

POSITION PAPER
ON
WRITING POSITION PAPERS

1. Position papers are essential tools for Airmen who are tasked to evaluate a proposal, raise a new idea for consideration, advocate a current situation or proposal, or take a stand on an issue. This paper advocates the use of the position paper for these and other functions where Airmen must advocate a position based on the background information and courses of action available.

2. The format of the position paper is identical to a background paper for page setup (margins, title, paragraph numbering, line spacing, text wrapping, page numbering, and identification line). Position papers may be a single page but are typically several pages or more in length. Also, the paragraphs of the position paper, like background papers, are narrative sentences that fully comply with the rules of good grammar and punctuation.

a. While USAF letterhead is not required for Position Papers, it is available as a premade header in this template.

3. The flow of the position paper is similar to other Air Force papers: introduce the topic with a clear statement of purpose, outline the paper, present background information, and conclude with recommendations. However, the position paper stands out from other papers by the clear statement of the position taken and actions required.

4. In many ways, a position paper is a written debate. The author must present a clear claim, provide evidence (background information) to support the claim, and demonstrate logic (the warrant) that ties the evidence to the claim. In addition, the author must also consider counter-arguments from readers and provide evidence and logic why counter-arguments are unwarranted.

a. The opening statement or introductory paragraph must contain a “clear statement” of your purpose in presenting the issue and “your position” on that issue.

b. The remainder of the paper should consist of integrated paragraphs or statements that logically support or defend that position.

c. Adequate, accurate, and relevant support material is a must for the position paper.

d. For classified content, see DOD 5200.1-R to prepare classified papers. To add classification banner markings (including FOUO), click on the header or footer, and in the “Header & Footer Tools” tab, select the Header / Footer dropdown menus on the left side.

e. The concluding paragraph must contain a specific recommendation or a clear restatement of your position. This is where you reemphasize your bottom line.

5. The position paper is a valuable tool for Airmen to use to advocate a position. The flow of the paper presents a clear argument and background information while also presenting the logic that ties the background to the position being advocated and the action recommended.