

Memo

This handout provides a very brief overview of memos. For more detailed information, check the links listed below.

Definition of genre

“Memo” is short for memorandum, a written record or communication; cf. Latin verb *memoro* (to mention, call to mind, relate) and gerundive *memorandum* (notable, memorable). Memos are most often used in public policy studies, law, and business. The objective of a memo is to provide a concise, comprehensive, and convincing argument on a specific question or proposal.

Format

A memo typically includes the following parts. For detailed explanations of each, refer to the websites below.

- Letterhead/name of organization
- Heading
- Date:
- To:
- From:
- Subject:
- CC: (here, or at end of memo)
- Purpose
- Context
- Discussion
- Action
- Attachments

Actions to take

- Put the most important points at beginnings of paragraphs. Imagine your pressed-for-time readers. Where would they look first if they only had time to skim?
- Organize the information clearly, using headings and bullet points to emphasize crucial information while making it easy to find.

Helpful Links

<http://writingcenter.tamu.edu/content/view/22/76/>

A quick guide to memo writing, modeled as a memo, from Texas A & M's Writing Center.

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

A more detailed discussion from Purdue's Online Writing Center.

<http://www.pubpol.duke.edu/courses/pps55/handouts/memo.html>

“Dos and don'ts” for memo writing from Duke's Terry Sanford Institute of Public Policy.