

Tips for Improving Your Newsletter Submission

- 1. There's more than one way to spell "John Smith."** As elementary as it may sound, double-check the spelling of **all** names that appear in your article and correctly identify your sources' affiliations (company name, school, hometown, etc.). If readers notice that you spelled someone's name wrong, it calls into question the accuracy of all other information in the article. When you're interviewing sources for a story, never be bashful about asking them to spell their name. All the Jon Smythes of the world will thank you.
- 2. Keep it brief.** Blame it on *USA Today* if you want, but research shows that most of today's time-stressed readers are much more likely to turn their attention to short, easily digestible articles — especially in newsletters. Your challenge is to pack your article with useful tidbits of information.
- 3. Sidebars are your friends.** Oftentimes, writers and editors are faced with the dilemma of having *too much* good information. When you have compelling information that doesn't quite fit or takes too much focus away from the main thread of your article, consider including it in a sidebar instead. This keeps your main story shorter (see Tip #2) without interrupting its flow, is more visually appealing and increases the likelihood that readers will focus on this "story within a story" (the sidebar) instead of simply scanning over the information or skipping it altogether. In fact, sidebars are often more popular with readers than the main articles.
- 4. Two short sentences are usually better than one long one.** Long sentences tend to get convoluted, bog down an article's flow and discourage readers from continuing. You don't have to eliminate all long sentences, but be wary of letting them overpopulate your prose. As a general rule, when you have a sentence of 40 words or more, look for ways to break it into two shorter, crisper sentences.
- 5. Read your stories out loud.** To determine how "smooth" an article's writing is, simply read it out loud. If you stumble when reading certain portions of the article aloud (often because Tip #4 has been ignored), it may indicate that some rewriting is necessary.
- 6. Cover the basics.** You'll provide a solid foundation for your newsletter (and a solid knowledge base for your readers) by ensuring that each of your articles answers the following questions: who, what, when, where, why and how.
- 7. Personalize your stories.** We're all naturally curious about what is happening in other people's lives (look no further than reality TV and Internet blogging). Whenever possible, "give a face" to your stories by profiling someone personally affected or engaged by the problem or topic you're covering in the article. Readers are much more likely to get hooked into an article that presents a strong personal element.

Adapted from "15 Tips for Improving Your Newsletter"
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