

The word *memorandum*, or *memo* for short, originally meant a reminder or confirmation. Now it has become a very common form of business communication used for a wide variety of messages exchanged between people working in the same organisation. A memo usually focuses on only one specific topic, as in the following examples:

Conveying information Reporting back the minutes of meetings or summaries of brainstorming sessions

Requesting information Asking employees to send in requests for the use of office parking spaces

Giving instructions Telling employees to display identity badges when entering the building

Recommending options Informing people in the company of decisions reached on the best way to solve a company dilemma and recommending that these options be implemented

Layout

When writing memos, you should follow the standard format. The memo opposite shows where the following different components should appear on the page.

a date
b name of the person / people the memo is addressed to
c name of the person / people sending the memo
d information about the content of the memo
e introduction to the subject matter
f main points
g conclusion, often recommending the action to be taken
h closing, which can be the name or initials of the person sending the memo

Language styles

Although styles vary across cultures and organisations, there are basic rules to memo writing.

The opening is more direct and less formal than in a letter or email, with no greeting such as *Dear ...* and memos usually start with the introduction to the main points. The closing is generally just the initials of the sender.

Memos are less formal than business letters so the tone is neutral and the language simple. Sentences are usually short and clear, but not brisk and bossy. Memos often conclude with a request for action.

Useful phrases

Giving information
You will be happy to hear ...
I am / We are delighted to inform you ...

Requesting information

I would like to have ...
Could you give me ...
Would you send me ...

Giving instructions

Please ...
We / I kindly request ...
I / We want ...

Recommending options

I / We recommend that ...
I / We feel it is best to ...

Requesting action

suggest ...
Having considered all the alternatives, I / we
Do ...
Write ...
Phone ...

Sample memo

Qualcom Industries

MEMO

DATE 9th June
TO All Marketing staff
FROM Alan Stewart, Marketing Manager
SUBJECT New product launch

I am delighted to inform you that the Finance Committee has approved the new product plans. We need to get moving ASAP on the marketing campaign.

- Could you send me all the present market research data on the identified target.
- I recommend we set up focus groups for more up-to-date data.
- I would like to see a selection of proposed brand names by the end of this week.
- The creative team must have a proposal for a print media and TV campaign by the end of this month.
- We need to finalise and make decisions at the next meeting early next month.

Make this project an urgent priority. The team must meet the above deadlines.

A.S.