MEMORANDUM

What is a Memorandum?

- Generally speaking, the memorandum is <mark>a kind of formal communication which usually operates within an organization.</mark>

- A memorandum can also be said to be a correspondence between employees of a place of work.

- The memorandum differs from the formal letter basically in its formal features, its range of circulation, and in its range of formality.

Memorandum Versus Formal Letter

- Formal letters are basically formal because they exhibit a remarkable degree of distance between people in communication.

- On the other hand, memorandum exhibits a wide range of formality which can be classified into the formal, informal and semi-formal. It suffices to say that such clear distinctions and ranges are not easily associated with the formal letter.

- Memorandums in themselves are considered less formal than formal letters which bridge the distance between communicators who believe that they have been brought much closer together by the common organization they serve.

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- At the workplace, therefore, matters which tend to emphasize an individual's goals, or those which tend to pitch the organization against and individual are communicated through the formal letter, instead of the memorandum.

- It is in the sense of this social framework that appointment, promotion, leave, query, resignation and dismissal correspondence are communicated as formal letters and not as memorandum.

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Types

The memorandum can be classified into the informal, the semi-formal and the formal.

The Informal Memoranda

- These are hand-written, conversational messages of simple requests, directives or information between employees of an organization. They are usually made up of between one and six lines.

- An informal memorandum usually operates between equals or between officers and their subordinates. These memoranda do not usually follow the three-part structure (introduction, body, conclusion).

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- Officers <mark>do not usually keep record</mark> of these memoranda because they are considered as one of the many short messages which people give us in our daily lives. <mark>The language of the informal memorandum is basically colloquial.</mark>

- The use of contracted forms, abbreviations, and elliptical constructions are a mark of this colloquial language. Below is an example of an informal memorandum culled from Sekyi-Baidoo (2003).

❖ *This informal memo is from a lecturer to her colleague*

MEMORANDUM
Department of English Education

FROM: Louisa

TO: Yaw Sekyi

DATE: 2/4/97

SUBJECT:

Yaw. The meeting. It's this afternoon.
Be here 12pm. We need to plan strategies.
Make sure your usual lateness doesn't come this time.

Good Morning.

The Semi-formal Memorandum

The semi-formal memorandum is a communication between equals, between an administrator and his subordinate or between a subordinate and an immediate boss between whom there is not much difference in status or rank.

The semi-formal memorandum, like the informal one, is also concerned with day-to-day activities of the organization. It contains a well discussed or fully presented subject. It does not contain snippets of directives or information. Unlike the informal ones, the semi-formal ones are filed. These memoranda usually follow the three-part structure (introduction, body, conclusion).

The language of this form of memorandum is simple, everyday vocabulary construction except in instances when the nature of the subject demands specialized vocabulary. Even when this happens, it is believed that the workers understand it. Below is an example of a semi-formal memorandum culled from Sekyi-Baidoo (2003).

❖ A semi formal memo can be as short as the one below:

MEMO

UTAG, UCEW

FROM: President
TO: Executive Members
DATE: 20 April 2000
SUBJECT: Emergency Meeting

Colleagues are invited to an emergency meeting today to discuss an urgent letter received from the National President yesterday.

Time: 3.00 p.m.
VENUE: IEDE TEA ROOM

Paul K Ackom
(Paul Ackom)
President

The Formal or Policy Memorandum

- The formal or policy memorandum can be likened to the formal letter in the distance that exists between the employees in communication. It is concerned not with day-to-day information and activities but with general policies and directives. It is usually an announcement, explanation, suggestion, or reaction based on the principles and practices on which the organization operates. It is as a result of its preoccupation with organizational principles and practices that it is called policy memorandum.

- Policy memorandums are usually addressed to communal recipients such as *All Employees, All Managers, All Heads of Departments* or individuals with official designation such as *The Head, The Secretary, The Minister* etc.

Cont.

- These memorandums follow the three-part structure (introduction, body, conclusion).

