

How to write a memo?

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introduction

- **What is a memo?**

A **memo** is an internal document that is generally short, focuses on a single topic, reports information, makes a request, or recommends action.

It follows specific forms, depending on the organization.

Audience and Purpose

- Memos have a twofold purpose: they bring attention to problems and they solve problems. They accomplish their goals by informing the reader about new information like policy changes, price increases, or by persuading the reader to take an action, such as attend a meeting, or change a current production procedure. Regardless of the specific goal, memos are most effective when they connect the purpose of the writer with the interests and needs of the reader.

Audience and Purpose

- Choose the audience of the memo wisely. Ensure that all of the people that the memo is addressed to need to read the memo. If it is an issue involving only one person, do not send the memo to the entire office. Also, be certain that material is not too sensitive to put in a memo; sometimes the best forms of communication are face-to-face interaction or a phone call. Memos are most effectively used when sent to a small to moderate amount of people to communicate company or job objectives.

Format

- The format of a memo follows the general guidelines of business writing. A memo is usually a page or two long, should be single spaced and left justified. Instead of using indentations to show new paragraphs, skip a line between sentences. Business materials should be concise and easy to read. Therefore it is beneficial to use headings and lists to help the reader pinpoint certain information.

Format

- You can help your reader understand your memo better by using headings for the summary and the discussion segments that follow it. Write headings that are short but that clarify the content of the segment. For example, instead of using "Summary" for your heading, try "New Advertising Recommendations," which is much more specific. The major headings you choose are the ones that should be incorporated in your purpose-statement in the opening paragraph.

Format

- For easy reading, put important points or details into lists rather than paragraphs when possible. This will draw the readers' attention to the section and help the audience remember the information better. Using lists will help you be concise when writing a memo.

The segments of the memo should be allocated in the following manner:

Header: 1/8 of the memo

Opening, Context and Task: 1/4 of the memo

Summary, Discussion Segment: 1/2 of the memo

Closing Segment, Necessary Attachments: 1/8 of the memo

Parts of a Memo

- **Heading Segment**

The heading segment follows this general format:

TO: (readers' names and job titles)

FROM: (your name and job title)

DATE: (complete and current date)

SUBJECT: (what the memo is about, highlighted in some way)

Parts of a Memo

- Make sure you address the reader by his or her correct name and job title. You might call the company president "Maxi" on the golf course or in an informal note, but "Rita Maxwell, President" would be more appropriate for a formal memo. Be specific and concise in your subject line. For example, "Clothes" as a subject line could mean anything from a dress code update to a production issue. Instead use something like, "Fall Clothes Line Promotion."

Parts of a Memo

- **Opening segment.**

State the purpose of the memo and identify the purpose in three parts; the context of the problem, the particular assignment, and the purpose of the memo. Identify the exact reason for writing the memo and make it clear to the reader.

Parts of a Memo

- **Task Segment**
- One essential portion of a memo is the task statement where you should describe what you are doing to help solve the problem. If the action was requested, your task may be indicated by a sentence opening like,
 - "You asked that I look at...."
 - If you want to explain your intentions, you might say,
 - "To determine the best method of promoting the new fall line, I will...."
- Include only as much information as is needed by the decision-makers in the context, but be convincing that a real problem exists. Do not ramble on with insignificant details. If you are having trouble putting the task into words, consider whether you have clarified the situation. You may need to do more planning before you're ready to write your memo. Make sure your purpose-statement forecast divides your subject into the most important topics that the decision-maker needs.

Parts of a Memo

- **Summary segment.**

This segment should provide a brief statement of important suggestions. This will help the reader quickly understand the key points of the memo. The summary can also include links or references to sources that you have used in your research on the issue.

Parts of a Memo

- **Discussion segment.**

In this segment, include all of the details that support your ideas and recommendations for solving the problem. You may also choose to propose future problems that may arise and discuss how your recommendations ensure these problems will not occur (see tips).

Parts of a Memo

- **Closing segment.**

Close the memo with a friendly ending that states what actions you want the reader to take. Consider the ways that the reader can benefit from the information in the memo and how these changes will be advantageous.

Parts of a Memo

- **Necessary Attachments**
- Make sure you document your findings or provide detailed information whenever necessary. You can do this by attaching lists, graphs, tables, etc. at the end of your memo. Be sure to refer to your attachments in your memo and add a notation about what is attached below your closing, like this:
- Attached: Focus Group Results, January- May 2007

Tips

- State the most important points first, then move on to the details.
- Be specific and brief in every heading so that the basic point of your memo is apparent to the reader right away.
- Include only as much information as necessary for the reader;
- Feel free to include lists, charts, and graphs at the end of the memo to help the reader better understand the topic. Make sure to add a notation of how the attachments are relevant.
- The reader can understand the memo better if you use headings for the different segments of the memo.
- Write short headings that clarify the content of each category. For example, instead of stating "opening", write "Ant problem in the office".

Tips

- Write short headings that clarify the content of each category. For example, instead of stating "opening", write "Ant problem in the office".
- Always address the reader by his or her correct name; do not use nicknames.
- When constructing the heading, be sure to double space between sections and align the text.
- Check for errors: If there is an error in a memo, it will probably be in names, dates or numbers.
- Keep paragraphs short: Limit each paragraph to five lines or less.