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CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS

Office of the Director, Navy Staff

OPNAV Correspondence Writing Guide

7 April 2006

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OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR, NAVY STAFF

OPNAV Correspondence Writing Guide

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Director, Navy Staff

Prepared by LT Karl W. Thurlow

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Introduction

This manual provides specific guidance on the different methods of written communication particular to the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations. Every effort should be made to strictly adhere to prescribed formats, as deviation could unnecessarily delay processing for "administrative action" or complete restaffing.

Topics covered in this manual include:

- Action Memo Preparation and Format
- Info Memo Preparation and Format
- Coordination
- Packaging and Routing
- Congressional Correspondence
- Other Formats
  - Congressional Interim Response
  - Point Paper
  - Brief Preparation Guidance
  - Read Ahead
  - Weekly Report

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Action Memo Preparation and Format

The Action Memo is used to request action by or a decision from a Flag Officer or Senior Executive within the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations.

When preparing an Action Memo, consider who the audience is and what information is being communicated. Too often, the real issue is lost in a mess of superfluous trivia requiring more space than is necessary to communicate. To the point statements are key to success. The format for the Action Memo was developed to be a concise, informative, single-page document that provides the principal with enough information to sufficiently understand an issue and be able to make an informed decision, or approve or disapprove a request.

General Format Guidelines

(The Action Memo format template can be found at page 5)

Paper: Plain (not letterhead)

Font: Times New Roman 12 point

Margins: 1-inch (top, bottom, left, and right)

Size: 1 page (maximum)

Date (upper right corner): 5 Oct 05

Dates (in text): 5 October 2005

Bullets: Aligned left
- Bullet Position = 0.0", Text Position = 0.25"
- Sub-Bullet Position = 0.25", Text Position = 0.50"

General Content Guidelines

Use short, concise bulleted statements that provide essential elements. <u>Bullets will be no longer than three lines in length.</u>

- The first bullet communicates what the principal receiving the Action Memo needs to do.

NOTE - The first bullet is often confused with a recommendation. The first bullet is a statement of direction. If a favorable decision is being requested, state it, e.g., "Support implementation of program X, TAB A. "

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- The second and subsequent bullets should provide essential information pertinent to the requested action or decision.

If the information necessary to communicate an action will not fit on a single page in the required format, capture the information in a Point Paper or brief and identify it as a tab in its corresponding bullet.

Do not staple or use clam clips to assemble.

Be brief and to the point, but not overly cryptic in what is being conveyed.

Use TABs to forward necessary and/or additional information.

- TAB A is the "action item" requiring signature or approval.

NOTE - If an Action Memo forwards multiple, similar items that require the same action, tab them as TAB A-1, TAB A-2, etc. For example, the tabs for an Action Memo that forwards 10 letters that cover the same subject, but are going to 10 different individuals should be tabbed, TAB A-1 through TAB A-10.

- TAB B is incoming correspondence (if applicable)
- TAB C is any background material.

NOTE - If there are multiple items, tab each one individually. For example, an OPNAV Instruction and a SECNAV Instruction provide necessary background information for a decision requested in Action Memo. Tab the OPNAV Instruction as TAB C, and tab the SECNAV Instruction as TAB D.

- TAB D (or the last TAB in a package) is the Coordination Page. The Coordination Page format is at page 13.

NOTE - The Coordination Page is always the last page of a package. If the package contains one additional tab, then the Coordination Page would be TAB B. If the package contains 10 additional tabs, then the Coordination Page would be TAB K.

All Action Memos that contain classified material will be marked per the associated marking guidance, commensurate with the level of classification. For material classified CONFIDENTIAL or SECRET, refer to SECNAVINST 5510.36 (Department of the Navy Information Security Program Regulation). For material classified TOP SECRET contact your Special Security Officer for classification guidance.

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ACTION MEMO FORMAT

CLASSIFICATION

¶

Bold → **ACTION MEMO**

¶ Two Spaces

¶ [*Date*]

¶ All CAPS

FOR: CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS

¶

FROM: VADM M. R. SAILOR, [*Directorate Title*]

¶

SUBJECT: ACTION MEMO FORMAT

¶

- The first bullet will tell the principal what action is required. This is different from the entry for the Recommendation.

