

**Memos:
Communicating Clearly, and Concisely**

Critical Learning	Materials and Interaction
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ Understand that memos serve as examples of clear, concise communication ☑ Understand the purpose, content, tone and format of memos (critical attributes). ☑ Understand and interpret the wording of an assignment. ☑ Understand the preparation that goes into brief writing ☑ Use a R.A.F.T.S. template 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Response Page: Memos • Access to the Internet • Level 4 sample memos from <i>Ontario College Writing Exemplars</i> available at http://www.gotocollege.ca/pdfs/6-8_OCWE.pdf • Work with a partner to analyze and revise sample memos • Conferences (2) with your teacher
Minds On	
<p>① The memo is a useful, practical format often used in employee-employer communications. Organizations in education, business, and healthcare use memos, to structure relationships and organize information. Even if memos aren't studied in your courses, they can teach you about purpose, audience, and clear, concise writing.</p> <p>① Reading examples of good memos is one way to learn about its purpose, content, style and format. An effective strategy for learning is to compare examples to find common features. These are the critical attributes, or essential characteristics, that distinguish memos from other types of writing.</p> <p>① The <i>Ontario College Writing Exemplars</i> Document contains authentic samples of Ontario college student writing. These have been graded using a four-level scale, with 4 being the highest.</p>	<p>➡ Locate the <i>Ontario College Writing Exemplars</i> website using the internet address above.</p> <p>Step 1: Read and compare the Level 4 samples on pages 33 and 34, looking for similarities in the form, topic, purpose, and tone (i.e., the attitude of the writer). Aim for at least 5 key similarities.</p> <p>Step 2: List the critical attributes of the two memos, e.g., a memo begins with a list of the topic, sender and recipient (form).</p> <p>Step 3: Compare your list of critical attributes with that of a partner or your teacher. Alternatively, 'test' your critical attributes against the Level 3 memo on page 37.</p> <p>Step 4: Finalize the list and keep it as a checklist for your own memo writing.</p>
Action!	
<p>① Understanding the instructor's task is essential to success in college. Ask questions or rephrase the task directions to</p>	<p>➡ Locate the memo, <i>Development Session Video Review: "Listening Actively"</i>, on page 33 of The Ontario</p>

make sure your understanding is the same as your instructor's.

① Assignments like this always involve more than just “filling in the blanks” and following instructions. Even short memos require considerable planning and thought.

Writing Exemplars website.

Step 1: Locate the task; the task describes the assignment (in a grey box online). List the task requirements on your Student Response page.

Step 2: Read the memo on page 33 and verify that the writer has completed all the items you listed on the Student Response page. Check items the writer completed.

Step 3: Backmap from the memo on page 33, to imagine what the writer needed to consider *before* beginning to write. Answer the following questions on your Student Response page:

1. From your prior knowledge and experience, what do you think someone should do before making a recommendation?
2. If you were going to recommend a video, what factors would you consider?
3. If you are an employee, how do you compose your memos that your employer will read and respect?

Step 4: Complete the middle column of the R.A.F.T.S. on page 4 for the level 4 memo.

Consolidation

① We tend to think of memos as little notes, but memos can be extremely important in the workplace. Memos

- are formal and official
- are public (in the sense of not personal and private)
- can be kept and tracked and forwarded to other people
- have implications for accountability
- can have legal implications.

For these reasons, it is essential to be clear, to the point, and accurate. Do not include anything you wouldn't want to be shared at large. Be careful about your phrasing.

① R.A.F.T.S. is a strategy for clarifying 5

➡ Plan a memo about a college campus issue. Sample topics include health and safety concerns, access to computer labs, signage, academic policies. Brainstorm or freewrite to discover topics. (See Literacy Lesson 2.1)

➡ Complete the right-hand column of the R.A.F.T.S. on page 4. [Ask your teacher for the Sample Analysis if an example would help understand how to think through a R.A.F.T.S.](#)

➡ Draft the memo, ½ page maximum, using your list of critical attributes and the Level 4 memo as your guide. Use one of the drafting strategies from Literacy

important aspects of any piece of writing:

- your **Role** and relationship to the intended reader
- the **Audience**, or intended reader, whose needs for information you must respond to
- the **Form**, or shape or format, that the writing will take; many forms are already set and accepted; putting information into a familiar form makes it easier for the reader to understand it
- the **Topic**, or what you're writing about:
- a **Strong Verb** that captures what you hope to achieve.

Lesson 2.1, e.g., go with the flow or start where you are.

- ➡ Use a revising strategy from Literacy Lesson 2.1, e.g., by reading aloud or taking the long view.
- ➡ Submit your memo [to your teacher](#). [In a conference, read your memo aloud and explain how it demonstrates the critical attributes of a memo.](#)
- ➡ Send your memo.

