

Writing Emails and Memos



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Agenda

- Professional Correspondence
- Memo Writing
- Email Writing

Professional Correspondence



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Professional Correspondence

- Anything you write could become evidence in a legal case
- Endorsements and opinions
- No expectation of privacy for work email accounts
- Correspondence could be cause for termination
- **Key take away:** Never write anything that could put yourself in legal jeopardy



Professional Correspondence

- Poorly crafted correspondence with typos and grammar errors will damage your reputation
- Timeliness in responding
- Reactive and defensive
- **Key take away:** You are always just one bad correspondence away from damaging your reputation



Professional Correspondence

- Beware of email forwards, such as political, “humor”, vulgarity, etc.
- “its” content is cause for termination
- If you receive such content, report it. Complicity can also be considered cause
- **Key take away:** Never write/forward anything that could put yourself in HR jeopardy



Professional Correspondence

- ASCE Code of Ethics Cannon 3:
- “ Engineers shall issue public statements only in an objective and truthful manner”
- Internal documents can become public documents
- **Key take away:** All documents should be written ethically whether or not they are public



Professional Correspondence

- Relationships are key for professional success
- Method of delivery, style and tone can radically change how messages are perceived
- Emotional intelligence
- **Key take away:** Pause and think before hitting send how message might be interrupted

Memo Writing



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What is a memo?

- Memorandum comes from latin - something to be remembered
- Brief correspondences often sent via email, though paper memos are still used

How Brief?



**Memos can
range from a
single paragraph
to no more than
3 pages**

Keys to effective memo writing

- Who is the audience?
- What is my purpose?
- What is the message?
- How best can I communicate message?



Good memos

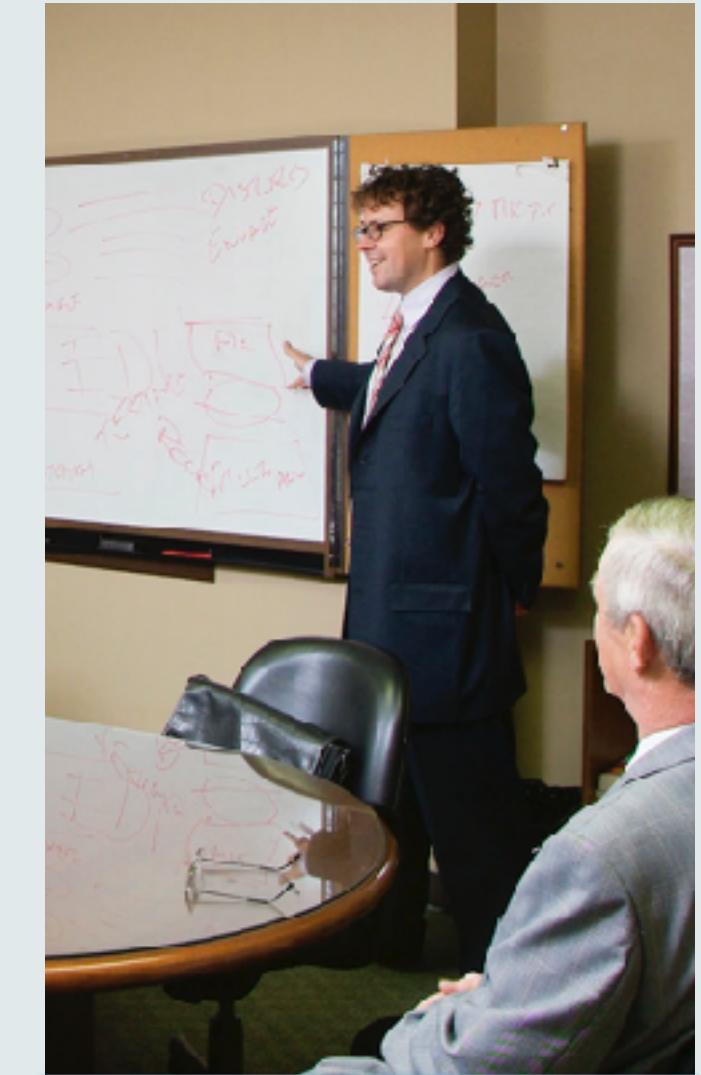
- A clear statement of **purpose**, stated upfront: I am writing because . . .
- Information about what the reader **needs to know**: The facts are . . .
- Statement of any **action requested**, ordered, or undertaken: I will, or I propose that you . . .