¶

- Enter any statutorily mandated or programmatically driven due date for the second bullet, if applicable. [*This action is due to the Secretary of Defense by 1 September 2005. TAB B refers.*] Do not enter an "I would like to have this done by" due date.

¶

- [*The total cost of Program X is $5 million. Detailed costing information is at TAB C.*] This bullet is an example of how to identify additional information that is contained in a tab.

¶

RECOMMENDATION: [*Sign TAB A.*] The recommendation supports the first bullet of the Action Memo. Use this example if there is a document for signature.

¶

RECOMMENDATION: [*Approve (or disapprove) "something" by initialing as appropriate. Approved* _____ *Disapproved* _____] Use this example if there is a request that needs to be approved or disapproved. Do not include a "PSM" (please see me) block.

¶

COORDINATION: [*TAB D* (or as applicable)]

¶

ATTACHMENTS: As stated

Two Spaces

All CAPS

Enter classification/declassification information here (UNCLASSIFIED is not a classification)

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Info Memo Preparation and Format

The Info Memo forwards information of an official nature to a Flag Officer or Senior Executive within the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations.

In almost all cases, the Info Memo will be used to forward another document (e.g., a point paper or a brief). The Info Memo should capture, in sufficient detail, the intent of the attached document.

The format for the Info Memo was developed to be a concise, informative, single page document that provides the principal with sufficient information to understand an issue.

General Format Guidelines

(The Info Memo format template can be found at page 9)

Paper: Plain (not letterhead)

Font: Times New Roman 12 point

Margins: 1-inch (top, bottom, left, and right)

Size: 1 page (maximum)

Date (upper right corner): 5 Oct 05

Dates (in text): 5 October 2005

Bullets: Aligned left
- Bullet Position = 0.0", Text Position = 0.25"
- Sub-Bullet Position = 0.25", Text Position = 0.50"

General Content Guidelines

Use short, concise bulleted statements that provide essential elements. Bullets will be no longer than three lines in length.

- The first bullet is used to identify what information is being forwarded and why.
- The second and subsequent bullets should provide essential information supporting the first bullet.

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If the information being forwarded will not fit on a single page in the required format, capture the information in a Point Paper or brief and identify it as a tab in the first bullet.

Do not staple or use clam clips to assemble.

Be brief and to the point, but not overly cryptic in what is being conveyed.

Use TABs to forward necessary, additional information.

TAB D (or the last TAB in a package) is the Coordination Page. The Coordination Page format is at page 13.

NOTE - The Coordination Page is always the last page of a package. If the package contains one additional tab, then the Coordination Page would be TAB B. If the package contains 10 additional tabs, then the Coordination Page would be TAB K.

All Info Memos that contain classified material will be marked per the associated marking guidance, commensurate with the level of classification. For material classified CONFIDENTIAL or SECRET, refer to SECNAVINST 5510.36 (Department of the Navy Information Security Program Regulation). For material classified TOP SECRET contact your Special Security Officer for classification guidance.

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INFO MEMO FORMAT

CLASSIFICATION

¶

Bold → **INFO MEMO**

¶

¶ Two Spaces [*Date*]

¶

FOR: CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS

All CAPS

¶

FROM: VADM M. R. SAILOR, [*Directorate Title*]

¶

SUBJECT: INFO MEMO FORMAT

¶

- The first bullet will identify what information is being forwarded and why. If forwarding a document, identify as TAB A.

¶

- The second and subsequent bullets will provide essential information that relates to, and/or supports the first bullet.

¶

COORDINATION: [*TAB D* (or as applicable)]

¶

ATTACHMENTS: As stated

Two Spaces

All CAPS

Enter classification/declassification information here

CLASSIFICATION

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Coordination

(The Coordination Page format template can be found at page 13)

Coordination on a correspondence package with all appropriate commands, organizations, or OPNAV codes is key to ensuring the timely routing of a package. All necessary coordination will occur at the Action Office level. A correspondence package that is not appropriately coordinated could potentially be delayed in routing, or worse, returned to the Action Office for restaffing. All coordination will be documented on a Coordination Page.

