

# MEMOS

## **Definition:**

A memo is an internal document that is generally short, focuses on a single topic, reports information, makes a request, or recommends action. It follows specific forms, depending on the organization.

## **Before writing, consider:**

- Who will read the memo
- Why the memo is being written
- The tone and language  
Certain words convey the tone of a memo (for example, negative, positive, conciliatory, assertive, motivational, friendly, etc.). In addition, the choice of language depends on the reader (co-worker, superior, or subordinate) and the objective.

## **Heading of memo:**

To: Santa's Elves  
From: Santa Claus  
Date: 30 September 2001  
Subject: Meeting to discuss shortage of toy parts

Note: To prevent confusion, a memo should address only one subject. The subject-line title should be accurate and complete.

## **Body of memo:**

A memo should contain three parts:

1. For the *introduction*, start with one clear sentence that states the subject and provides a summary of the topic.
2. The *middle* may contain several sentences of explanation.
3. The *ending* makes a request or a recommendation

## **Format:**

Follow the guidelines of your particular company, university, etc.

These guidelines should include:

- Heading (To, From, Date, Subject)  
Most memos now use this form for the date: 17 December 2002

- Names – follow guidelines for your institution  
Example: A.B. Jones or Alexander Buckson Jones
- Position or title – include if your organization requires it.
- If copies should go to more people, put "cc:" with the names at the bottom of the memo.

***Electronic Memo (e-mail):***

E-mail memos serve the same purpose as paper memos but are easier to create and store, as well as faster to distribute.

***Sample Memo:***

To: Santa's Elves  
From: Santa Claus  
Date: 30 September 2001  
Subject: Meeting to discuss shortage of toy parts

I am calling a meeting at 3 p.m. tomorrow to discuss the shortage of toy parts for the upcoming holiday season. Some of you have already mentioned that various widgets and snippets are hard to obtain from the usual sources. If we cannot obtain these items soon, we will have to find new suppliers in order to meet our holiday deadline. We do not want to disappoint any children.

Please bring a list of the parts in short supply to the meeting so that we can determine what to do next. If you have any additional suggestions, be sure to contact me or Mrs. Claus.

Cc: Mrs. S. Claus

Note: Proofread carefully! Make no spelling or punctuation mistakes.

Sources: Business Communications, 4th ed., 1999, Andrews & Andrews.  
Writing That Works, 7th ed., 2001, Oliu, Brusaw, Alred.