

MEMORANDUM (or other title identifying the type of document such as “Interoffice Communication” or “Memo,” not the title of the assignment)

TO: Audience Name, Job Title or Position
FROM: Author Name, Job Title or Position
SUBJECT: Subject of Memo (Design Similar to an Email Subject Line)
DATE: Date Memo Sent

Optional section that provides a short, one-sentence statement indicating the purpose of the memo (not the purpose of the assignment). Rather than using “The purpose of this memo is... (to request, report, explain),” try to make it more concise by saying, “This memo requests...,” “This memo reports...,” or “This memo explains...” This statement may or may not have a heading.

Summary

Provide a brief overview of the contents of the memo. Remember, the Summary is typically used as a substitute for the full memo, not an introduction. Do not include information here that does not appear elsewhere in the memo itself.

Discussion

This section is the “body” of the memo. This section contains the major message, report, or whatever you need to discuss. It is the longest section of the memo.

Some memos omit “Discussion” as a heading and instead use other informative headings to organize the body content. You may also consider keeping “Discussion” as a Level 1 heading and adding subheadings underneath it. If you go this route, make sure your Level 2 headings are distinct from the formatting on the Level 1 heading.

For easily readable memos, break up your Discussion into paragraphs. Each paragraph should focus on one key “thing.” In a memo addressed to your instructor, this “thing” may be a specific document, a rhetorical technique, a particular challenge, or whatever you decide.

Finally, note that memos, like most professional documents, are single-spaced. A full line of space separates each paragraph. You should not indent so long as you are following these formatting guidelines. These conventions are applicable to most US-based professional writing, but may vary in specific organizations or in other areas of the world.

If your memo stretches onto more than one page, include the recipient, date, and page number in the top left or right of the second page and any following it.

Recommendation

This short, optional section advises the reader on next steps. Are you waiting for some information, and the recipients should wait to hear from you again? Are you hoping for a response or action from any members of the audience? Make sure everyone knows whose responsibility it is to act next.

Figure 15.3. An example of a memo with explanatory content.¹

¹ Nicole Hagstrom-Schmidt, “An Example of a Memo with Explanatory Content,” 2020. This image is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).