- The language of formal memorandum is formal and therefore uses the impersonal method generally. <mark>The use of passives and genitives(instead of specific names) reflect its impersonal nature. I</mark>t is important to avoid the use of colloquial language in formal memos. The use of contracted forms, abbreviations, and elliptical constructions are a mark of this colloquial language. Below is an example of a formal memorandum culled from Sekyi-Baidoo (2003).

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UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

P. O. Box 25, Winneba

UCEW

Office of the Registrar
MEMO

FROM	:	Management
TO	:	All Heads of Sections – Divisions, Departments, Administration etc
DATE	:	14 January, 2000
SUBJECT	:	Annual Leave of Staff

INTRODUCTION

Annual leaves are periods when officials who have worked the whole year round take some time off to rest their bodies and also to attend to personal or family duties and problems. Such leaves should however not cause any standstill in the running of our set-up. This unfortunately is the problem Management has been made to know concerning the dispensation of leave in our young university. This memorandum outlines some of the problems we have discovered and the step taken to forestall their effect.

PROBLEMS

i. Some officials accumulate their leave over years and proceed later on long periods of leave, or have more than one leave sessions in a single year.

ii. Some officials proceed on leave before the dates granted them; some overstay their leave.

iii. In most departments, there are no replacements for officials on leave, thereby reducing the effectiveness of work.

iv. Leave applications come too late and allows little time for processing.

MEASURES

1. In order to ensure an effective administrative system, Management has taken the following measures. Heads of Sections as well as their subordinate staff are to take note of these and adhere to them accordingly.

2. Management has decided to employ more clerical and typing staff. This is to ensure that those who proceed on leave can be duly replaced.

3. Leave application must reach the Senior Assistant Registrar (Personnel) at least two months before the commencement of leave.

iii. Such applications must be endorsed by the sectional heads who must state whether they need substitution for the officials going on leave.

iv. From hence, casual leave with the exception of those taken for heath reasons and duly supported by medical report would strictly be deducted from one's annual leave.

i. From hence, all accumulated leave has been cancelled, except where such leaves were duly applied for but disallowed by the personnel officer. Even here, only leaves for the 1998/1999 academic year would be granted.

ii. Management has designed a form which would be completed by sectional heads on the resumption of and from leave of their subordinates.

As such measures get underway, we hope to bring further measures to address problems that crop up.

J N Aryeetey

(J. N. Aryeetey)

Registrar, for Management

Cc. Chairman, SEMSA

Chairman, TEWU

Staff Notice Boards

Structure of a Memorandum

- Departments often design their "memo pads" with the following features:

1. Corresponding heading: This is the heading which appears at the top usually in bold print and seeks to identify the nature of the correspondence.

- For most organizations this heading, comprises the word **Memorandum** or **Memo**.

- Others such as **Office Memo**, **Interoffice Correspondence** and **Interoffice Communication** are sometimes used in place of memorandum.

- Some organizations do not even have this correspondence heading on their memo pads.

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Cont.

2. **Specific headings:** These headings come below the correspondence heading.

- They serve to identify the people and the subject or focus of the communication.

- It is important in every communication that the people in the communication event are all identified.

- In the formal letter, these people are identified in the recipient's address and salutation on one hand, and the writers address and the subscription on the other.

Cont.

- The specific headings comprise the following elements which can be arranged not necessarily in the order below:

From:

To:

Date:

Subject:

Informal and sometimes semi-formal memorandums generally have no subscription. The writer may only write a 'Thank you' or initial his/her name at the end of the correspondence. It is now however customary for formal and some semi-formal memorandums to display the signature, the name and the designation of the writer.

Uses of a Memorandum

- Memorandums are used within an organization to:

1. Report information

2. Make requests

3. Recommend an action

4. Communicate issues of immediate importance

- Organization can also send memos to people or firms that have close or long-standing relationships with them.

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Types of Modern Communication

Other types of modern communication have been around since the early days of phone and internet. Some of these include:

- Voice Calling

- SMS Text Messaging

- Email

- Social Media

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Assignment

Explore other types of modern communication used in organizations.

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