Elements of a Memo

Memos are used within companies for the purpose of reporting information, announcing policy changes or new policies, giving valuable instruction to groups of people, and delegating responsibility. Memos can be sent in hard copy or electronically via an attachment. Memos are formulaic, meaning they have a structure that is universally accepted, containing a heading, text body, and miscellaneous elements.

Heading: If there is no official company heading, keep all the information justified on the left side.

1) Organization’s Name (Without Address).
2) Date: The month is always spelled out.
3) To: Specify the individuals by full name and formal title—groups by title of the group.
4) From: Your name and title. Initial your name after it is printed.
5) Subject: Brief but specific—the purpose statement or what the memo is about.

Text Body: should contain a specific point, a brief summary, and prominent recommendations.

1) Formatted similar to the formatting of a letter and should contain the following information
   a) Point or Purpose of the Memo use infinitive verbs that point to what you want someone to know, to believe, or to do. This is very important. The statement of purpose should start the memo.
   b) Brief summary serves as an organizer for what is to come. It basically summarizes the discussion’s topics.
   c) Discussion which might begin with background information. Facts the reader will need to know for understanding.
   d) Conclusion follows the discussion and ends in good will.
   e) Prominent recommendations or action steps that are bulleted or numbered allow the reader to see an organized plan.
2) Use headings and bullets when appropriate
   a) Informative headings are used to make the memo easier to read.
   b) Bullets or numbers provide the reader with easy organization for quick reading.

Miscellaneous Elements:

1) Notations for identifications, enclosures, and copies.
2) Continuation page will look like the continuation page of a letter.
3) Initial your signature next to your name in the heading.

Note: Memos should be short and focused. Do not put needless information or provide too much back-up information. The most important information should come first and the reasons later. The writers should be explicit about what they want the reader to do.