These components are interdependent. For example, a change in audience or purpose would likely require a change in form.

Connections and Next Steps

- ➡ All that you have learned about memos applies to e-mails in the world of work. Check out the lesson 5.4 on **Netiquette** for guidelines about email. Rewrite either the sample level 4 memo or your own memo as an email.
- ➡ Check out the actual or online bulletin boards in your college. How many examples of memos can you find? How well written are they?

Memos – Student Response

Communicating Clearly and Concisely

➡ You can: (1) Work on this template online and print a completed copy. It will expand as you work or (2) print a blank copy after adjusting the spacing to leave room to write or (3) use this as a guide to structure responding in a notebook.

Minds On...

➡ Critical attributes of a memo:

- Form
- Topic
- Purpose
- Tone

Action!

➡ List the task requirements:

1. From your prior knowledge and experience, what do you think someone should do before making a recommendation?
2. If you were going to recommend a video, what factors would you consider?
3. If you are an employee, how do you compose your memos that your employer will read and respect?

Consolidation

➡ Use the R.A.F.T.S. (right-hand column) to plan your memo. Ask your teacher for the Sample Analysis if an example would help understand how to think through a R.A.F.T.S.

	Level 4 Memo, p. 33	Planning a Memo
<p>Role What role is the student</p>		

playing?		
<p>Audience</p> <p>Who is the intended audience for the memo? Who is expected to read it?</p>		
<p>Format</p> <p>What critical attributes of the memo does the writer include? Why is a memo an appropriate form in this situation?</p>		
<p>Topic</p> <p>What is the memo about?</p>		
<p>Strong verb (purpose)</p> <p>What is the purpose of the memo? What is the action verb that expresses the purpose?</p>		

➡ Draft, revise, edit and send your memo.

Connections and Next Steps

- ➡ Rewrite a memo as an email.
 - ➡ Check out memos on a college bulletin board.
-

Teacher's Feedback



Successfully completed

Still to do: _____

Comments:

Memos

Communicating Clearly and Concisely

R.A.F.T.S. Sample Analysis of Level 4 Memo, p. 33

Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The writer of the memo, <i>Development Session Video Review, "Listening Actively"</i>, is a first-year college student, writing in the character of a medical imaging technologist writing to the department manager. The writer effectively maintains this role throughout the memo. "I'm just giving you a quick update..."; "I think this video will most certainly aid in improving the staff's interpersonal skills".
Audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The audience is one person, the department manager. Because the audience is a supervisor, the writer refers to the assigned task ("...a quick update on the video you requested I review...") and demonstrates initiative ("...I have taken it upon myself to retrieve it from the IAHS Resource Center and will have it for you for the session.) The supervisor knows what the acronym IAHS means.
Format	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The memo format dictates a clear statement of purpose in the opening sentence. The format is brief and clear, about a single issue. The writer uses the informal tone permitted in a memo ("See you then!"), but uses professional language ("the staff's interpersonal skills").
Topic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The topic is a review of a video on listening skills for a staff development session. ("it did an excellent job...")
Strong verb (purpose)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The writer provides a clear statement of purpose—the technician's review of the suitability of the video for staff development purposes. The purpose is to state the aspects of the video that make it suitable for its intended audience—a staff development session. Three important points are listed and a conclusion is provided. "This video should provide the staff insight into improving their communication skills...".

See *Think Literacy Subject-Specific Examples: Language/English 7-9*, p. 36. The *Development Session Video Review: "Listening Actively"* memo is from *Ontario College Writing Exemplars*, p. 33, and is included in this resource document at the end of Literacy Lesson 2.6.

Memos

Communicating Clearly and Concisely

Literacy Learning Self-Assessment Checklist

☞ Check items you have completed confidently in this lesson. Highlight items about which you have questions or need to consolidate further.

Critical learning

- Understand that memos serve as examples of clear, concise communication
- Understand the purpose, content, tone and format of memos (critical attributes).
- Understand and interpret the wording of an assignment.
- Understand the preparation that goes into brief writing
- Use a R.A.F.T.S. template

Minds On...

- I can identify 5 critical features of an effective memo
- I am familiar with a R.A.F.T.S. graphic organizer
- I can use the organizer to understand the format, audience, purpose, content and voice of a memo

Action!

- I can use a R.A.F.T.S. graphic organizer to plan a memo of my own for an audience of my peers
- I consult my teacher/peer to compare results
- I can make necessary revisions

Consolidation

- I can reflect on my learning by reviewing what I learned and making connections to electronic memo-writing
- I have noted examples of memos in the college environment