

Structuring a Memo to Summarize Research Findings

MEMORANDUM

TO:

FROM: (Initial or sign next to your full name)

RE: State the subject of the memo in a way that conveys its value to the recipient

DATE:

In the first paragraph, identify the issue, state the purpose of the memo, and give the main message.

Set the Stage with Background

Then, provide background information. You might provide data trends showing why the issue is important and succinctly describe previous efforts to address the issue. Don't go overboard here; tailor the depth and type of information to your recipient's needs.

Summarize the Study Methods, Limitations, and Results

Summarize the study using understandable and engaging language. (Be sure to provide the full citation for the article here or elsewhere in the memo.) Use active voice whenever possible; it's more engaging than passive voice. Include a discussion of study limitations, and be sure to state whether/how those limitations affect the interpretation and implications of the findings.

Present relevant study results clearly and concisely; they should be easy to understand and remember.

- Consider which data are necessary for the recipient, given the purpose of the memo.
- Present findings without copying them directly from the article.
- Avoid using overly technical jargon.

Identify Implications of the Study Findings

Identify the implications of the findings you have presented. You should provide a sequence of information with a logical path: If the research shows X, what are the implications of that finding for the population you serve, or for your agency or organization? And given those implications, what changes might your agency or organization consider?

If you make recommendations for changes in policies, programs, or practices, be sure they follow logically from the evidence you presented. Always accompany recommendations with an analysis of constraints or context, such as anticipated consequences, cost, administrative or political feasibility, and stakeholder interests.

Conclude the memo with a one or two sentence summary of the main points. Tell the recipient that you are available to answer questions, provide follow-up information, and/or assist with next steps. Provide your email address and phone number.