

# Daybooks, Memos, E-mail

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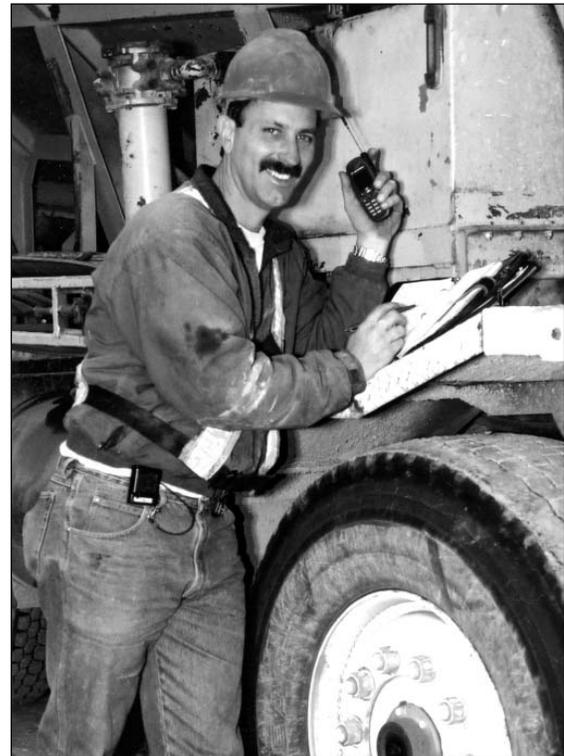
## Introduction

Writing such as that found in daybooks, memos and e-mail has as its primary purpose to keep track of information and to help workers stay organized. A focus on clear writing is important when workers convey short messages to which readers can quickly respond. Lists and notes are important vehicles for clear communication and are addressed in this chapter as well.

Daybooks or organizers are used to schedule appointments, track travel expenses and make occasional notes and lists. Daybooks are also used to record information which will be used in other documents. For example, the information in a daybook may be used to create an invoice. Brief notes in a daybook may be used as memory prompts for an action plan or progress report.

Memos and e-mail allow communication when a face-to-face meeting isn't possible or necessary. In general, memos and e-mail are used for shorter communications both inside and outside an organization.

Daybooks, memos and e-mail are probably the most common types of writing at work. These formats are used to organize and remember details, to keep a record, to document changes or to pass on information.



*A slinger truck driver records job dispatches in his day book. He notes details such as names and addresses of job sites, amounts of material and the number of trips.*

## Analyzing Purpose and Audience of Entry Forms

Answer the four questions below as you read each example of how workers use entry forms.

1. What is the purpose of the writing task? There may be more than one purpose.
  - To organize/to remember
  - To keep a record/to document
  - To inform/to request information
  - To persuade/to justify a request
  - To present an analysis or comparison
  - To present an evaluation or critique
  - To entertain
  
2. Who is the audience for this form?
  
3. Why do they require this information?
  
4. What do you think are some possible consequences of not completing the form correctly?
  
5. What information is required to complete the entry form? Identify examples of primary and secondary information.

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## Features of Logbooks and Reports

Logbooks differ from daybooks in purpose. Daybooks usually function as a scheduler while a logbook is a report that is articulated to time intervals and is organized for that purpose. What is written is usually focused on a specific task such as the operation of a piece of machinery or the sequential events of a shift. Unlike a daybook, the logbook is a shared document. It is likely to be reviewed by workers on different shifts, from different departments, quality control workers, supervisors and others. Written entries consist of observations, often factual in nature. The language used can be brief and include abbreviated terms that are unique to the organization. Longer narrative text is used to explain unusual events or problems. Attention to details that may be significant in a historical sense over time is an important aspect of logbook writing tasks.

### Logbooks

#### *Purpose*

Logbooks are used primarily to record and document information. Entries in logbooks are the observed facts or evidence that are recorded at regular or irregular time intervals. For example, logbooks are used to document incidents that occur during a shift including details such as the reasons for downtime. These records help other workers analyze the ‘facts’ to identify trends and to find ways to improve processes. Total Quality Management, a system popularized in manufacturing in Japan, is a management style that is being adopted in North America in manufacturing and other sectors. Fundamental to this system, is documentation. Every process that can be measured and evaluated undergoes scrutiny for continuous improvement. These quality efforts rely on the information recorded in formats such as logs.

Not only are management styles influencing how records are used, increasing legal requirements make writing in logs increasingly important. Provincial health and safety regulations demand that equipment and vehicle logbooks are kept on file for reference in case of an accident. These logbooks become part of the legal documentation required to prove or disprove a claim.

*“Logbooks are an essential part of the record keeping process. A workplace diary or logbook is the best piece of documentation and is critical in labour relation and safety issues. For example, if a worker is regularly not following safety regulations, you need a record of exactly what violations occurred when. Otherwise it is difficult to prove.” - Small Business Owner*



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## Writing Style

Policies often contain a combination of text and lists. Lists help to summarize and draw attention to important information. One common list style is to use a *lead-in* or *stem* phrase, which is followed by a list of phrases, each of which completes the stem. The phrases in the list should be parallel in structure to facilitate comprehension. For example, all the phrases in a list could begin with verbs in the same tense. The phrases must also connect grammatically with the lead-in phrase and be punctuated appropriately.

The following excerpt from a mining company's Code of Conduct illustrates this list writing style.

**A company is deemed to be in a “special relationship” with Placer Dome if any one of the following conditions are met:**

- i. Placer Dome owns directly or indirectly 10% or more of the shares of that company; or**
- ii. Placer Dome is proposing to:**
  - a. make a take-over bid for that company,**
  - b. effect a merger or business combination with it,**
  - c. acquire a substantial interest in that company or its property, or**
  - d. otherwise enter into a transaction that is material to that company.**

*Code of Conduct, Placer Dome Inc.  
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Policies vary from formal to casual in tone. Because policies tend to be broad statements, writers sometimes intentionally *soften* the language so that the policy covers all the issues it needs to address, but in a way that doesn't overly restrict future action.

*“A Policy Statement (on land-use) provides the negotiating text for further phases of planning. It addresses issues broadly and supports all the areas that will require attention and resources devoted to them at more detailed levels. It represents some consensus about the quadrant where we want to shoot the arrow.” - City Planner*

In politically charged arenas such as land-use planning, policy writers choose wording carefully in order to elicit a consensus among diverse stakeholders. They choose words that allow for flexible interpretation such as “*should*” rather than “*shall*”, “*encourage*” rather than “*ensure*”, or “*where feasible*” rather than “*as per zoning regulation 14.5*”. When they can't specify who is responsible for certain actions, they use the passive tense; instead of “*the City shall do such and such*”, they might write “*such and such should be pursued in xyz locations*”.