Technical Writing Skills

Workplace Communication - Memos

Learning Outcome

Identify parts of a memo and their functions.

Follow a standard memo format.

Use various strategies to improve readability.

Understand the importance of professional communication.

Parts of a Memo

What is a memo?

A memo refers to any written correspondence within a business or an organization.

Parts of a Memo

What's the difference between a memo and an email?

Parts of a Memo

1. Organization identification

2. Receiver identification

3. Sender identification

4. Date

5. Subject line

6. Body or memo contents

7. Signature

8. Identification of other readers

9. Pagination reference

Organizing the Content

The memo should:

- Get to the point quickly
- Be limited to one subject and purpose
- Include only the relevant information to support that purpose.

Organizing the Content

Rule #1: Create an informative heading.

When you fill out the subject heading, be sure to include as much information as you can. Start to communicate the point of the memo.

Organizing the Content

Rule #2: State the purpose up front.

A succinct statement of purpose at the start of the memo answers the reader's crucial question,

"Why are you telling me this?"

Organizing the Content

Rule #3: Use the rest of the memo to provide the readers with the necessary details.

Organizing the Content

Rule #4: Conclude with an action statement.

The last section of many memos is an action statement - a list of future tasks that you or some of your readers or even some other people will carry out.

Effective Format

Memos should be designed so the information can be read quickly.

To make your message more visible to your audience, use can use the following:

- Headings
- White space
- Lists using point form
- Short paragraphs
- Use visual cues

Effective Format

Rule #1: Use headings.

A heading is a word or a phrase that announces the main idea of the paragraph or section.

Discussion

- Why should you use headings in a memo?
- What makes a good heading?

Effective Format

Rule #2: Use white space.

White space refers to the empty space on a page of text.

Discussion

- How can white space make a document easier to read?
- How can you create white space in an email?

Effective Format

Effective use of white space can be achieved in three ways:

- Lists using point form
- Short paragraphs

Effective Format

Rule #3: Make lists using point form.

Lists can be used to emphasize important information.

Example

At the end of this lecture you should be able to:

- Follow a standard memo format
- Write effective subject lines

Effective Format

Rule #4: Write short paragraphs.

Short paragraphs are easier to read than long ones.

Discussion

What can you do if your paragraph is longer than eight to ten lines?

Is it acceptable to have a paragraph that consists of only one sentence?

Effective Format

Rule #4: Use visual cues.

You can highlight important information by using upper case letters, underlining and boldface.

Discussion

How can these visual cues be helpful to the reader?

What kind of problems can they present?

Activity