The purpose of this memo is to inform you about the Context-Content-Close memo structure and review common elements associated with memo writing. The goals are two-fold: to show you how to make memos effective and to provide an example of a memo style commonly used in the business world. It will benefit you as a reader to begin by reading this memo in its entirety.

Review of Context-Content-Close (CCC)
The previous paragraph you just read sets the context of this memo. The first paragraph forecasts the content and lays out the goals for this memo. The current section is the content. As stated in the context, this section lists key memo writing skills. The final paragraph listed is the close. Note that a close not only summarizes the main points, but also contains a call-to-action. The call-to-action is an important feature of a memo, where the audiences are informed what they need to do next.

Note: Memos are internal documents and are ideally used only within the company. Typically you send reports out to clients. Additionally, while most memos use the CCC technique, it is not the only way to organize a memo. Depending on the given situation and purpose, you will realize that you may need to organize your memo differently. However, it helps to learn the rules of the game before you can adapt them to your need.

General Rules Associated with Memo Writing
This section lists standard characteristics of memos. Note that specific idea chunks are separated clearly under different headings. Breaking ideas into manageable chunks improves readability and accessibility of the memo. Also formatting lists into bullets makes information accessible over using big, chunky paragraphs.

- Know your audience; understanding their levels of expertise and your relation with them informs the memo’s tone
- Use the word “memo” or “memorandum” at the top of the sheet with large, visible formatting. This specifies that action needs be taken about the information presented.
- Typically memos are single-spaced. In the College of Business, we advocate one-page memos, but memos can be multi-paged. The guiding principle is to be concise.
- Avoid hanging titles, i.e. place headings close to the paragraph with which they belong instead of floating them between paragraphs.
- Link the context of your memo directly to the subject line. Avoid over general and vague subject lines. Identify key stakeholders and include the most important ones in your subject line.
- Avoid use of contractions in business writing to prevent confusing your multiple levels of audiences.
- Use parallel structure: begin bulleted lists with the same type of word (verb, noun, etc) in the same tense.
- Include a call-to-action. Most beginning professional communicators forget to include the final section and simply summarize the memo.

This document has provided you details on crafting effective memos. I look forward to reviewing your memos. Please use the above guidelines to craft all your future memos for this class. Make an appointment with me or send me an email <arao@iastate.edu> if you have any questions regarding memo format and content development.