## WRITING MEMOS

Even in the age of e-mail and microblogs, memos are likely to survive because sometimes writers want a slightly more formal document. Like letters, memos have a characteristic format, which consists of the elements shown in Figure 14.11.

Print the second and all subsequent pages of a memo on plain paper rather than on letterhead. Include three items in the upper right-hand or left-hand corner of each page: the name of the recipient, the date of the memo, and the page number. See the header in Figure 14.4 on page 378.

AMRO MEMO

To: B. Pabst
From: J. Alonso *J. A.*
Subject: MIXER RECOMMENDATION FOR PHILLIPS
Date: 12 June 2012

INTEROFFICE

To: C. Cleveland
From: H. Rainbow *H. R.*
Subject: Shipment Date of Blueprints to Collier
Date: 2 October 2012
c: B. Aaron
K. Lau
J. Manuputra
W. Williams

**NORTHERN PETROLEUM COMPANY**
**INTERNAL CORRESPONDENCE**

Date: January 3, 2012
To: William Weeks, Director of Operations
From: Helen Cho, Chemical Engineering Dept. *H. C.*
Subject: Trip Report—Conference on Improved Procedures for Chemical Analysis Laboratory

**Figure 14.11 Identifying Information in a Memo**

*Some organizations prefer the full names of the writer and reader; others want only the first initials and last names. Some prefer job titles; others do not. If your organization does not object, include your job title and your reader's. The memo will then be informative for anyone who refers to it after either of you has moved on to a new position, as well as for others in the organization who might not know you.*

*Write out the month instead of using the all-numeral format (6/12/12); multicultural readers might use a different notation for dates and could be confused.*

*List the names of persons receiving copies of the memo, either alphabetically or in descending order of organizational rank.*

*Most writers put their initials or signature next to the typed name (or at the end of the memo) to show that they have reviewed the memo and accept responsibility for it.*

*The subject line is specific: the reader can tell at a glance that the memo reports on a trip to Computer Dynamics, Inc. If the subject line read only "Computer Dynamics, Inc.," the reader would not know what the writer is going to discuss about that company.*

*The memo begins with a clear statement of purpose, as discussed in Ch. 5, p. 109.*

*Note that the writer has provided a summary, even though the memo is less than a page. The summary gives the writer an opportunity to convey his main request: he would like to meet with the reader.*

*The main section of the memo is the discussion, which conveys the detailed version of the writer's message. Often the discussion begins with the background: the facts that readers will need to know to understand the memo. In this case, the background consists of a two-paragraph discussion of the two models in the company's 500 series. Presumably, the reader already knows why the writer went on the trip.*

*Note that the writer ends this discussion with a conclusion, or statement of the meaning of the facts. In this case, the writer's conclusion is that the company should consider only the external drive.*

*A recommendation is the writer's statement of what he would like the reader to do next. In this case, the writer would like to sit down with the reader to discuss how to proceed.*

# Dynacol Corporation

**INTEROFFICE COMMUNICATION**

To: G. Granby, R&D
From: P. Rabin, Technical Services *P.R.*
Subject: Trip Report—Computer Dynamics, Inc.
Date: September 21, 2012

The purpose of this memo is to present my impressions of the Computer Dynamics technical seminar of September 19. The goal of the seminar was to introduce their new PQ-500 line of high-capacity storage drives.

**Summary**
In general, I was impressed with the technical capabilities and interface of the drives. Of the two models in the 500 series, I think we ought to consider the external drives, not the internal ones. I'd like to talk to you about this issue when you have a chance.

**Discussion**
Computer Dynamics offers two models in its 500 series: an internal drive and an external drive. Both models have the same capacity (100 G of storage), and they both work the same way: they extend the storage capacity of a server by integrating an optical disk library into the file system. The concept is that they move files between the server's faster, but limited-capacity, storage devices (hard disks) and its slower, high-capacity storage devices (magneto-optical disks). This process, which they call data migration and demigration, is transparent to the user.

For the system administrator, integrating either of the models would require no more than one hour. The external model would be truly portable; the user would not need to install any drivers, as long as his or her device is docked on our network. The system administrator would push the necessary drivers onto all the networked devices without the user having to do anything.