The Coordination Page begins with the Action Officer, and will include all principals who review the package.

NOTE - If LT Jones staffs a package for a Flag Officer, the Flag Officer's name, not LT Jones' name will appear on the Coordination Page.

The following items will be included on the Coordination Page:

Rank and Name (First and Last)

Organization (if OPNAV use only the N-Code)

Commercial Phone Number (use DSN if it is an overseas number)

Date of Coordination

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Action Officer

Coordination Page Format

COORDINATION PAGE

¶

CAPT David Jones, N781, (703) 555-1212	10 Sep 05
¶	
RADM Mike Kendall, COMFLTFORCOM (N2), (757) 556-1111	19 Sep 05
¶	
RDML Davis Smithe, COMUSNAVEUR (N52), DSN 314-628-2222	22 Sep 05
¶	
RADM John Smith, N78, (703) 555-1213	23 Sep 05
¶	
VADM Mark Davis, N6/N7, (703) 555-1214	24 Sep 05
¶	
VADM Mary O'Donnel, DNS, (703) 555-1215	27 Sep 05
¶	
ADM Peter Douglas, VCNO, (703) 555-1216	29 Sep 05
¶	
ADM Harry Young, CNO, (703) 555-1217	2 Oct 05

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Packaging and Routing

The proper assembly of a correspondence package for routing will ensure that the package is routed correctly and that the content of the package is complete.

Correspondence Package Assembly

Correspondence packages will be routed using a Correspondence/Message Routing Folder. The folders are color-coded by classification or type as follows:

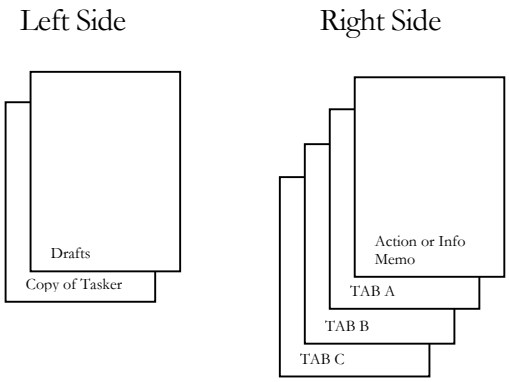
UNCLASSIFIED – Black
CONFIDENTIAL – Blue
SECRET – Red
TOP SECRET – Orange
Congressional – Green

Each correspondence package will be forwarded under an OPNAV Routing Sheet. A sample route sheet is at page 17. Affix the route sheet to the outside cover of the Correspondence/Message Routing Folder.

Assemble the package as follows:

<u>Left Side</u>
Items not part of the official package

<u>Right Side</u>
Info Memo or Action Memo
TABs



Correspondence Packages Routing

Route correspondence packages in a timely manner. The day before a package is due to the final signatory is not the day to put the package in routing. The following is a list of average routing times by office:

DNS – 5 days
VCNO – 3 days
CNO – 3 days
SECNAV – 2 weeks
SECDEF – 2 weeks

Based on the above routing times, it could take as long as 5 weeks to get a package through SECDEF's office. Plan accordingly.

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OPNAV Routing Sheet

SUBJECT:	
DCN:	
ORIGINATOR:	PHONE:
_____ (Directorate Flag Comments) Initial _____ Date _____	
DNS (Comments) Initial _____ Date _____	
VCNO (Comments) Initial _____ Date _____	
DEA (N00AA) Initial _____ Date _____	EA (N00A) Initial _____ Date _____
CNO Comments	

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Congressional Correspondence

(Refer to SECNAVINST 5216.5D for additional guidance.)

Congressional correspondence, regardless of its type, requires prompt attention. Some type of response is required within 48 hours from the date of receipt whether it is a final response or an interim response. If a full reply cannot be made within 48 hours, then provide an interim response. The interim response should give as much relevant information as possible, including the reason why additional time is required, and the date for a final response.

An interim response must be signed by an OPNAV or SECNAV principal when the original correspondence is addressed to the Chief of Naval Operations or the Secretary of the Navy. A copy of the interim response will be posted to the Taskers program, and the due date for the tasker updated accordingly.

