

MEMORANDA AND THEIR USES

Memos are used within a company or organization to report information, make requests, communicate policy, or recommend actions. In today’s business situations, business memos are typically sent as emails and sometimes called e-memos.

ASPECTS OF THE WELL-FORMATTED MEMO

ELEMENTS	FORMATTING
Top Header	To, From, Date, and Subject; use the colon : after each of these words
Salutation/Closing Signature	None needed
Format	Block-format, left justified, no paragraph indentations
Headings	3-4 words to summarize each paragraph section’s content, bolded to stand out, capitalized on major words
Bullets	Not necessary but may be used to subdivide sections into separate points
Paragraphs	Short, concise, to the point; main idea in first sentence of paragraph, while the remaining sentences offer support for the main idea

TIPS FOR A ONE-PAGE MEMO:

Occasionally, writing a one-page memo may be preferred over a multi-page document. In this case, carefully edit and revise all data to fit on one page.

If condensing the information is not possible, put all the key points on one well-designed page and attach extra information as appendices for readers who may be interested.



ORGANIZING INFORMATIVE MEMOS

- Open with good news and summarize main points to establish rapport with the reader
- Develop ideas by giving details, explanations, and background information
- Present any negative elements as positively as possible in the middle
- Explain how the reader benefits when making suggestions
- Close with a personalized message, restating the main points and listing actions to be taken

ORGANIZING PERSUASIVE MEMOS

- Start by establishing common ground between the writer and reader.
- Show an understanding of the reader's problems or circumstances when giving reasons for why changes are needed
- Explain clearly and concisely what steps to take, emphasizing important points through bullets or other formatting choices/options
- Address the reader as an equal who can help in solving the problem

ORGANIZING NEGATIVE NEWS MEMOS

When addressing a superior:

- Describe the problem clearly, concisely, and objectively
- Explain how the problem occurred by providing background information and state underlying factors relating to the problem
- Describe the best options for fixing the problem. If more than one option exists, describe all options with their advantages and disadvantages. The preferred solution goes last
- Explain how the reader benefits when making suggestion

- Recommend a solution and ask for action or approval to make the necessary changes

When addressing peers and subordinates:

- Describe the problem clearly, concisely, and neutrally
- Present an alternative or compromise, if one is available
- Ask for input or action where possible; when subordinates or peers are part of the decision-making process, they are more likely to accept the consequences

ABOUT THE BUSINESS COMMUNICATION CENTER:

The BCC provides one-on-one coaching to undergraduate and graduate students, supports the instruction of communication content in other courses, and offers Isenberg faculty and staff expert communications-related resources and assistance. The BCC works with other Isenberg faculty, the Chase Career Center, and student groups to customize our services and meet the needs of the Isenberg community.