

In memo format, write a brief report to your work supervisor about a problem that has come up in an experiment, project, procedure, etc. that you are presently working on or have recently worked on (from your final report scenario, or make it up). Consider using a visual element such as a diagram, table, or figure.

Describe the problem and **give two possible ways of solving it**. Then evaluate both the solutions and recommend one of them, giving reasons for your choice. Your report is supposed to contain technical information concisely presented in a clear and user-friendly manner.

Due date: November 6 by 11:59 PM EST through Brightspace.

Value: 15%

- Your report should be roughly two pages long, including any visual components, single spaced. All in 12-point Times New Roman or Garamond. PDF or MS Word format, please.
- Use memo format, and include clearly visible sections and headings. Make sure to use true single space (blank lines between paragraphs or sections).
- Please hand in a recent rough draft with your report. Your rough draft must show some meaningful visible editing.

Informal Report

Informal reports are typically internal reports, and can go to other members of the department and department heads. They are also used for reports that will circulate throughout the company. They use personal pronouns and contractions. Though the report may be several sections long, it is typically much shorter than a formal report. No contents page is included. Informal reports can even be formatted like a memo.

Informal Structure

Your introduction and conclusion are included in the body of the report, and there is no abstract. Include very short headings, if necessary. In the introduction, briefly state the problem, what you have done and your final conclusion. You have a target audience, so speak directly to them in your discussion. State the facts and do not embellish the details, but make sure the report is understandable. Remind the reader what your conclusions were. Your report will be left-justified with a 10- to 12-point font. Include your recommendations and the progress you have made toward solving the problem. Be positive about the expectations and recommendations.

Tables & Figures

These graphical displays are useful for presenting information that would be difficult to interpret if described in narrative format, such as large amounts of numerical data. The APA Publication Manual states that effective tables and figures supplement or augment the text rather than duplicate it. This does not mean that there can't be any overlap between tables, figures, and the text. In fact, the Publication Manual stresses that key pieces of information from a table or a figure can also be highlighted in the text.

Meta-analyses nicely illustrate the relation between visual displays of data and the main text. They often contain tables and figures (e.g., forest plots) that summarize data from multiple studies, including sample sizes, effect sizes, standard deviations, statistical significance, and so forth. These data give readers important contextual information about the studies. Presenting them in tables and/or figures makes the data much easier to digest than if they were described in narrative format. In the text, authors can then highlight and analyze specific data that stand out from the rest, such as pointing out that one study found a much greater effect for a given treatment approach than any other study and explaining why that might be the case.

Citing Tables and Figures in Text

When citing a table or a figure in text, refer to it by its number, such as “Table 3” or “Figure 2.1.” Do not refer to it by its position relative to the text (e.g., “the figure below”) or its page number (e.g., “the table on page 12”); these may change when your report is edited or your letter printed out, etc. **Cite any image source!**

The APA Style guidelines in the Publication Manual were written with draft journal articles in mind, so they do not address how to cite figures and tables in other contexts, such as letters and memos. Even so, these guidelines can be adapted to meet your needs (e.g., if you are writing for work, follow their in-house style guidelines).

Writing Informal Reports: Format Guide

Memo header

To: (name and title of target audience)

From: (name and title of writer: remember to sign or initial if it isn't an electronic submission)

Date:

RE:

CC: (distribution list when necessary)

Introduction [No heading necessary]

Discussion sections [Use meaningful headings to clearly separate your information]

Conclusion [**Reflection** on the content]

Parts of an informal report

Reports are written for many different reasons and use two basic formats. One is the long or formal report and the other is the short or informal report. But EVERY report, like every letter, essay, or article has three main parts: **Introduction, Discussion sections, Conclusion**. These reports follow the same format as a short memo but are longer and more comprehensive. Because they are longer than one or two pages, reports often include such formatting elements as headings, bulleted or numbered lists, and graphs and charts or tables.

Introduction

The introductory section includes 3 parts:

1. A statement of the problem or situation,
2. The task assigned to the writer and the scope of the project.
3. The purpose of the report and forecasts for the reader the topics of the report.
4. When appropriate, the introduction ends with your conclusion or recommendation.

Discussion Sections

Another aspect of report writing that is somewhat different from other business communications is the reading patterns of various audiences. Remember that most memos and reports have a target audience, but a number of secondary audiences who must be accommodated. Some of the readers will skim the report. In other words, the report, particularly the discussion sections, may not be read in a linear way—from the first word progressing to the last. Therefore, the writer must be certain the report is comprehensible when read in that manner. Each section must work together as part of the whole report, but a reader should be able to read one section and understand the context.

Anytime you use a list, or graphic or visual representation, you should introduce that list or visual and explain its purpose to the audience.

Conclusion

Finally, the conclusion of a report, depending on its purpose, should remind the reader of any action needed, ask for a response, or indicate a willingness to answer questions. This section may also provide contact information for future communications. Always be pleasant and polite, no matter what the situation or problem may be. Informal does not mean reckless, rude, or careless. **Don't forget your sign-off and signature!**