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## THE STYLE AND TONE OF MEMOS

A **memo** is a written form of communication most often employed in business environments.

It is a record of something which it is desired to remember; a note to help the memory.

Each company or office has its own style, format and layout of memos; therefore, it is best to refer to past ones before you write them.

Most memos are written under pressure of time and are to be read quickly for the main purpose and be easily understood by top executives, departmental heads and busy staff; therefore they should:

1. Be **brief**, straight to the main point, followed by details logically organized and connected.
2. Be **clear** in simple grammatically correct English with headings and sub-headings for easy reading and comprehension.
3. Be **concise** so that the message is quickly understood for immediate action to be taken. Most routine informational memoranda are 1-2 pages long.
4. Have **appropriate tone**, which depends on
  - (a) the **purpose** and **type** of memorandum to be written
  - (b) the **relationship** and status between the reader(s) and the writer(s); and
  - (c) the **personality** of the reader(s).

Some readers may insist on formal or informal memos. *It is very important to first find out their preferences and terms of address before you write your memo.*
5. Choose **appropriate vocabulary and expression** to suit the status of reader(s) and the type of memorandum written so as not to give offence and to get immediate response to the message written.
6. Be **accurate** with **unbiased information**, with various points of view taken into consideration.
7. Be complete with data, chart, graphs, pictures, suggestions and recommendations.
8. Be typed on 8 ½ X 11 inch paper with blocked paragraphs separated by one blank line and typed single-spaced.

The **Deductive Format** usually starts with the general topic in the first introductory paragraph, followed by details in other supporting paragraphs. The final paragraph usually concludes with suggestions or recommendations for future action as shown in Example I below. It should be noted also that the deductive format is also found in letter writing.

Example 1: **Format of a Routine Memorandum**

Date: 6 June 2006  
To: All Supervisors  
From: Chan Tong Soon, Manager

Ref: MR/124

Subject: **Wearing Protective Clothing and Gloves**

Introductory  
Paragraph →

The factory Medical Doctor's report has drawn attention to increased accidents among staff working in dangerous sections of the chemical factory. The workers concerned were not wearing the protective clothing or gloves

Paragraph 2: →  
**Supporting  
details**

First it is company regulations that all workers must wear protective clothing and gloves in the chemical processing sections.

Paragraph 3: →  
**Supporting  
details**

Second, the increased accidents has led to much absenteeism; loss of production and increased the medical expenses.

Concluding  
Paragraph: →  
**Suggestions  
and  
recommendations**

Protective clothing and gloves must be worn at all times or disciplinary action will be taken. All supervisors must be vigilant and report offenders immediately

The **Inductive** Format starts with the supporting specific details or examples in the first introductory paragraph; followed by step-by-step reasoning, suggestions and recommendations and concluding with the general view point as shown in Example II.

#### Example II: Format of Analytical Memorandum

To: The Manager  
From: Assistant Manager

Ref: MR/117  
Date: 22 February 2006

Subject: **Deterioration in Maintenance Service by  
Computer Centre**

Introductory  
Paragraph 1 →

Although previous maintenance and repairs of office computers were prompt and satisfactory, the recent quality of services has deteriorated

Paragraph 2 →  
Details to support  
paragraph 1

On January 1, 2006, 5 computers broke down. It took 2 weeks for the Computer Centre to send their service men to repair them. The same repaired computers broke down again a day after they were repaired and returned

Paragraph 3 →  
Details and data  
to support  
paragraph 1

Other computers have also had frequent breakdowns since 1 January, 2006 on : 23/1, 27/1, 10/2 and 22/2/ 2006. This has greatly affected office work.

Paragraph 4: →  
Details to support  
Paragraphs 1-3

Frequent complaints have been made to the Manager via telephone calls and letters (copies of these are attached); but we have received no replies

Concluding  
Paragraph: →  
suggestion and  
recommendation.

In view of this, the contract with the Computer Centre should be examined and legal action taken. If possible the contract should not be renewed for next year