

Writing a Memo

A memorandum, or memo, is a brief, semi-formal means of communication at an organization. Adhering to proper format is a significant part of writing a memo, but knowing your audience is even more important. Anticipate what your readers will know or not know about you, your subject, and how to contact you if necessary, and adjust your content appropriately. The tone of a memo should be one that fits a professional workplace.

The basic memo format has a **heading** that states the **recipient(s), the sender, the date, and the subject**. There is no formal salutation or closing remark. The **first paragraph** or section always states **the purpose of the memo**. The subsequent content depends on the type of memo, generally one of four types: **directive, response, trip report, or field/lab report**.

- **A directive memo** states policy or procedure; after the purpose statement there is an explanation of whatever length is required to explain the matter fully.
- **A response memo** states a brief answer to a query, discusses the most important information, and then provides any action to be taken by the reader.
- **A trip report memo** is sent to a supervisor after an employee returns from a business trip; the employee states the purpose of and summarizes the trip, discusses the most significant events or discoveries, and in the action section states additional relevant information since returning from the trip or recommendations for the reader.

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- **A field report memo** reports on inspections and procedures; it states the purpose, the summary of the procedure, the problem leading to the decision to perform the procedure, the methods, the results, the conclusions, and the recommendations of the sender.

It is good memo style (and very helpful to readers) to break up long paragraphs and to put important information into bulleted lists; use numbered lists only if sequence is important. The document should be formatted with one-inch margins, left-aligned paragraphs with no indents, single-spaced text, and a line of space after the memo heading and between each paragraph. If the memo is longer than one page, subsequent pages should be headed with TO: . . . , PAGE: . . . , and DATE: The sender may sign with only initials, a first name, or a complete name.

Bibliography

Perkins, Courtney. "Memo Writing." *The OWL at Purdue*, edited by Allen Brizee, Purdue University, 3 Jan. 2008, owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/590/01/.

"Writing Guides: Writing Business Memos." *Writing@CSU*, Colorado State University, 2008, writing.colostate.edu/guides/documents/memo/index.cfm.

Example of Memo Format

To: Division Directors

From: Katya Logg, Supervising Director

Date: 28 February 2020

Subject: Training for Discussion Board

The new company discussion board system will be going online next week. In preparation, I have hired a training team to provide workshops on the features of the board and proper etiquette when posting.

The training team has generously agreed to multiple sessions to accommodate the various shifts and part-time employees who are not in our facilities at the same time every day.

Workshop Schedule

In Building 3, Meeting Room 241:

- Monday, March 4, 12:00 a.m. to 2:00 a.m.
- Tuesday, March 5, 12:00 a.m. to 2:00 a.m.

In Building 6, Meeting Room 141:

- Wednesday, March 6, 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.
- Thursday, March 7, 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

In Building 24, Meeting Room 341:

- Monday, March 11, 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.
- Tuesday, March 12, 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.

Please contact Desiree LaPlante at x5555 or d.laplante@directorsrus.com to register for a time that is convenient for you.

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