Audience

- Memos are **internal documents** written for peers and management



Peers



Management



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Audience

Your audience will dictate

- Tone and Style
- Amount of details provided
- Channel selection
- Expectations of topic knowledge

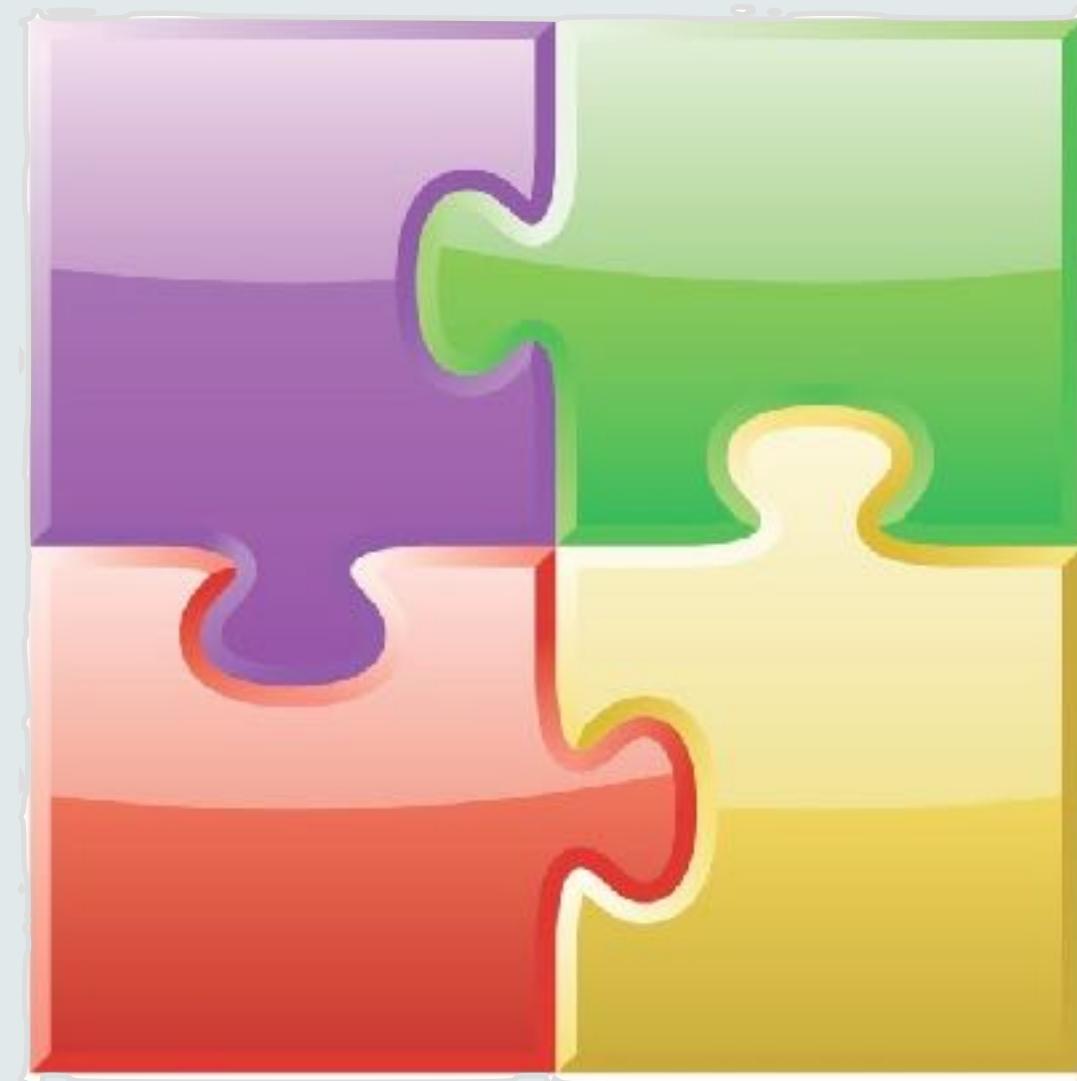


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Purpose

- Announce company policies changes, promotions, and other important details
- Communicate project updates
- Document conversations/decisions
- HR issues

Audience & Purpose



- Together your audience and purpose will determine how you message the information contained in the memo

