

Software Guide

- There are a variety of software options that can be used when designing a policy brief:
 - Microsoft Word
 - Microsoft PowerPoint
 - Canva
 - Adobe InDesign
 - Adobe Illustrator
- Use what works best for you and your team to get the work done efficiently without needing to learn how to use "new" (or "new to you") software
- **Check if there are stock or generic templates available that may work for your needs.** This option will allow you to focus on the content and not the actual mechanics of "building" a layout. Some customizations should be available. Word, PowerPoint, and Canva all have template options
- A few considerations for choosing software:
 - **How many different people will be reviewing and making changes?** If one person is making all the revisions based on team reviews, then less ubiquitous software may be OK. If many people will be making revisions, then something more common may be better.
 - **Do you have a mix of Mac/PC/other users on your team?** If so, make sure to use common fonts, even if the non-Mac users won't be making revisions. The Mac library of fonts is larger than other types of computers, so any "non-standard" fonts (including some that seem common, like Helvetica Neue) will lead to issues in viewing the files on non-Mac machines.
 - **Will others need to access the document in the future?** If the document will be edited or repurposed by others, a more accessible software may be best (Word/PowerPoint).
- **What level of design are you hoping to accomplish within your report?**
 - For simpler layouts with standard visuals, **Word** will be the easiest. Word is efficient and can be edited by more users because most people are very comfortable with MS Word.
 - **PowerPoint** will give more flexibility in layout and visual options serving as a great middle ground software. More people may be familiar with PowerPoint, but PowerPoint may pose additional challenges for accessibility.
 - If you're looking to have a more highly designed report with more variation in the layout, you may want to use **Canva, Illustrator** or **InDesign**.
- **Consider a hybrid approach**, where you use more graphics/design-oriented software to create high-impact visuals, then use Word or PowerPoint for the full report. It may make sharing and revisions of text more streamlined, while allowing you to make high-impact, custom visuals, graphs, infographics, tables, etc.
 - **If you use a hybrid approach**, convert graphics to jpeg or png to maintain specific looks. Some elements may not convert directly between two applications (Canva -> PowerPoint for example).