Engineers make extensive use of reports and memos to communicate with management and colleagues. The ability to write 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
FROM: originator + your “signoff” initials
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/](http://www.writing.eng.vt.edu/).

An example of a short memo follows.
MEMO

DATE: May 4th, 2012
TO: Dr. Frank Kelso
CC: Greta Tomson (Supervisor)
FROM: Frederick Dahlgiesch FRD
SUBJECT: Summer Internship Job Description

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Weak</th>
<th>OK</th>
<th>Strong</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Completeness and Technical Content</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Summarizes what was done on the task or gives an answer to the problem assigned</td>
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<td>• Provides sufficient detail</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Organization</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Uses memo header format</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Stays on task</td>
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<td><strong>Clarity of Expression</strong></td>
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<td>• Avoids use of first person voice</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Uses correct grammar, spelling and punctuation</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Uses “newspaper” style writing</td>
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<td>• Uses concise, clear language</td>
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