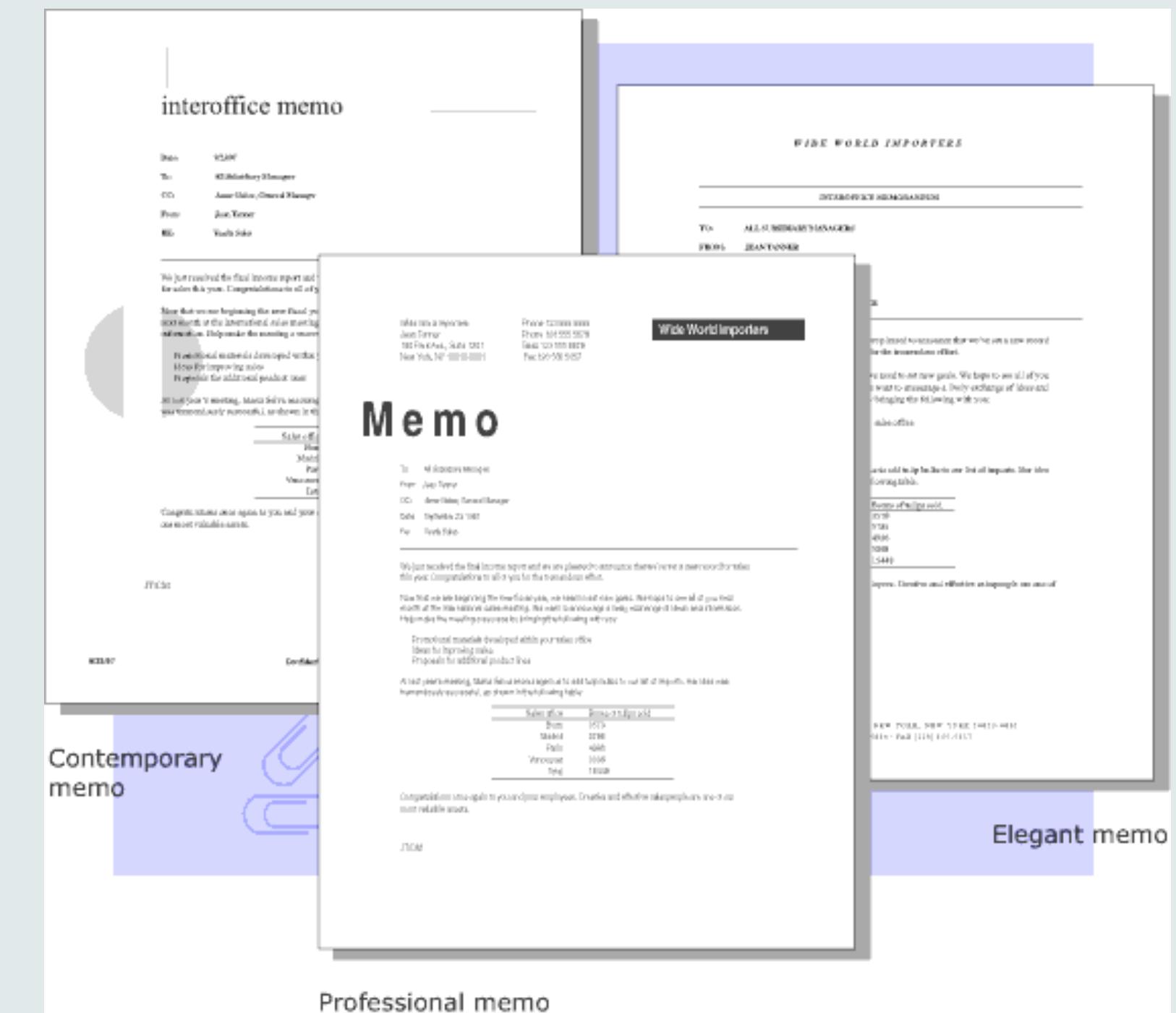
Messaging

- Memos should be limited to a single topic/issue



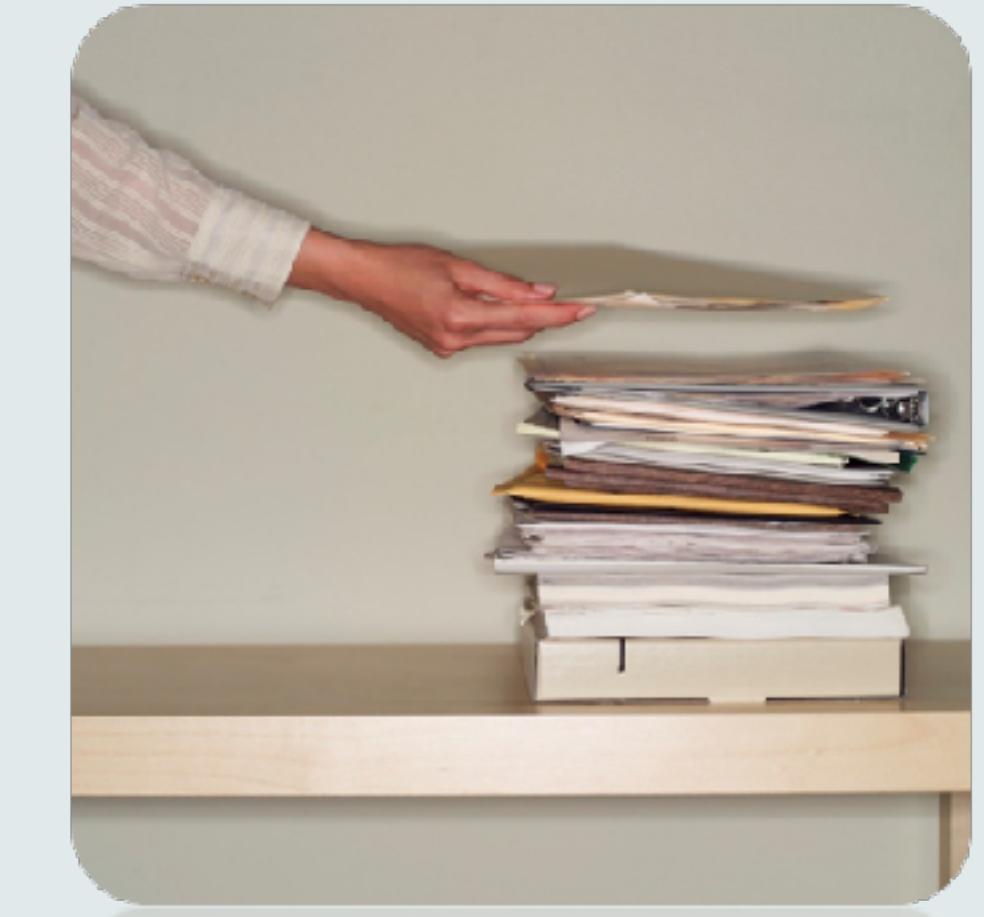
Messaging

- Provide practical information
- Give facts using concrete language & specific details



Archives

- Memos can sometimes become critical evidence in lawsuits and legal cases
- Be mindful of **what** you write and **how**



Memo details

- Introduction, Discussion, & Conclusion
- Style & tone will be dictated by the audience
- Clear & concise writing

A close-up photograph of an open spiral-bound notebook. The left page is white with light blue horizontal ruling. The right page is white with red horizontal ruling. A black and gold pen lies diagonally across the bottom of the frame, pointing from the bottom left towards the top right.

Style
&
Tone

Style & Tone

- **Style** - how something is written rather than what
- **Tone** - expresses attitude toward topic and audience

Style & Tone



- Depending on purpose can be more informal
- Informal is still professional

Style & Tone



- Formal and professional
- Passive/Assertive
- Respectful
- Not devoid of opinion