Congressional correspondence regarding Senate Armed Service Committee or House Armed Service Committee issues will be coordinated through the Office of Legislative Affairs.

Congressional correspondence regarding Senate Appropriations Committee or House Appropriations Committee issues will be coordinated through the Financial Management and Budget Appropriations Matters Office.

General Format Guidelines

Paper: Letterhead or personal stationary

Font: Times New Roman 12 point

Margins: 1-inch (top, bottom, left, and right)

Size: 1 page (maximum)

Date: October 5, 2005

Paragraph Indentation: 9 spaces or tab stop 0.40"

Signature Block: Center of the page, beginning on the fourth line below "Sincerely."

General Content Guidelines

Use the business letter format from SECNAVINST 5216.5D.

The response should not be loaded with flowery adjectives or technical jargon. Pay close attention to the mechanics of writing (grammar, syntax, spelling, and format). Consider the sensitivities of the intended readers. Always ask, "Is this acceptable for the front page of the *New York Times*?" If the answer is no, rewrite it.

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When responding to a member of the House of Representatives, use the salutation, "Dear Mr. (or Ms.) [Last Name]. If the member is the Chairman of a committee or subcommittee, use the salutation, "Dear Mr. (or Madam) Chairman.

NOTE – When corresponding with a committee or subcommittee Chairman, a courtesy copy must be provided to the committee's ranking minority member using the copy to method.

When responding to a member of the Senate, use the salutation, "Dear Senator [Last Name]. If the member is the Chairman of a committee or subcommittee, use the salutation, "Dear Mr. or (Madam) Chairman.

NOTE – When corresponding with a committee or subcommittee Chairman, a courtesy copy must be provided to the committee's ranking minority member using the copy to method.

The first line of the body of the response shall read, "Thank you for your letter of [date], concerning [issue]. If the response has been delegated, the second line shall read, "As the Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for [Title], I am responding on behalf of the [original addressee].

If the response is going to more than one Senator or Member of Congress the second-to-last sentence of the last paragraph will read, "A similar letter has been sent to [Chairman/Senator/Representative] [Last Name]."

The last sentence of the last paragraph will always read, "If I may be of any further assistance, please let me know."

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CONGRESSIONAL INTERIM RESPONSE FORMAT

The Honorable John Warner
Chairman, Committee on
Armed Services
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Thank you for your letter of [date (November 9, 2005)], concerning [subject].

[Applicable comments or statements [Note 1]]. I anticipate I will be able to provide you a response by [date].

[Appropriate closing, if applicable [Note 2]]. If I may be of any further assistance, please let me know.

Sincerely,

M. G. MULLEN
Admiral, U.S. Navy

Copy to: [Note 3]
The Honorable Carl Levin

Notes

1. If this letter needs to explain or amplify when the final response will be provided, enter that information here.
2. Though the last sentence can stand alone, an appropriate closing should be entered here.
3. Use the "Copy to" block only when providing a Ranking Minority Member a copy of the correspondence sent to the Chairman of a committee or subcommittee. In all other situations, each Senator or Congressman gets their own, original letter.

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POINT PAPER FORMAT

UNCLASSIFIED

15 Jul 05, N81, (703) 692-9026
CDR David E. Jones

Subject: POINT PAPER FORMAT

1. **Executive Issues:**
   - Focused, concise summary statement of the most important issues
     - Why the issue is important for the CNO?
     - What is the Navy position? {and your N Code's position}
     - If this issue has joint implications, what is the position of the other Services?
     - Who are the stakeholders? What are their positions?
   - If an information paper, state why the paper is provided. {e.g. CNO, at the 15 Jul CMM, you requested more information regarding the impact of rotationally crewing DDG's.}

2. **Background:** {Not required if not needed to clarify the main topic}
   - Background amplifying data and information
     - Only, specific, need to know information
   - Historic data that directly applies to the issue (e.g. past programmatic budget decisions)

3. **Discussion:**
   - A discussion of the significant issues
     - Clearly state your objectives and desired effects surrounding this issue
     - Include hard data and facts
     - Both sides should be stated: "tell the rest of the story"
   - Include a statement of assumptions and an assessment of risks pertaining to this issue

