Guidelines for Technical Writing

Guidelines for Writing a Memo

Much of your day-to-day communication with coworkers might be in the form of memo's—short and to the point, providing only the information that is needed for further action. These notes might serve to inform colleagues about decisions that affect their work, or to update your supervisor and prompt appropriate follow-up management. In any case, the key to writing a useful memo is to keep it short and focused. The format will vary depending on content of the message and the culture of the workplace, but some items are essential no matter what the format.

To: **Mr. Poohbah**

From: **Billy Bob**

Re: **Monitoring sites**   *Be as explicit as possible about the subject*

Tell him what this is about, and why you are reporting to him. On Friday (10/21), I met with Biff and Buffy (*identify collaborators by name*) to discuss possible locations for establishing monitoring stations to support our global change research program. This note summarizes the outcomes of our discussion.

Define the scope of the activities you are reporting. We discussed three scenarios for site selection, based on recommendations from the central NPS Inventory & Monitoring office…. (*It's OK to be a bit informal, as this is an internal document and you can assume that your boss knows the relevant people and documents.*)

Tell him what you decided, and why. We decided that we should site monitoring stations in clusters arrayed over ecotones defined by elevation. Our logic in this is that ….

Importantly, tell him what he needs to do about this. Our recommendation is that the office deploy a field crew next summer to install the sites and collect baseline monitoring data. This will require our budgeting for a standard field crew, along with a RAWS climate station (see I&M documents). We should meet next week to discuss implications for hiring and equipment budgets. *Remember: if you want something to come from your efforts, you must identify exactly what needs to be done and when it needs to be done.*