

Making your reports readable for Japanese

Most Japanese businesspeople are more comfortable reading English than speaking it. Nevertheless, they find reading significant numbers of documents in English to be time-consuming and tiring. You can make it easier for your Japanese colleagues to digest your written output by following these guidelines:

- Organize documents so that they can be perused quickly.
- Divide anything over 3 pages into sections and add section headings.
- Always include an executive summary, or for shorter memos and reports a summary sentence, at the beginning.
- Avoid unnecessary floridity.
 - Keep sentences short and straightforward. Use two or three sentences instead of one long one.
- If a point is particularly important or difficult to get across, restate it again in a different way.
- Use lists, charts, and graphs to clarify and organize data.
- Use metaphors to convey points that are complex and abstract.
- Include a glossary or put a definition in parentheses for any technical, industry, or newly-coined term that is likely to be unfamiliar to your reader.
- When in doubt, err on the side of "over-communicating" by adding more explanations.

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