

Writing a Business Memo

A memo is a document commonly used in the workplace to convey information to company employees. In that sense, it is an internal document, which means that, generally, the audience is internal to the company; it is not a form used for outside customers or clients. The purpose of a memo, usually, is to inform employees of policies or other company-related matters, such as a change in personnel within departments, change in a process or procedure, or an upcoming company meeting.

Each company you work for may have its own particular format for a memo, but generally, a memo is written in the following format.

Date: April 25, 2011 (if you are addressing employees in a foreign branch of the company, you might want to use this format for the date: 25 April 2011, which is more common overseas).

To: List the names of employees that this memo is addressed to. If you are sending it to an entire department, you can list the department title here, such as All English Faculty and Staff. Consider the order of people. Will you alphabetize or should you go by rank/position within the company listing the most senior personnel first?

From: List the contact person's name and title, such as Diane Martinez, Writing Specialist

Subject: Make this brief but descriptive of the memo contents, such as Resource Development Procedure Changes

The content of the memo begins here. Generally, a memo is single-spaced. For a memo written to an American audience, you would state the purpose of the memo in the opening paragraph.

Body paragraphs of a memo contain the details of the news you are informing employees about. Generally, you want to keep the information in a memo brief, or at least concise, providing only facts that are needed to understand the main message of the memo. However, there are times when a memo may be a longer document, such as when writing a memo proposal or a strategy memo. If the memo is particularly long, you might consider using subheadings for easier reading since you will likely be addressing different topics in the longer memo.

A conclusion paragraph ends the correspondence and generally provides readers with contact information.

Remember that a memo is a business document so the language should be formal and the tone professional.

The next page shows an example of a memo.

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Example Memo

Date: April 25, 2011

To: Academic Advisors; Susan Campbell; Darleen Harding; James Russell

From: Kimberly Sullivan

Subject: New Communications Degree Training

We are pleased to announce the addition of a new technical communication degree in the School of Humanities. All academic advisors are required to attend the training session on Monday, May 2, 2011, at 10:00 AM ET in the Laguna Conference Room.

The Bachelor of Science in Technical Communication is a new degree program that will be launched May 15, 2011, in the School of Humanities. Because this degree is new and many faculty and staff are unclear as to what this program is about, as well as career opportunities for graduates with this degree, Kimberly Sullivan will conduct an hour-long training that will give you information about the degree and career options. Please plan on attending this training. One make up session will be given on Wednesday, May 4, 2011, at 10:00 AM ET in the Laguna Conference Room for those employees that are out on Monday.

If you have any questions or concerns about this new degree program or the training, please contact Kimberly at x123 or ksullivan@pguniversity.edu.