
WRITING A MEMO

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DEFINITION:

an in-house business letter, an important form of intra-corporate communication, written to one person, several persons, a group, a whole community

PURPOSE OF A MEMO

To “solve problems” by:

- ❑ **informing**
 - ❑ **persuading**
 - ❑ **refuting**
 - ❑ **arguing**
 - ❑ **analyzing**
 - ❑ **giving feedback, etc.**
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MEMO VERSUS LETTER

Reader:

- ❑ **Communicating within your organization**
- ❑ **Communicating with sb outside the company**

Signature/Closing: full, formal

Wordiness:

- ❑ **Memos are more straightforward, to make it easier for reader to get the info**
 - ❑ **Letters tend to be more dense, more formal**
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MEMO STRUCTURE

To:	Mrs. Sharon Jones, Supervisor
From:	Dianna Moreno, Bookkeeper <i>DM</i>
Date:	March 2, 2007
Re:	Retirement Party

SUBJECT LINE

- probably the most important part of your memo
 - summarize the *intent* of your memo, e.g.:
 - “Request for assistance with grant project”
 - “Consequences of recent material thefts”
 - specific, concise and to the point
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STRUCTURE

- **The opening part provides context**
 - **The body contains task/action/request**
 - **The closing part – call for action with clear instructions, including deadlines where applicable.**
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FORMATTING

- **Make it single spaced and justified.**
 - **Instead of using indentations to show new paragraphs, skip a line between sentences.**
 - **Use headings and lists to help the reader pinpoint certain information**
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MEMO SAMPLE



University of Pittsburgh

*School of Dental Medicine
Center for Dental Informatics*

501 Schiefel
220 Terrace Drive
Pittsburgh, PA 15261-1462
Telephone: (412) 624-6666
Fax: (412) 624-6660
http://dental.pitt.edu

Memorandum

To: JACS Committee
CC: K. Shwartz, H. Spalek
From: T. Schleyer
Date: 12/3/02
Re: Proposed LRC Renovation

Attached are a description and architectural drawings for the proposed renovation of the Learning Resources Center (LRC). The description provides an overview of the type of equipment proposed for the renovated LRC. The drawings illustrate two options for a new layout.

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- Drawings illustrate two options for a new layout. drawings illustrate two options for a new layout.
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Please send us your comments on this project by December 20, 2002. We will also make this plan accessible to students and faculty for their comments. The renovation is expected to start in January 2003.

Thank you very much for your input in advance!

TIPS: Cohesion

- **Arrange topics in a logical order.**
- **Move from old information to new.**

Start sentences with ideas that you have already described, or with something you can safely assume the reader already knows.

Place technical terms new to the reader not at the beginning, but towards the end of the sentence

TIPS: Language

Make the sentences more straightforward:

We have come to the decision that it is not possible for our company to accept the offer.

We have decided that our company cannot accept the offer.

TIPS: Language

- **Use the active voice wherever possible**
 - Write in 1st person, i.e. “I cannot accept your proposal”
 - **Use action verbs instead of phrases**
 - NOT OK: “We made a payment of \$15,000”
 - OK: “We paid \$15,000.”
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TIPS:

Language:

In view of the fact that we will lose a big contract next year, we have to cut expenses.

Since we will lose a big contract next year, we have to cut expenses.

TIPS

- **Headings**
 - **Numbering of paragraphs, points, instructions**
 - **Tabulating when presenting statistics and figures**
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TIPS

Get personal: Use words like I, you, and we.

To initiate action, write in the active, not the passive voice.

Be conversational: Write the way you talk and do not be afraid to use contractions.

Don't show off: Avoid scholarly words, technical jargon, and just plain gibberish like "as per your request" when you simply mean "here's what you wanted".

QUIZ

Which date is correct?

- a. March 7, 2007**
 - b. March, 7, 2007**
 - c. March. 7, 2007**
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QUIZ

Which initials are correct?

- a. **D.M.**
 - b. **D,M.**
 - c. **DM**
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QUIZ

Which phone number is correct?

- a. **255-555**
 - b. **727 255555**
 - c. **(727) 255-555**
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QUIZ

Which courtesy title could a married woman use?

a. Ms.

b. Miss.

c. Mrs.

REFERENCES

<http://www.suite101.com/article.cfm/5381/34825>

http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/print/pw/p_memo.html

<http://ibi.cbe.wsu.edu/Tansuhaj/ibus380/memo.htm>
