, a good intro in a list article will often:
- Explain to the reader what they will get out of reading the list. If your article is a list of tools that will make the readers do their jobs better, for example, that will motivate many people to read on.
- Provide a transition: In the sentence connecting your introduction to the body of the text, it is often helpful to clarify for the reader why have chosen this specific focus. If you are describing tools, you may have chosen the 10 most impactful solutions, but it could also be the easiest to implement, or something else entirely.

Body of text

Once you begin writing the body of the text, your first choice is which individual facets of your topic you want to focus and how many bullets to include. As a general rule, if there are less than 3 bullets, a different format may be more ideal. Likewise, if there are more than 10, it may prove difficult to cover each in sufficient depth.

Each individual bullet should ideally be roughly the same length and follow the same format. If, for example, you begin the first three bullet points with an explanation of why the tools you describe are relevant, don't begin the following bullet points with a deep history of when these tools were first invented.

Outro

In this last part of your article, you have a lot of freedom to decide which note you want to end on. Some popular endings for lists are:

- Give a helicopter overview: after focusing on each individual element in turn you can add a new perspective by looking at them all together as a group. What are their shared characteristics, similarities and differences, and what does that tell us about the overall topic?
- Drill down: this is essentially the opposite of the helicopter overview, and is used when there is one key element that warrants a deeper exploration.
- Look ahead and make an educated guess for how the field will evolve in the coming years.