

GUIDANCE on Creating the A3 Memo Report on What is Technical Communication?

POINT 1) You are REPORTING

—that means you are re-presenting information without (as much as that is possible) infusing it with your opinion or bias.

You KNOW and are communicating this knowledge to inform those WHO DO NOT KNOW or do not know as well as you do. You have done the work to go through the information and your report presents a “processed, analyzed, and synthesized” version of the information so it is consumable for your less informed audience.

POINT 2) You are REPORTING on three main questions

1. What is technical communication? (What characterizes it? What is its subject matter? What might distinguish it from other forms of communication? Why even is it important?)
2. What forms does technical communication take? What are the common kinds of texts and tasks do technical communicators engage in?
3. What tools and skills are needed to produce these various kinds of technical communication?

Be sure and make each main section of your “Collected Data” part of your report (each “topic of investigation”) focus on these questions. DON’T SKIP a question. That means you should have three sections in the body of your report. See pg. 549.

POINT 3) Each “Topic of Investigation” section should have three parts

1. Definition—define and explain what this particular topic investigates—i.e. what the question of investigation is and means
2. Findings—here you present “raw” data: that is, you present information from your various sources on the topic of investigation
BE SURE AND PRESENT INFORMATION FROM MOST ALL YOUR SOURCES—at least three for each topic of investigation
3. Interpretation of findings—you will also pull together some understanding of this data in terms of your topic of investigation (the question). How are these various views the same? How different? What seems significant in this data? What are the implications?

POINT 4) The Introduction is important

--hit all the points, but be direct and concise

Here are further glosses on the parts of the introduction

1. Definition, Description, and Background on Report
--i.e. it was generated out of a classroom project in your Tech Writing Class
--short explanation of the project behind the report

2. Purpose of the Report
 - to report on what you have found and learned from the project
 - intended for professor but also to other's uninformed about TC
3. Method of Inquiry
 - describe what the various sources of information are that went into this report and where you got the information that went into this report
4. Limitations of Study
 - here you are open with your audience about the limits of the study (such as limited number of sources and your own limited knowledge coming into it); this is work done by a novice in the field who is just learning about it
5. Working Definitions—not sure? SKIP.
6. Scope of the Inquiry
 - here you post the questions that this report focuses on
 - also tell the reader about the structure and sequence of your report
7. Conclusion
 - present a one sentence (or maybe two) concise, thoughtful, synthesized ANSWER to the questions of inquiry. It is a one sentence version of “what this report adds up to”

Length? Ack—try to keep your Introduction brief. In this two to four page report, I would say no longer than the first page.

POINT 5) ANALYZE and study your data; KNOW IT so you can report on it

I have a suggestion for analyzing your data. Create “data sheets” with one sheet focused on each question (or maybe multiple sheets). Then put the information from our various sources for each question on those separate sheets. Here might be an example:

Question 1: What is technical communication? (What characterizes it? What is its subject matter? What might distinguish it from other forms of communication? Why even is it important?)	
STC Job Ads	Record thoughts and impressions on this site
Textbook	
Web definition(s)	
STC profiles	
Shriver	
Occupational Handbook	
Alex Morones	

How do you make sense of this data? Constant comparison—compare the various bits of information for likenesses and differences and let that guide your conclusions and interpretations.

POINT 6) You must properly “document” your sources in this report following either MLA or APA Documentation form.