Format



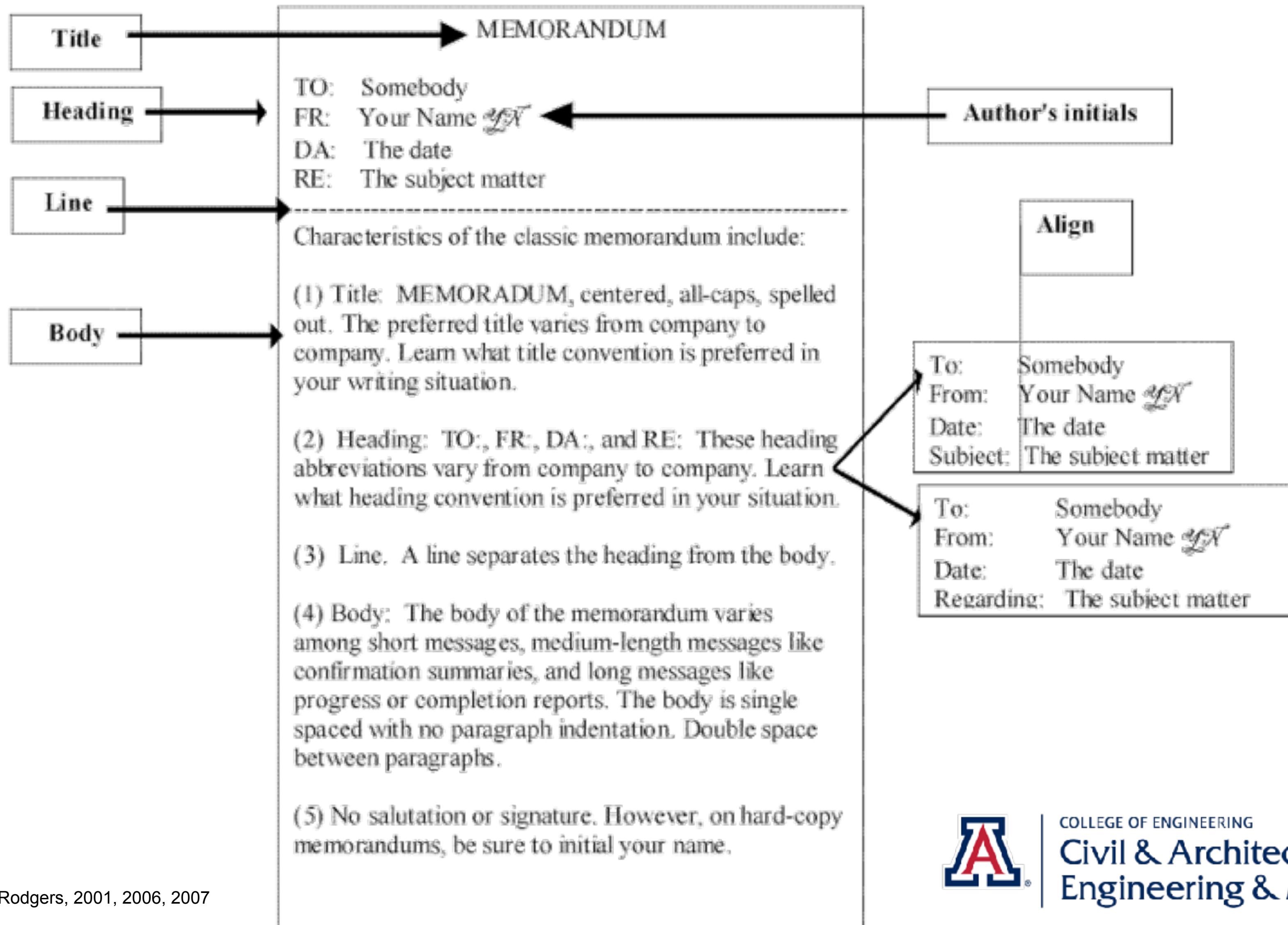
Will vary
depending on
manner in which
the memo is
transmitted



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Format

Paper	Email PDF	Email
Traditional formatting	Traditional formatting but distributed as an PDF attachment	Content of memo in message body



Value-added formatting

- Headings
- Number or Bulleted lists
- Underling or bolding

Memo

To: Department Heads
From: Debora Lynn
Date: December 10, 2006
Subject: Annual Bonus Leave for Employees with Outstanding Performance

Starting January 1, we will introduce the following modification in our company policy with regard to annual leave: every year one employee from each department will be awarded special annual bonus leave for outstanding performance.

The eligible employees will have additional five (5) days of annual leave credited on January 15. The bonus leave will be accounted for separately and will remain available until used, notwithstanding any other limitation of the total number of days of annual leave that may be carried forward.

We will have a meeting on December 15 at 10:00 a.m. to discuss the results of the 2006 performance evaluation and approve the final list of employees eligible for the bonus. The announcement to the employees will follow the meeting. If you have any questions or comments, please let me know before the meeting.



Memo

To: Files
From: Steven Bradshaw
Date: June 2, 2006
Re: Nadine Prentice's Employment Status

Nadine Prentice initiated a meeting with the management to discuss her current employment status, given her on-going leave without pay as of 29 March 2006. As her current family obligations do not allow for a full-time return to the office, Ms. Prentice has requested an extension of the unpaid leave period up until 15 September 2006. At that time, the management and Ms. Prentice will revisit her engagement with the company. In the meantime, Ms. Prentice will perform specific job tasks on an as-needed basis, as requested by the Technical Services Department.

Memo Checklist

Before you distribute

- Spelling
- Grammar
- Correct tone
- Key points covered
- Adequate length for message
- Addressed to correct audience
- Peer Review

Writing Emails



Before you...



