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. Be able to 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 professional.

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 of any memo always states the purpose of the memo. The subsequent content depends on the type of memo being written. Memos generally fall into 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, 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.
- A field report memo is used to report 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

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/590/01/>.

EXAMPLE MEMO

To: Division Directors

From: Katya Logg, Supervising Director

Date: 28 February 2012

Subject: Training for Message Board

The new company message 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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