

THE SITUATION ROOM ★ ★ ★ EXPERIENCE

HOW TO READ A MEMORANDUM

Correspondence within the government is often formatted like the following example. This worksheet will help you understand how to read all parts of this type of correspondence to prepare for the Situation Room Experience.

Find receiver, sender, subject, etc. here

Note: Text like "Confidential" that denotes level of secrecy around the message

4535

MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

July 1, 1983

CONFIDENTIAL

ACTION

MEMORANDUM FOR: WILLIAM P. CLARK

THROUGH: CHARLES P. TYSON

FROM: PAULA DOBRIANSKY

SUBJECT: Request for Presidential Photo Opportunity: European Parliament President Piet Dankert

The main message

State has forwarded a memorandum (Tab II) requesting that a photo opportunity be granted with the President for European Parliament President Piet Dankert early in November. As this would be Dankert's first official visit to the U.S. since his election as President of the European Parliament on February 19, 1982, I recommend that this request be given favorable consideration. A Schedule Proposal is attached at Tab I.

Al Myer concurs.

RECOMMENDATION

That you forward the Schedule Proposal at Tab I.

Approve _____ Disapprove _____

Notification of additional attachments to the message

Attachments:

Tab I Schedule Proposal

Tab II State memorandum, June 29, 1983

cc: Jack Matlock
Peter Scharrer

Note the "declassified" stamp that makes the document available for the public to read

DECLASSIFIED
Sec. 3.4(b), E.O. 12958, as amended
White House Guidelines, 8/11/11, 11/12/10
BY NARA DATE 11/12/10

CONFIDENTIAL
Declassify on: OADR

Recipient approves/disapproves a suggestion

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The term “Breaking News” means you are meant to be watching new information about an event that is happening right now.

1. Summarize the “Breaking News” report you just watched.
2. Did the reporter accurately reflect what was happening in the background?
3. Did you bring previous knowledge or preconceived ideas to your experience? Did this influence your experience of the material?
4. What are the differences between a breaking news broadcast and a pre-recorded report? What might change in the images, content, situation, and level of impact of each?
5. What were some of your emotions while watching the video, and what prompted them?
6. Do you think the report was one-sided or did it explain differing viewpoints on the situation?
7. What two or more questions would you like to ask about the situation you just watched unfold?

HOW TO READ A BILL

Bill – proposed law, amendment to a law, or amendment to the Constitution

Legislative session of the bill:
A new Congress number starts every 2 years. The 114th Congress is in year 2015. Within each Congress, there are two sessions.

The bill number is assigned by the House or Senate clerk. HR or HB indicates a House bill, while S or SB indicates a Senate bill. A bill's number is unique to it throughout the legislative session.

Date of proposal

Authors followed by the committee the bill was referred to

Stated purpose

Title - the short title of a bill provides a comprehensive, clear brief summary of the subject of a major portion of the text. Titles should not conceal or mislead the readers.

Sections:
If several topics must be covered in a bill, it is divided into various sections.

Subsections:
Within sections, it is sometimes appropriate to designate further subsections (for clarification) indicated by (a), (b), (c) and then (1), (2), etc.

COMMITTEE PRINT NO. 21
MAY 14, 1965
(Committee Amendments to Committee Print)

80TH CONGRESS
1st Session
H. R. 6400

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
MARCH 17, 1965
Mr. COLLIER introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary
[On all the part struck through and insert the part printed in italics]

A BILL
To enforce the fifteenth amendment to the Constitution of the United States.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*
3 That this Act shall be known as the "Voting Rights Act of
4 1965".
5 SEC. 2. No voting qualification or prerequisite to voting,
6 or standard, practice, or procedure shall be imposed or applied
7 by any State or political subdivision to deny or abridge the
8 right of any citizen of the United States to vote on account of
9 race or color.

J. 47-623—1

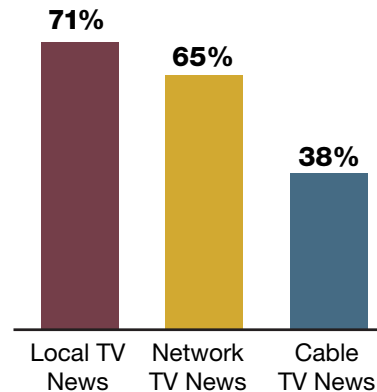
HOW TO READ TABLES AND CHARTS

Know what is being measured: look at the graph title, x & y axis, and other labels or keys to familiarize yourself with the content

Look for sub-categories or keys that allow for further analysis of graph or chart data. For example, the color coding in these two graphs allows for easier differentiation, and the sub-categories of heavy, light, and medium TV viewers in minutes watched per day clarifies meaning in the second graph.