THINK!

T = Is it True?

H = Is it Helpful?

I = Is it Inspiring?

N = Is it Necessary?

K = Is it Kind?



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Email Don'ts

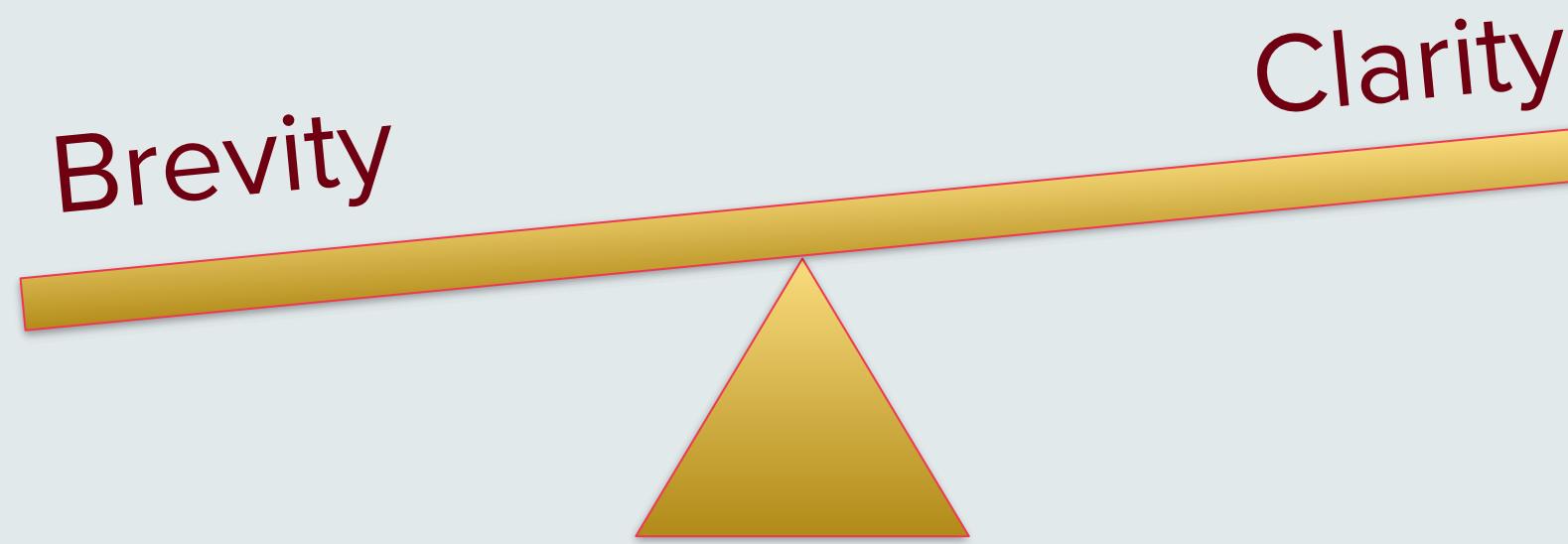
- Reacting defensively, emotionally, and hastily
- Send before proof reading
- Provoke escalation/confrontations
- Including lingo/terminology unknown by the receiver

Qualities of Effective Emails

- Informative
- Critical information highlighted
- Timely
- Clear messaging
- Support arguments with evidence

Brevity v Clarity

- Concise wording must be weighted against clarity of meaning



- Too much brevity can confuse the reader
- Too much details can confuse the reader

What's the
rush?



Right medium?

