



OWLS Writing Guides: BRIEF GUIDE TO THE BUSINESS MEMO

The memorandum, or memo, is a written form of internal communication used to inform, persuade, or direct. The following information is a general guideline for writing a business memo.

GENERAL INFORMATION

- **Audience:** Determine the priorities and concerns of the audience. Why is the memo important to them?
- **Length:** Memos are usually no more than one page.
- **Language:** Be brief and to the point. Favor clear, direct words over showy or unnecessary words.
- **Tone:** Use a positive or neutral tone where applicable. Strive for a professional voice.

PARTS OF A MEMO

Heading: The heading follows this general format:

To: (readers' names and job titles)

From: (your name and job title, hand-written initials next to your name)

Date: (complete and current date)

Subject: (the main idea, should be clear and informative)

Opening: The opening segment states the purpose and sets the context. The reader should have a clear idea of what to expect in the memo. This section should be no longer than a short paragraph.

Body: The body develops the main idea stated in the opening and is usually organized in 2-4 short units of information. Any paragraph in the body should be no more than 8 lines. *The use of graphic devices highlights important points and makes the information easy to scan:*

- Bulleted or numbered lists
- Tables and columns
- Headings
- **Bolded** or UPPERCASE text
- White space

Closing: The closing segment should be a brief, courteous ending to the memo. It may include relevant dates, deadlines, or information about actions taken or requested. When writing this section, consider how the reader benefits from the information presented in the memo.

FORMATTING

- Use 1-inch margins.
- Text should be 12 point, left justified.
- Paragraphs are block style (first line not indented) and single-spaced.
- MEMORANDUM is bolded and centered on the first line.
- Don't use an opening salutation or a complementary close.

Sources and resources:

Guffey, Mary Ellen, *Business Communication: Process and Product* 6th ed.

The OWL at Purdue: Memo Writing: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/590/01>

Love to Know: Business and Finance:

http://business.lovetoknow.com/wiki/Category:Business_Communications

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