

ASSIGNMENT #1: Rhetorical Analysis Memo & Professional Letter

DUE: In Writing Workshop #1 on date listed on D2L

FORMAT:

- **For Part #1**, please use appropriate “memo parts and format” as detailed in Chapter 10.
- **For Part #2**, use work-place letter format, as demonstrated in Chapter 10 of Gurak and Lannon text (p.174 of hardcopy). Also, look at the examples I’ve posted to D2L (YumButter, etc.)

LENGTH: 1-2 page memo; 1-page letter (not to be exceeded)

AUDIENCE: For the memo, write to your WRIT 221 instructor and peers; for the letter, address the person to whom it is most appropriate to address your complaint.

Part #1: Draft a detailed rhetorical analysis of a professional writing situation using memo format.

ASSIGNMENT DETAILS: In light of our exploration of **audience analysis**, **rhetoric** (the practice of thinking and writing strategically to one’s audience) and **document usability**, think of an instance in your personal or professional life when you felt slighted. Perhaps you paid for a mattress online that promised “exceptional” quality but squeaks every time you sit on it. Perhaps you paid \$200 for tulip bulbs and nary a one bloomed.

UNDERSTAND RHETORIC: What does it mean to think rhetorically? What is rhetoric, after all? Rhetoric is about shaping your message to reach your audience; it’s about using language and other means of communication to deliver a message to a specific reader or listener with an understanding of their inherent biases, education, life experience, etc. Yes, it is historically about persuasion, but academically has evolved as a more holistic concept regarding effective communication. Be sure to understand this, as it is essential to all professional writing—including, of course, this assignment.

CONSIDER: What must you consider about audience, purpose, and context before you can write an effective letter in this situation? What ethical issues will you need to consider? How will these elements of the rhetorical situation shape your approach?

PURPOSE: Your memo will identify your audience; the perceived slight; and all the factors a writer must consider to successfully reach his or her readers. Look at my example in D2L for appropriate headings. Write comprehensively enough so that you may write a successful letter—which you will do next. The memo is a great brainstorming tool.

WRITE: Now, as brainstorming exercise to help write a successful letter to a person or group of people you deem responsible for your slight, write a one to two-page memo. This is your Rhetorical Analysis. Use page 179 for formatting guidelines. You may want to include additional subheadings (bold, all caps or color) for sections such as “Problem,” “Audience Info and Considerations” “Request,” etc. Write in complete sentences throughout.

YOUR READERS: Address the memo to your peers and me, your instructor.

PART #2: Write a one-page formal complaint letter (also called “claim letter” in Gurak and Lannon, section 10.6.3) clearly stating the grievance for which you just wrote a rhetorical analysis memo. The book also calls this letter “an arguable claim letter” and offers concrete suggestions I recommend following.

YOUR READERS: Address the letter to a specific people or group of people at the company or stores from which you seek a response. Be sure to find a name.

LETTER PARTS: Use workplace format with the following paragraphs:

- **Heading** (your address)
- **Date**
- **Inside address** (note the spacing demonstrated in the book between these upper elements)
- **Salutation** (*Dear Sarah,*) followed by a comma or colon
- A **2-3-sentence introduction** establishing good will and specifically referencing your grievance. Note tone here—an aggressive tone will not yield success. Apply the **“You Perspective”** as discussed in chapter 10. All paragraphs in your letter will be **flush left and single spaced**; include a blank space between graphs. Indentation, therefore, is not necessary.
- A **letter body consisting of 2-3 supporting paragraphs** (each no more than 4-6 sentences long) depending on the need for background and explanation given your reader and purpose. Be sure to state necessary background and logistic details in one paragraph and exactly what action you wish to come from this letter in another. Specific information readers will want to know include the date the item was purchased/or incident occurred; the make and model of any items mentioned; cost, color, and other physical characteristics as necessary.
- A **final paragraph concluding the letter** with good will and possibly restating the desired action.
- An appropriately **formal closing** (Thank you OR Sincerely), followed by a comma, 4 blank lines (for your signature) and your typed name.