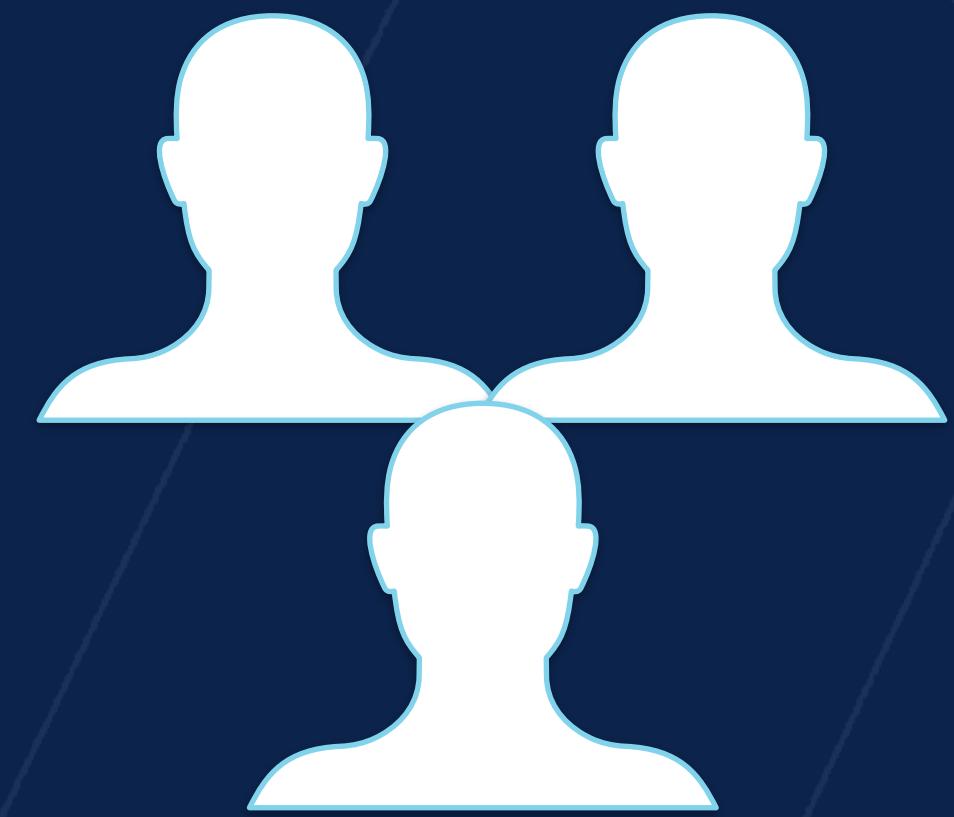


Email template

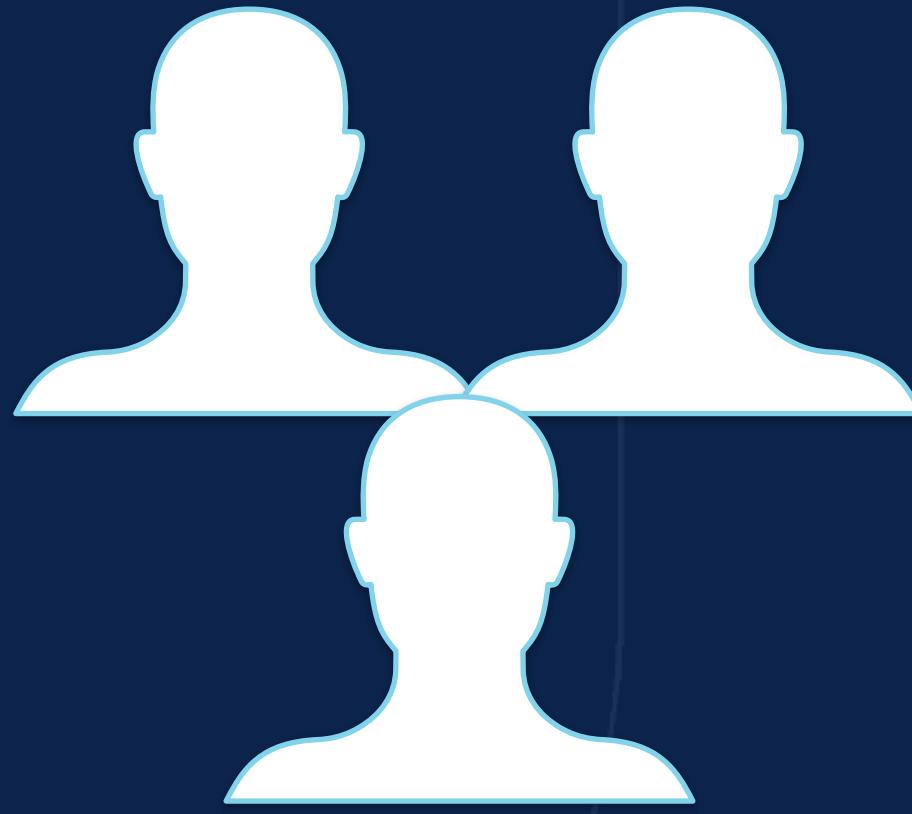
- Choosing recipients
- Meaningful subject line
- Greeting to receiver or audience
- Key information
- Closing/action steps



