



# mem·o·ran·dum

/ˌmeməˈrændəm/ 

*noun*

a written message in business or diplomacy.

"he told them of his decision in a memorandum"

*synonyms:* message, communication, note, email, letter, epistle, missive; *informal memo*

"a memorandum from the managing director to all staff"

- a note or record made for future use.

"the two countries signed a memorandum of understanding on economic cooperation"

*synonyms:* record, minute, note, contract, agreement; [More](#)

- **LAW**

a document recording the terms of a contract or other legal details.

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**.

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.

## Parts of a Memo Parts of a Memo

Standard memos are divided into segments to organize the information and to help achieve the writer's purpose.

### **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)

### **Heading Segment Revised**

The heading segment follows this general format:

TO: (readers' names and job titles)

CC: (for other individuals who need to be “aware of the communication”)

FROM: (your name and job title)

DATE: (complete and current date)

SUBJECT: (what the memo is about, highlighted in some way) **Also referred to as RE:**

## **Opening Segment**

The purpose of a memo is usually found in the opening paragraph and includes: the purpose of the memo, the context and problem, and the specific assignment or task. Before indulging the reader with details and the context, give the reader a brief overview of what the memo will be about. Choosing how specific your introduction will be depends on your memo plan style. The more direct the memo plan, the more explicit the introduction should be. Including the purpose of the Opening Segment. The purpose of a memo is usually found in the opening paragraph and includes: the purpose of the memo, the context and problem, and the specific assignment or task. Before indulging the reader with details and the context, give the reader a brief overview of what the memo will be about. Choosing how specific your introduction will be depends on your memo plan style. The more direct the memo plan, the more explicit the introduction should be. Including the purpose of the memo will help clarify the reason the audience should read this document. The introduction should be brief, and should be approximately the length of a short paragraph. memo will help clarify the reason the audience should read this document. The introduction should be brief, and should be approximately the length of a short paragraph.

## **Context**

The context is the event, circumstance, or background of the problem you are solving.

## **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,

"To determine the best method of promoting a better understanding of school procedures ...

## **Summary Segment**

If your memo is longer than a page, you may want to include a separate summary segment. However, this section not necessary for short memos and should not take up a significant amount of space. This segment provides a brief statement of the key recommendations you have reached. These will help your reader understand the key points of the memo immediately. This segment may also include references to methods and sources you have used in your research.

## **Discussion Segments**

The discussion segments are the longest portions of the memo, and are the parts in which you include all the details that support your ideas. Begin with the information that is most important. This may mean that you will start with key findings or recommendations. Start with your most general information and move to your specific or supporting facts. (Be sure to use the same format when including details: strongest to weakest.) The discussion segments include the supporting ideas, facts, and research that back up your argument in the memo. Include strong points and evidence to persuade the reader to follow your recommended actions. If this section is inadequate, the memo will not be as effective as it could be.

## **Closing Segment**

After the reader has absorbed all of your information, you want to close with a courteous ending that states what action you want your reader to take. Make sure you consider how the reader will benefit from the desired actions and how you can make those actions easier. For example, you might say,

"I will be glad to discuss this recommendation with you during our Tuesday trip to the spa and follow through on any decisions you make."

## **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:

# 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.