

## ENC 3250 | Professional Writing

### Writing Assignment One (Memo)

**TIP: Be sure to watch the accompanying video that gives additional information and helpful hints regarding this assignment.**

## Scenario

### The Help Desk Team

You work as the Managing Supervisor of the IT Help Desk at Colorado Mesa University, a small but growing university. You oversee a team of technicians who specialize in answering calls, e-mails, and in-person requests for support from students, faculty, and staff. They handle everything from setting up e-mail accounts and conducting password resets to helping students learn how to navigate the learning management system, Blackboard. Most of your team is young and fresh out of college themselves, but they're smart and hard-working.

### Problems with E-mail Support

Your latest annual review of the Help Desk's quality surveys has highlighted areas that need improvement. You've noticed that people who e-mail the Help Desk (rather than calling or visiting) are the most unsatisfied with the help they've received. Comments from the surveys suggest that the technicians send e-mails that are difficult to understand – largely because of missing details, confusing instructions, and technical jargon, but sometimes also because of poor grammar and misspellings.

You know that part of the problem is that the team is extremely busy. With the university growing as fast as it is, you have barely enough technicians to meet the volume of support requests you receive. You also know that the technicians were hired primarily for their computer knowledge rather than their communication skills.

There's no time for a long, drawn-out meeting about e-mail etiquette. Also, you don't want to discourage the team – they're doing the best they can, and for most of them, this is their first full-time job. However, you need to address these problems with the team and convey the importance of improving their e-mail writing practices.

You do some research and find a few helpful tips on professional e-mail etiquette, and you decide to share them with the team. Then, as a way of getting them interested in learning more about professional writing, you have the idea to ask the technicians to find other e-mail tips for addition to the Help Desk Handbook.

## Assignment

Using your textbook as a source as well as any credible sources you can find, choose **three** specific suggestions you can make to the technicians about how to write clear, complete, and professional e-mails.

Write a one-page **memo** in which you not only share your three tips but also ask the group to find and compile others for the Help Desk Handbook.

Note: Information obtained from sources should be **paraphrased**, not plagiarized.

**Your memo will be graded on correct use of language and overall professionalism as well as the Red Level Strategies listed below. Please review them before writing and then use them as a checklist for revision.**

Assignments that use strategies well but that do not exhibit appropriate professional use of the language will be given a grade of zero. You will have one week to meet with the Instructor to solve the problem, and a new deadline will be given for a resubmission with reduced grade.

## **Red Level Strategies**

- Establish purpose and audience
- Use simple, concrete, and direct language -- align language and purpose
- Use the direct organization
- Ensure completeness and accuracy
- Write informative and purposeful subject lines

### **Your Revision Checklist**

For your use; does not need to be handed in.

Great	Good	Not sure	Needs revision	Criteria
				Establish purpose and audience (10 pts)
				Use simple, concrete, direct language – align language and purpose (10 pts)
				Use the direct organization (10 pts)
				Ensure completeness and accuracy (10 pts)
				Write informative and purposeful subject lines (10 pts)
				Overall professionalism (50 pts)