

Informative Headings Improve Readability

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Topic Headings Emphasize the Generic Category

Probably the most common type of heading, topic headings give only general information such as "introduction" or "results." Topic headings are of minimal benefit to the reader because they are so general.

I. Introduction

- A. Authorization
- B. Purpose
- C. Sources
- D. Preview

II. Community Attitudes

- A. Plant location
- B. Labor policy

Descriptive Headings Provide Information About the Topic

Going a step further than topical headings, descriptive headings actually tell us something about the information being presented. Rather than simply telling us that we are about to read an introduction, the descriptive heading tells us something about the content of the introduction. For example, the sample below tells us that the introduction will address a problem.

I. Introduction of the Problem

- A. Authorization by Board
- B. Purpose of Building Mill
- C. Sources of Information & Stats
- D. Preview of Final Report

II. Community Attitudes Toward Mill

- A. Favorable Reaction of Cities Toward Mill
- B. Mixed Attitude Toward Labor Policy

Informative Headings Give the Most Information to a Reader

Informative headings look more like a topic sentence than a traditional heading. They include both a noun and a verb. The primary advantage to using informative headings is that they allow the reader to quickly skim and extract the core ideas in the memo. In other words, the informative heading makes the reader's job easier.

I. Woolen Mill Moves to San Marcos

- A. Board Authorizes Move
- B. Location Reduces Cost and Convenience Problems
- C. Government Data Supports San Marcos Choice
- D. Plan for Move Solves Problem

II. Communities Have Mixed Reaction to Woolen Mills

- A. All Cities Favor New Mill
- B. Attitudes Toward Labor Policy Mixed

Can you see how informative headings provide the reader with more and useful information?

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