Although the internal drive is convenient—it is already configured for the computer—I think we should consider only the external drive. Because so many of our employees do teleconferencing, the advantage of portability outweighs the disadvantage of inconvenience. The tech rep from Computer Dynamics walked me through the process of configuring both models. A second advantage of the external drive is that it can be salvaged easily when we take a computer out of service.

**Recommendation**
I'd like to talk to you, when you get a chance, about negotiating with Computer Dynamics for a quantity discount. I think we should ask McKinley and Rossiter to participate in the discussion. Give me a call (x3442) and we'll talk.

**Figure 14.12 Sample Memo**

Figure 14.12, a sample memo, is a trip report, a record of a business trip written after the employee returned to the office. Readers are less interested in an hour-by-hour narrative of what happened than in a carefully structured discussion of what was important. Although writer and reader appear to be relatively equal in rank, the writer goes to the trouble of organizing the memo to make it easy to read and refer to later.

## Guidelines

### Organizing a Memo

When you write a memo, organize it so that it is easy to follow. Consider these five important organizational elements.

- **A specific subject line.** "Breast Cancer Walk" is too general. "Breast Cancer Walk Rescheduled to May 14" is better.
- **A clear statement of purpose.** As discussed in Chapter 5 (p. 110), the purpose statement is built around an infinitive verb that clearly states what you want the readers to know, believe, or do.
- **A brief summary.** Even if a memo fits on one page, consider including a summary. For readers who want to read the whole memo, the summary is an advance organizer; for readers in a hurry, reading the summary substitutes for reading the whole memo.
- **Informative headings.** Headings make the memo easier to read by enabling readers to skip sections they don't need and by helping them understand what each section is about. In addition, headings make the memo easier to write because they prompt the writer to provide the kind of information readers need.
- **A prominent recommendation.** Many memos end with one or more recommendations. Sometimes these recommendations take the form of action steps: bulleted or numbered lists of what the writer will do, or what the writer would like others to do. Here is an example:

  **Action Items:**
  I would appreciate it if you would work on the following tasks and have your results ready for the meeting on Monday, June 9.
  - Henderson: recalculate the flow rate.
  - Smith: set up meeting with the regional EPA representative for sometime during the week of May 13.
  - Falvey: ask Armitra in Houston for his advice.

## WRITING E-MAILS

Before you write an e-mail in the workplace, find out your organization's e-mail policies. Most companies have written policies that discuss circumstances under which you may and may not use e-mail, principles you should use in writing e-mails, and the monitoring of employee e-mail. Figure 14.13 on page 388 shows the basic elements of an e-mail.

*"CC" stands for* courtesy copy. *All of your recipients will know that you are sending a copy to this person or group.*

*"BC" or "Bcc" stands for* blind copy *or* blind courtesy copy. *None of your readers will know that you are sending a copy to this person or group.*

*You can create a "group" for people whom you e-mail frequently.*

*Like a memo, an e-mail should have a specific subject line.*

*By naming her readers at the start, the writer is showing respect for them.*

*The first paragraph of the e-mail clarifies the writer's purpose.*

*The second paragraph describes the idea. You want to be sure your readers understand the context.*

*Notice that paragraphs are relatively brief and that the writer skips a line between paragraphs.*

*The writer explains what she would like her readers to do, and she states a deadline.*

*The writer ends politely.*

*The writer has created a signature, which includes her contact information. This signature is attached automatically to her e-mails.*