TV News Viewing

Percent of Americans Reached



Source: Nielsen data, February 2013

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What are the units used in measurement? (Hours versus minutes is a big difference!)

Test your graph reading skills:

Can you state one data piece from the graph?

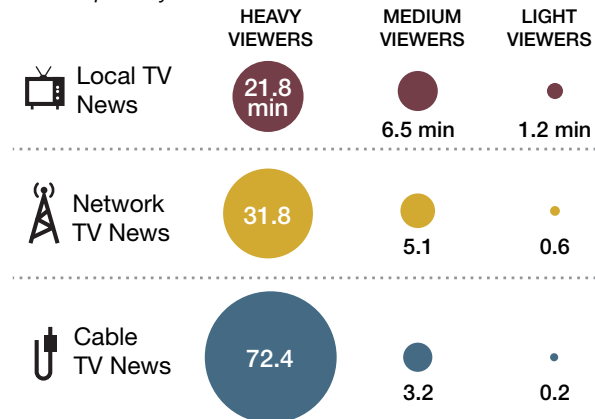
Example: Heavy TV viewers for Local TV News watch about 21.8 minutes of it per day.

Look for short-term and long-term trends or surprising data to make inferences and generalizations.

(Does anything double or show dramatic change? What could have caused this?)

Average Time News Consumers Spend on Various Platforms

Minutes per Day



Source: Nielsen data, February 2013

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HOW TO READ A CABLE

Cable - the term given to a confidential message.

The diagram illustrates the components of a cable message. Red boxes on the left label the parts of the cable, with arrows pointing to the corresponding text in the sample cable on the right.

Labels and their corresponding cable fields:

- The situation and subject matter of the cable:** Points to the **SITUATION: PRES** and **SUBJECT CATEGORY: ASSASSIN** fields.
- Date:** Points to the **DATE 04/28/81//** field.
- All the people who will get the cable:** Points to the **TO ALL DIPLOMATIC POSTS FLASH** and **AMEMBASSY KABUL FLASH 5016** fields.
- The subject of the cable:** Points to the **SUBJECT: STATEMENT TO FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS** field.
- The message:** Points to the numbered list of statements (1, 2, 3) starting with **1. THE PRESIDENT HAS UNDERGONE SURGERY...**
- The author:** Points to the **HAIG** and **BT** fields.

Sample Cable Text:

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SENSITIVE
PAGE 18 SITUATION(S) MESSAGE(S) LISTING
DATE 04/28/81//

SITUATION: PRES
SUBJECT CATEGORY: ASSASSIN
MESSAGE / ANNOTATION:

MESSAGE:
FLASH
Z 310103Z MAR 81 ZFF4
FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO ALL DIPLOMATIC POSTS FLASH
AMEMBASSY KABUL FLASH 5016
AMEMBASSY CONAKRY FLASH 5307
UNCLAS STATE 080707

E.O. 12065:IN/A

TAGS:PDIP
SUBJECT: STATEMENT TO FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS
1. THE PRESIDENT HAS UNDERGONE SURGERY FOR THE GUNSHOT
WOUND RECEIVED IN THE ATTEMPTED ASSASSINATION THIS AFTER-
NOON IN WASHINGTON. THE BULLET HAS BEEN REMOVED. THE
PRESIDENT HAS BEEN REMOVED TO POST-OPERATIVE CARE, IS IN
GOOD CONDITION WITH PROGNOSIS EXCELLENT.
2. PLEASE INFORM YOUR GOVERNMENT OF THIS LATEST DEVELOP-
MENT AND CONTINUE TO REASSURE YOUR HOST THAT THE CONTINUITY
OF OUR GOVERNMENT IS ASSURED.
3. WE WILL KEEP YOU CLOSELY INFORMED AS EVENTS WARRANT.
HAIG
BT

***** WHSR COMMENTS *****

RA,NAN,CDL,VP
SEA

PSN:003815 DTG:310103 TOR:090011
SENSITIVE
  
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