



Talking/Discussion Points: short, clear statements of major issues to be covered in the meeting

Overall, talking points should:

- be one-two pages in length at most (no more than one page for USD(P) TPs).
- focus on achieving the objectives of the meeting (which are spelled out in the RAH document).
- be understandable as a stand-alone document, with a more in-depth examination of the issues provided in the RAH background.
- cover only the key elements that the Principal needs to know and be able to deliver or discuss.
- mirror the order of the topics address in the background section (bold topics should match).
- sound like something someone would actually say.
- include “*If Raised*” TPs if there are issues that you don’t want your Principal to raise but which the other Principal might.

One 5x8 card:

- is required for SecDef meetings with foreign dignitaries, but not for internal meetings or U.S.-only meetings.
- includes four to five key TPs (full sentences not necessary; use bullets with key phrases).
- has the same headers and in the same order as on the TP page in the RAH.
- includes all of the memory joggers.
- lists the foreign dignitary’s name and phonetic pronunciation.
- marks the classification at the top and bottom center.

For an external meeting, TPs should:

- provide the Principal with crisp language to achieve the objectives/deliverables of the meeting.
- be crafted to ensure a logical flow to the conversation.
- highlight land mines to avoid or objections that may be raised.

For an internal meeting, TPs should:

- serve as guidelines for the discussion.
- highlight any decisions the Principal may be asked to make.
- provide the key points the Principal should take away from the discussion.



Read-Ahead

Sections of the RAH include, in order:

1. **Lead** (briefer and their organization)
2. **Key Attendees** (name them and their titles)
3. **Objective**, which should:
 - include one to four bullets highlighting the key deliverables of the meeting and what the Principal's role is.
 - be used to influence an outcome, come to an agreement on a point/position, stress a position, or counter an argument.
 - be the more important areas you want the Principal to influence.
4. **Background** (see right)
5. **Attachments**, which should include:
 - A single-page executive summary, if longer than three pages of text or five slides
 - Any documents that will be presented or referenced during the meeting
 - Supporting documents/slides/charts
 - Biographies
6. **Coordination**

Background should provide *pertinent* information to support the TPs and objectives, and should include:

- short but clear statements of major issues or points.
- details regarding disagreements/controversy about key issues or objections that may be raised.
- alternative perspectives of other meeting participants.

For SD/DSD meetings with foreign visitors, address;

- precisely what the foreign visitor is doing with respect to the Secretary's and/or Deputy's priorities (prevailing in current conflicts, preventing proliferation, preparing for and countering future challenges and threats, preserving the fines fighting force and core national security capabilities within the current budget environment);
- anything else the foreign visitor is doing to support U.S. security objectives; and
- basic defense relationship and country information, as relevant.

Do not provide a complete history of the particular issue. For example, SecDef meets or talks several times a year with the Israeli MoD and they discuss a fairly consistent set of issues. Unless there is a new issue to discuss, the background should only cover what has changed since their last conversation.



General Read-Ahead Notes

POLICY

Deadlines and copies required: RAH is due to USD(P) 72 hours before the event to meet the SecDef/DepSecDef deadline of 1200 two work days prior to the event.

- For SD/DSD RAHs, include **seven** copies with all attachments (no tabs required on the copies).
- Ensure all color original pages are reproduced in color (to include PowerPoint slides).

RAH Writing and Style Tips:

- Refer to the Policy Writing Style Guide in the AO Handbook to avoid the most common style errors in Policy packages, include RAHs.
- Use short, succinct, and clear language. Avoid long, complex sentences.
- Ask yourself what the Principal needs to know and why.
- Analyze and distill data so that the Principal can easily digest salient information and understand how you arrived at your bottom line.
- No acronyms unless they have been previously spelled out. Avoid acronyms when possible.
- Keep lots of white space. Three lines per bullet. Use sub bullets.
- Bold or underline key words and use bold subject headers to differentiate topics as necessary.
- Avoid passive voice to lend precision and brevity to the writing.

Format/Mechanics Nits:

- Put USD(P)/PDUSD(P) initials block on the top right corner of the front TPs page.
- Single-sided
- 1-inch left/right/top/bottom margins
- Times New Roman, 13pt font
- Double space between items, single space between bullets
- Paginate all documents longer than one page.
- Use two-inch paper clips to fasten packages.
- Name rooms rather than using room numbers, i.e.:
 - SecDef Dining Room (for 3E918)
 - SecDef Conference Room (for 3E863)
 - DepSecDef Conference Room (for 3E928)
- Two spaces after colons, periods, and classification.
- Use classification markings on every topic, bullet, and sub-bullet. Bold topic headings should almost always be unclassified because they are just topics.
- Indent bullets and use the proper bullets (dot-dash-donut). Sub-bullets are indented so the sub-bullet begins at the classification marking for the major bullet above it.