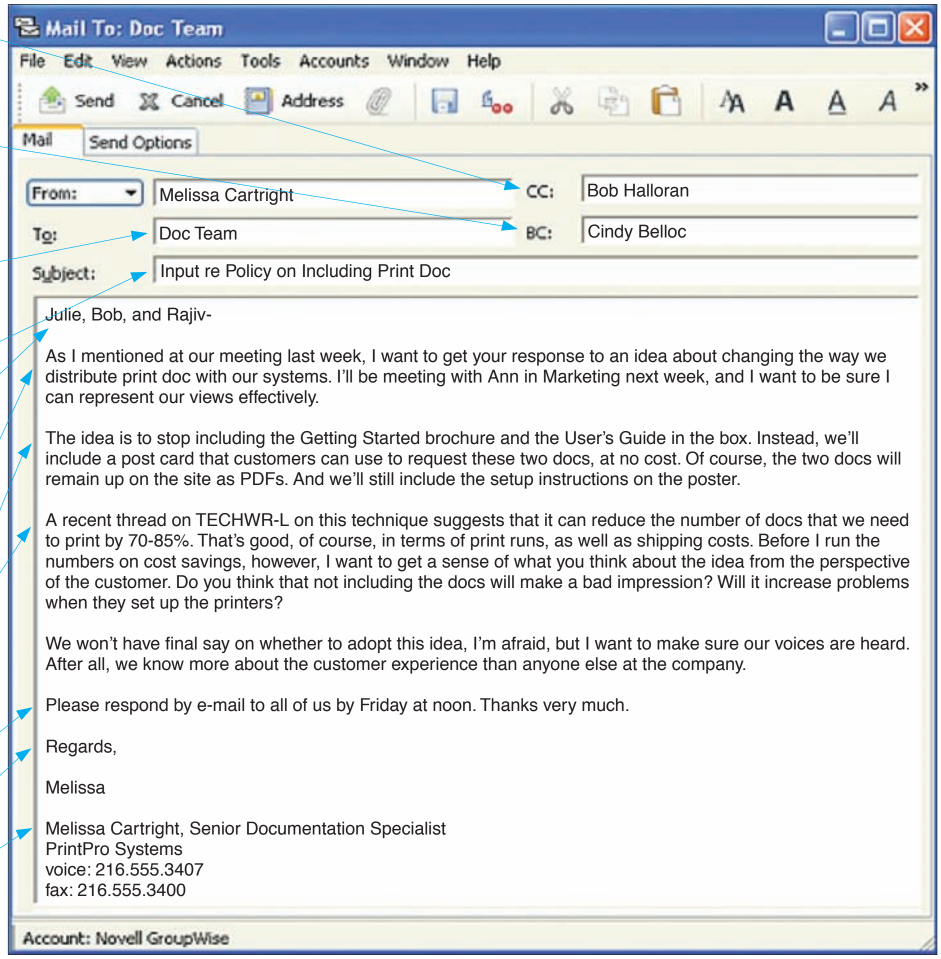


**Figure 14.13 Elements of an E-mail**

## Guidelines

### Following Netiquette

When you write e-mail in the workplace, adhere to the following netiquette guidelines. *Netiquette* refers to etiquette on a network.

- **Stick to business.** Don't send jokes or other nonbusiness messages.
- **Don't waste bandwidth.** Keep the message brief. When you reply to another e-mail, don't quote long passages from it. Instead, establish the context of the original e-mail by paraphrasing it briefly or by including a short quotation from it.

When you quote, delete the routing information from the top as well as the signature block from the bottom. And make sure to send the e-mail only to people who need to read it.

- **Use appropriate formality.** As discussed on page 373, avoid informal writing.
- **Write correctly.** As discussed on pages 373–74, remember to revise, edit, and proofread your e-mails before sending them.
- **Don't flame.** To *flame* is to scorch a reader with scathing criticism, usually in response to something that person wrote in a previous message. When you are angry, keep your hands away from the keyboard.
- **Make your message easy on the eyes.** Use uppercase and lowercase letters, and skip lines between paragraphs. Use uppercase letters (sparingly) for emphasis. Keep the line length under 65 characters so that lines are not broken awkwardly if the recipient's monitor has a small screen.
- **Don't forward a message to an online discussion forum without the writer's permission.** Doing so is unethical and illegal; the e-mail is the intellectual property of the writer or (if it was written as part of the writer's work responsibilities) the writer's company.
- **Don't send a message unless you have something to say.** If you can add something new, do so, but don't send a message just to be part of the conversation.

**On TechComm Web**

See Albion.com's discussion of netiquette. Click on Links Library for Ch. 14 on **<bedfordstmartins.com/techcomm>**.

