

Date:

To:

From:

CC:

Subject:

Notice there are no addresses here; memos are usually sent between members of the same organization, so no addresses needed.

Also note that there is no salutation in a memo.

This is a template that explains how to effectively format a business memo. The following paragraphs detail the other components of a memo. Notice that this first paragraph serves as a succinct introduction to the document, states its purpose, and forecasts its contents.

“Talking” headers increase skim value

While not every memo includes headers, they can be a useful way to frontload the essential information in the document and to increase its skim value. Readers of a memo will often read it quickly and only one time through, so making your most important message easily accessible is a valuable skill. Talking headers are not complete sentences, but they have stand-alone sense (SAS) and convey the main idea of a section. For example, “Talking headers increase skim value” conveys the main idea of this paragraph; just using the word “Headers” would not.

Frontload information in paragraphs

Especially if you’re not using headers, it’s important to also frontload the most important points in each paragraph. This is another way to increase the document’s skim value for busy readers. The first sentence of the paragraph should make a claim (sometimes called a positioning statement). For example, a paragraph’s claim in a document about business communication could read, “Knowing and analyzing your audience is an important part of business writing.” The second sentence should establish why that claim is important. For example, the next sentence could say, “This analysis will allow you to better connect with your reader and better convince them of your position on an issue.” The rest of the paragraph can get into examples and details.

Clear writing and formatting aid readability

Writing style and document formatting in a business memo – and in most business writing – should be clear, simple, and concise. As above, this helps the memo’s readability and effectiveness. Avoid elaborate prose and lengthy sentences. Choose an easily legible font, like Helvetica, Arial, Times New Roman, or Georgia. Left-justify margins and single space lines. Leave an extra space between paragraphs.

End with summary and goodwill

Your conclusion should bring together your main points and, ideally, end the memo on a positive note. If there is action to be taken by the reader, make that clear here. Notice that there is no signature in a memo.