

“Losing Earth” Memo Writing Assignment

A memorandum, or memo, is a short document that concisely conveys information to a reader. Memos are a critical communications tool in government. They are written to describe what occurs during a political meeting or convey recommendations from an organized group. A memo writer’s goal is to quickly tell the reader the most important information about an event, meeting, or topic. Writing a good memo can lead to major policy shifts; an ineffective memo might prevent important information from reaching policymakers who can make changes.

Instructions:

The U.S. senator that you are interning for this summer is unable to attend today’s climate change hearing. However, the senator wants a clear understanding of what happened during the hearing in order to inform his voting on the issues raised. They’ve asked that you write a memo that clearly outlines the main points discussed in the hearing and give a recommendation on policy ideas based on the information provided in the hearing. Follow the memo format guide on page two.

Memo Format Guide:

TO: The name of the person receiving the memo, the person’s title

FROM: Your name, title

DATE: Date

RE: Clear Subject Line

Executive Summary:

The executive summary is a short paragraph that highlights all the information included in the memo. The executive summary should include a brief explanation about what the memo is about including any necessary context that the reader needs, descriptions of the main takeaways described in the memo, and any broad recommendations for the reader.

Heading 1:

After the executive summary, explain the main points of your memo under separate headings. The headings should clearly indicate what the section is about. For example, the heading of this section might read “Instructions for Writing Memo Sections”.

There can be multiple paragraphs in a section, and you can use bullet points if needed to demonstrate a point. The idea is to share information in a concisely with all necessary detail.

Heading 2:

A second heading signals a new topic or idea to discuss. All the instructions under Heading 1 apply here too. The sections in the body of the memo relay information to the reader.

Recommendations:

If you are writing a memo for someone, you may be asked to give recommendations for future actions based on the information or evidence you described in the body of the memo (the sections under Heading 1 and Heading 2). When giving recommendations, you should refer to information and evidence in the memo without completely rewriting it.

Work Cited:

List here any sources used to write your memo or evidence that your reader can refer to.

How Memos Have Impacted Climate Change Policy

Connect with the Text

In April 1970, the President's Advisory Council on Executive Organization (PACEO) sent President Nixon a memo advising him to create the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

In this memo, the council first summarized the threat of pollutants to Americans. In the document, they write:

Scientists we have consulted tell us that over the next ten years a geometric increase in our knowledge and ability to understand the problem will be required if we are to make wise and economic judgments concerning our environment. The Administration is on the threshold of a major Federal effort. It will not prosper without a sound organizational base.

In the final parts of the document, the PACEO gives concrete recommendations regarding the EPA's organizational structure and responsibilities:

In our opinion, the EPA should be designed around its major functions--monitoring, research, standard-setting, enforcement and assistance. This organizational structure would:

- Recognize the interrelated nature of pollution problems;
- Address the fact that pollutants cut across media lines;
- Encourage balanced budget and priority decisions between component functions;
- and
- Permit more effective evaluations of total program performance.

Taking the recommendations outlined in the memo, the Nixon Administration supported a plan for the Environmental Protection Agency which was eventually approved by Congress. President Nixon signed the bill creating the Environmental Protection Agency in December of 1970.