Figure 14.14a shows an e-mail that violates netiquette guidelines. The writer is a technical professional working for a microchip manufacturer. Figure 14.14b shows a revised version of this e-mail message.

**To:** Supers and Leads
**Subject:**

LATELY, WE HAVE BEEN MISSING LASER REPAIR FILES FOR OUR 16MEG WAFERS. AFTER BRIEF INVESTIGATION, I HAVE FOUND THE MAIN REASON FOR THE MISSING DATA.
OCCASIONALLY, SOME OF YOU HAVE WRONGLY PROBED THE WAFERS UNDER THE CORRELATE STEP AND THE DATA IS THEN COPIED INTO THE NONPROD STEP USING THE QTR PROGRAM. THIS IS REALLY STUPID. WHEN DATE IS COPIED THIS WAY THE REPAIR DATA IS NOT COPIED. IT REMAINS UNDER THE CORRELATE STEP.
TO AVOID THIS PROBLEM, FIRST PROBE THE WAFERS THE RIGHT WAY. IF A WAFER MUST BE PROBED UNDER A DIFFERENT STEP, THE WAFER IN THE CHANGE FILE MUST BE RENAMED TO THE ** FORMAT.
EDITING THE WAFER DATA FILE SHOULD BE USED ONLY AS A LAST RESORT, IF THIS BECOMES A COMMON PROBLEM, WE COULD HAVE MORE PROBLEMS WITH INVALID DATA THAT THERE ARE NOW.
SUPERS AND LEADS: PLEASE PASS THIS INFORMATION ALONG TO THOSE WHO NEED TO KNOW.

ROGER VANDENHEUVAL

*The writer does not clearly state his purpose in the subject line and the first paragraph.*

*Using all uppercase letters gives the impression that the writer is yelling at his readers.*

*The writer has not proofread.*

*The writer's tone is hostile.*

*With long lines and no spaces between paragraphs, this e-mail is difficult to read.*

a. E-mail that violates netiquette guidelines

**Figure 14.14 Netiquette**

*The writer has edited and proofread the e-mail.*

*The subject line and first paragraph clearly state the writer's purpose.*

*Double-spacing between paragraphs and using short lines make the e-mail easier to read.*

*The writer concludes politely.*

**To:** Supers and Leads
**Subject:** Fix for Missing Laser Repair Files for 16MB Wafers

Supers and Leads:

Lately, we have been missing laser repair files for our 16MB wafers. In this e-mail I want to briefly describe the problem and recommend a method for solving it.

Here is what I think is happening. Some of the wafers have been probed under the correlate step; this method copies the data into the nonprod step and leaves the repair data uncopied. It remains under the correlate step.

To prevent this problem, please use the probing method outlined in Spec 344-012. If a wafer must be probed using a different method, rename the wafer in the CHANGE file to the *.* format. Edit the wafer data file only as a last resort.

I'm sending along copies of Spec 344-012. Would you please pass along this e-mail and the spec to all of your operators.

Thanks. Please get in touch with me if you have any questions.

Roger Vandenheuval

b. E-mail that adheres to netiquette guidelines

**Figure 14.14** (continued)

## WRITING MICROBLOGS

As discussed earlier in this chapter, microblogs are different from letters, memos, and e-mail in that they are often extremely brief and quite informal in tone. Usually, you do not revise microblogs extensively. You just proofread and send them.

However, the speed and informality of microblogs do not mean that anything goes. When you write microblogs, you are creating an archived communication that reflects on you and your organization. In addition, anything you write is subject to the same laws and regulations that pertain to all other kinds of documents. Many of the guidelines for following netiquette (see page 388) apply to microblogs as well as e-mail. Take care, especially, not to flame. Become familiar with your microblog's privacy settings, and be aware of which groups of readers may view and share your posts.

The best way to understand your responsibilities when you write a microblog at work is to study your organization's guidelines. Sometimes, these guidelines are part of the organization's guidelines for all business practices or all digital communication. Sometimes, they are treated separately. Figure 14.15 on page 392 shows one company's microblogging guidelines.