4. **Recommendation:**
   - Conclude the point paper with a specific recommended course of action or state "for information only"
   - If a decision paper, state whether there are stakeholders with dissenting opinions

UNCLASSIFIED

- **Notes to standardize CNO Position/Info Papers:**
- ✓ Use ***0.5 inch for top margin and one inch (1") margins on all other sides***
- ✓ Use Arial 12 point for
- ✓ Include Classification
- ✓ Include Date, Name of Action Officer, Office code, and phone number
- ✓ **No** major bullets with greater than 3 lines

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- ✓ **No** more than 2 sub-bullets per major bullet
- ✓ **No** sub-bullets with greater than 3 lines

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CNO **BRIEF** TEMPLATE AND GUIDANCE

General Guidelines

- Simple slides … the presentation supplements the discussion – talk to me
- Capture essence in notes pages
- No more than 5 bullets per slide, low clutter
- Arial font, minimum 16 pt
- Number each slide
- Do not rely upon hyperlinks to artificially increase slide count
- Be mindful of classification markings and caveats
- Ideal brief is normally 10-15 slides
- Timely read aheads are expected
- Meaningful graphics are useful
- End brief with recommendations [do not end with a blank "questions?" Slide]

Recommended # of Slides	Topic
1	**Cover with Title**
1	**Purpose, Objectives → Desired Effects** • Purpose: ➢ Decision brief or Information brief? – The Decisions that need to be made – Time factor – End user – Stakeholders • Results: Objectives & Desired Effects ➢ What are the objectives the subject matter seeks to achieve? ➢ What effects do you hope to achieve?
2	**Background, Assumptions, and Risks** • Background ➢ Methodology • Assumptions ➢ Coordinated with/Evaluated by whom? • Risk Assessment
8	**Main Content / Issues** • Provide details • Provide trade-offs • Specifically address programmatic requirements as appropriate
3	**Options and Recommendations**

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Read **Ahead** Table of Contents

[*SUBJECT or TOPIC*]

[*Date*]
(Include the time if applicable)

TAB	Subject
A	[*text*]
B	[*text*]
C	[*text*]
D	[*text*]
E	[*text*]

{Times New Roman – 16 point}

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7 APRIL 2006

Prepared by: [*Rank Name, Code, Phone*]

READ AHEAD FOR CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS

[*Reason (e.g., Meeting or Briefing)*] with [*Name*]
[*Title*]
[*Date and Time*]
[*Location*]

From: [*Principal*]

Host: [*Principal*]

Issue: [*Text*]

Objectives: [*Text*]

- [*Sub-bullet*]

- [*Sub-bullet*]

Key Attendees:

- [*Identify Individual*]

- [*Identify Individual*]

{Times New Roman – 12 point}

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Background on Key Issues

[*SUBJECT or TOPIC*]

[*Item*]

•

•

[*Item*]

•

•

[*Item*]

•

•

{Limit bullets to no more than three lines}

{Times New Roman – 12 point}

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Talking Points

[*SUBJECT or TOPIC*]

[*Item*]

•

•

[*Item*]

•

•

[*Item*]

•

•

{Limit bullets to no more than three lines}

{Times New Roman – 12 point}

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Other-Related Issues

[*Item*]

-
-

[*Item*]

-
-

[*Item*]

-
-

{Limit bullets to no more than three lines}

{Times New Roman – 12 point}

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[CODE] WEEKLY REPORT – [3 MARCH 2006 (WEEK ENDING DATE)]

Title. The week ending date for the title line above should be the Friday the report is submitted. It is not a date span for the entire week.
Title. Each paragraph or topic will have a title that is bolded and underlined. Paragraphs should flow one right after the other and not be separated by a line. This paragraph and the one above are an example of the format for paragraphs.

General Guidelines
Format:
One page maximum
Margins:
Top, Bottom, and Right = 0.5"
Left = 1.0"
Font:
Times New Roman (12 pt), *or*
Verdana (10 pt)
Spacing:
Do not insert a hard return between paragraphs
Do not compress line spacing
Do not indent
Only use bullets if adding "sub" items to a paragraph

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