

Engineers make extensive use of reports and memos to communicate with management and colleagues. The ability to write an effectively is a necessary skill in industry, so it is well worth the time to develop writing skills. Both initial job description and the final report will be in the form of a *memo*.

Memo Format

The general format of a memo is shown below. Styles vary from one organization to another, but they will all contain the same elements.

MEMO	Company, school, or project identifier or logo	
DATE:	date written	
TO:	recipient list	CC: list of people
FROM:	originator + your “signoff” initials	to receive copies of this memo
SUBJECT:	subject of memo (memo “title”)	
<Body of memo>		
Attachment list (if any attachments)		

This basic layout can be used to write a memo in one of two styles (discussed below).

Short Memo Format: used for the initial job description

Short memos are typically less than one page in length, and are used to make announcements or requests, or to report findings or current status.

These memos should be a quick read: get to the point in the first paragraph – the first sentence if possible. Use “newspaper-style” writing, i.e. short paragraphs (4-7 sentences typical) that use short

sentences (20 words or less). Separate the paragraphs with a blank line rather than indentation.

Long Memo Format: Used for the final report

At times it is convenient to issue short (2-4 page) reports in memo format. Reports are divided into sections, and each section is given a short section title that is set off in bold type. Figures are labeled and referred to by name in the report. Citations and footnotes are common: make sure to properly cite all sources. Appendices are included as necessary, in order to offload details or calculations and make the report more readable.

Reports generally are *not* a quick read, so it is *not* necessary to follow the short memo's "newspaper-style" format (i.e. short paragraphs and short sentences).

For more information on the topic of writing in engineering, refer to the following website located at <http://www.writing.eng.vt.edu/>.

An example of a short memo follows.

MEMO

ABC Corporation
St. Paul, MN

DATE: May 4th, 2012
TO: Dr. Frank Kelso
FROM: Frederick Dahlgliesch *FRD*
SUBJECT: Summer Internship Job Description

CC: Greta Tomson (Supervisor)

My summer internship at ABC Corporation will be spent in the metallurgy lab where we are currently investigating print head failures. This investigation is very high priority because the problem is costing our company thousands of dollars in field service calls and replacement parts.

The print head is fracturing at the base of the flange, where it is bolted to the arm structure. My job so far has been to prepare metallurgical samples for the metallurgist, and assist in recording data and observations from the SEM inspections.

I expect to be learning a lot, primarily in the material science and forensic engineering areas.

Suggested Memo Grading Grid

(adapted from ME 4054 Senior Design class)

Student Name:

Date:

Completed on time? ____Yes ____No

Criteria	Weak	OK	Strong	Comments
Completeness and Technical Content <ul style="list-style-type: none">Summarizes what was done on the task or gives an answer to the problem assignedProvides sufficient detail				
Organization <ul style="list-style-type: none">Uses memo header formatStays on task				
Clarity of Expression <ul style="list-style-type: none">Avoids use of first person voiceUses correct grammar, spelling and punctuationUses "newspaper" style writingUses concise, clear language				