



Assignment Sheet: The “Genre Memo”

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1. BACKGROUND

Throughout the semester, we will work to build your understanding of both the research process and the role of genre in writing situations. These two understandings go hand-in-hand, especially if you consider the varied roles of writing throughout the research process. As you move through this process this term, you will be asked to evaluate the genres we use in terms of their suitability for each stage of the process.

2. PROCEDURE

Before you write a Genre Memo, collect several samples of each genre from multiple sources (which may include examples provided by your instructor). Review the samples you collect, looking for trends or patterns in¹:

- typical content (included vs. omitted, avoided, or assumed)
- appeals to the audience (using logic, emotion, or credibility)
- text structure and organization
- document format and presentation
- authors’ choice of words and sentence style

Then, consider why the features you identified are appropriate for the given assignment. Why does that genre work so well for the needs of the course, the assignment, or the research process?

To compose your memo, save trouble by relying on the formatting suggested by a template in your software. Organize the information gathered above into a succinct presentation of your analysis of the genre and its functions within the class or the research process. Provide, on a single page, your understanding of the rationale behind using the genre in question.

3. PURPOSE

Because you need to analyze the use of many genres throughout the semester, you would benefit from a succinct and predictable format for reporting your analyses. You also need something simple, as the analysis of a genre is a reflection on each major assignment, not the assignment itself. Therefore, we will use the “Genre Memo” as a short, semi-formal tool for reporting on each genre used during the semester. These documents will only be seen by your instructor, so they are essentially “intra-office”. Your instructor can quickly see that you understand why we use each genre for specific purposes throughout the semester without requiring lengthy papers. Memos also require you to organize and simplify your thinking for clarity.

TABLE 1. The “Genre Memo” Assessment Rubric

	ACCURACY	APPLICATION
Excellent	Shows holistic understanding of genre’s characteristics	Clearly articulated understanding of genre’s purposeful function within larger context of research or classwork
Good	Includes exhaustive review of genre’s characteristics	Evident understanding of genre’s functions within larger context of research or classwork
Adequate	Provides basic list of genre’s characteristics	Connects genre’s role with specific needs of assignment only

¹from Devitt, Reiff, and Bawarshi’s *Scenes of Writing: Strategies for Composing with Genres* (2004), p. 65