Individual



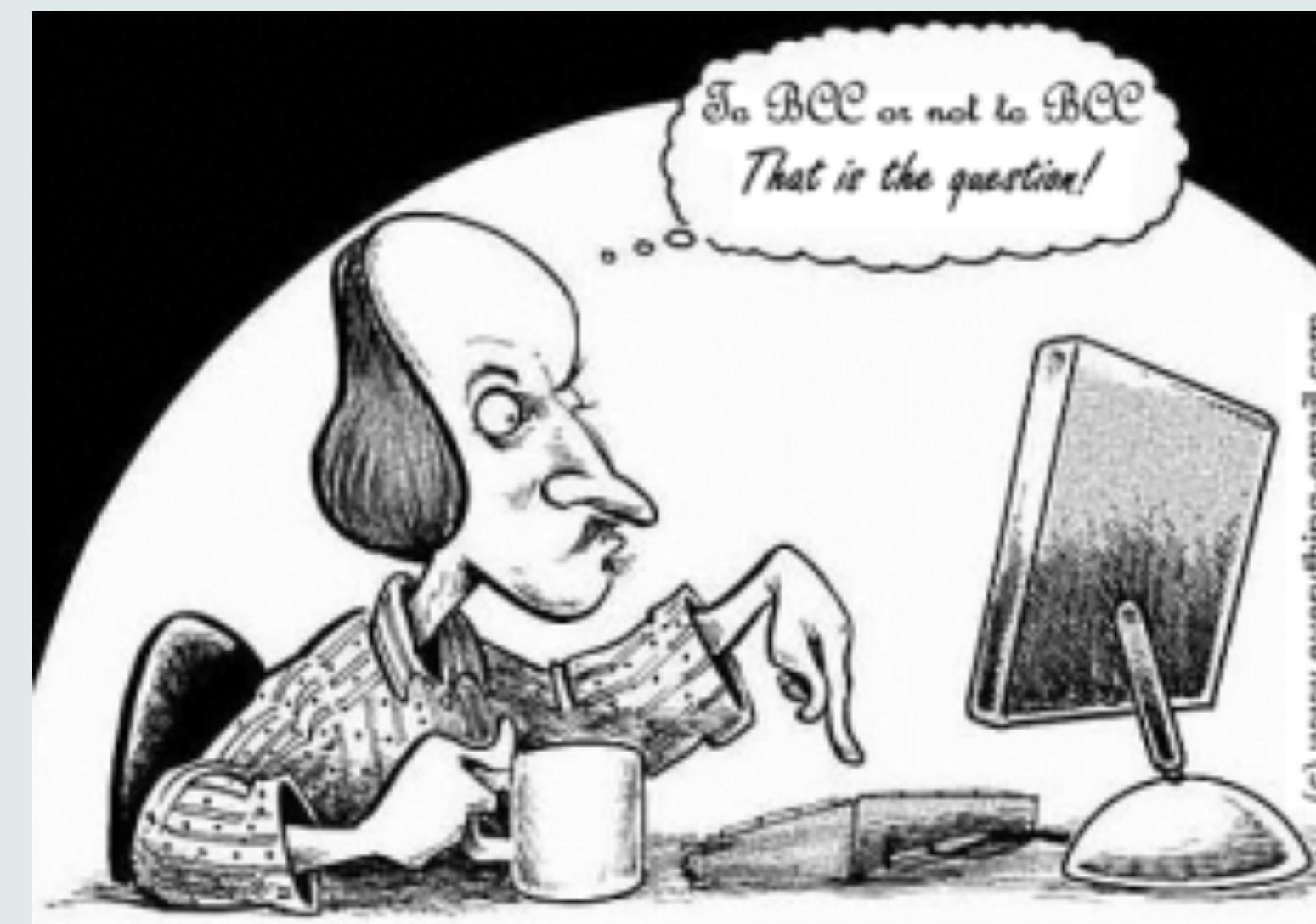
Group



Group

- Inclusion/Exclusion sends a message
- Receivers will interrupt intention differently based on recipient list
- Inclusion of supervisors/managers

Blind Carbon Copy



Use with care



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SUBJECT LINES MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Qualities of a good subject

- Concise and descriptive
- Not vague
- Urgency noted
- Not continuing thread with different subject to same recipients

Address your audience

- Dear Bob
- Hi Jane
- Hey team
- Drafting department

Key Information

- Highlight key information for the recipient to know and use attachments for in-depth details
- Email should not read as a novel... get to the point
- Clearly state any action steps required by the recipient/s