

Writing a Good Memo – Quick Tips (1.0 – December 2008)

Organizing the Text (The CPQQRT Method)

- Context - Why should this be done?
- Purpose - What difference will this make?
- Quantity - How much output is wanted?
- Quality - What kind of output is wanted?
- Resources - What can the recipient do about it?
- Time - When does it need to be completed by?

Writing the Text

- Give each topic a new paragraph and cover only one topic in each paragraph
- Start each paragraph with a topic sentence
- End each paragraph with a sentence referring back to the topic sentence
- Keep the subject, noun and verb together, putting qualifications and explanations after them
- Place the sentence's emphatic words at the end
- Use only one tense – past, present or future

Simplify the Text

- Never use a figure of speech regularly used in print
- Never use a long word where a short one will do
- If it is possible to cut a word out, always cut it out
 - Avoid using double or triple words when the words mean one idea
 - Use the active voice in place of the passive voice
- Never use a jargon word or foreign phrase where an everyday English equivalent exists
- Keep lines under 65 characters and justify margins for easy reading

Format the Text

- Use examples to illustrate particularly complex ideas
- Used vertical lists where a sentence contains multiple exceptions or conditions
- Use tables to show the relationship between complex materials (example: an if-then table)
- Used emphasis (bold and italics) to highlight important concepts
- Use descriptive headers between sections to separate ideas

