

# Writing/Style Guide

## THE PENMEN PRESS

Based on the Associated Press Stylebook



Jon Boroshok, Faculty Adviser  
Southern New Hampshire University  
**Fall 2020**

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## Formatting And Submitting Articles:

When writing Penmen Press articles, it is assumed you will be using Microsoft Word or Google Docs. No PDF files please! Please follow these guidelines:

- **MARGINS:** Set the margins at one-inch all around. This is not the default setting. If you don't know how to set margins, please ask an Editor or Adviser for help or find a video on YouTube. Please make the effort!
- **FONT:** Use 11-point Arial. *Do not* use any other font. Proofread carefully to be sure!
- **SPACING:** Use double spacing. The “before” and “after” spacing must be set to zero. If you're not sure what that means, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CkE9WaKsZqE#t=72>
- **Use a single space (not two) after each period.** Proofread your work for consistency.
- **Skip a line between paragraphs for white space. Do not indent paragraphs.**
- Name the document in a way that's clear to your editor. It's usually “*Your Last Name - Topic of Article.*”
- Put your name and contact information (phone and email address) in the upper left corner so your editor can reach you quickly.
- Articles are to be emailed as attached Microsoft Word files only.
- Make sure your email has an appropriate subject line.
- The article should be at least 300 words unless you have cleared it with your editor first.

## Photos

**Every article should have an original, high resolution photo.** Use the camera on your phone! The Penmen Press also has a good quality digital camera that you can use.

Take a photo, make sure you write down who is in it (or where it is), and **verify spelling of names** and places. Submit the photo with your article.

**Thinking of finding a photo online?** Please don't! There are copyright laws we must obey.

Read this first:

<http://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/copyright-fair-use-and-how-it-works-for-online-images/>

## Important Attention To Detail For All Articles



- **Write in third person!** The only times words like “I,” “we,” “you,” “our,” or “your” should appear in an article is if someone is being quoted and clearly identified.
- Even reviews, which are clearly the opinion of the writer, are stronger when written in third person although that’s more of an option.
- Verify spelling of names (people, companies, products, places). Ask them! There is no excuse for a spelling error on a proper noun.
- Avoid unnecessary words or redundancy: "Nick is currently a student at Southern New Hampshire University, majoring in business." "Currently" is implied. If Nick *is* a student, he is *currently* a student. Drop the word “currently.”
- **Don't start articles with the date.** What's the most important part of your story? Start with that! Starting with date just shows it's old information.
- List company/school locations the first time you mention them. For example, "The New Hampshire Fisher Cats (Manchester, NH)" the first time, and then just "The Fisher Cats." **You can ignore this rule when discussing SNHU.**
- **Use a single space (not two spaces) between sentences.** Proofread for consistency.
- Always mention names - be specific. Don't just say "Grace works at a supermarket." Say "Grace Daniels works at Market Basket, a supermarket in Concord, NH." Don't just say "Chris is from southern New Hampshire." Name the town. "Chris Smith is from Nashua, NH." By the way, “Long Island” is not a town, it's a land mass in New York (and pronounced “Lawn Guyland”). Cape Cod is not a town either - it's just a land mass. Name the actual town.
- Write short paragraphs (no more than about three sentences long). Start a new one at any segue or transition. A one-sentence paragraph is very common - see most articles in a daily paper such as The Boston Globe or The New Hampshire Union Leader.
- Headlines: A headline should be in either all capital letters or at least have the first letter of EVERY word capitalized. There should be no punctuation at the end of a headline. The one possible exception to this would be quotation marks. Challenge yourself - limit your headline to no more than eight words and/or 100 characters (less than Twitter!).
- **Put the most important information first** - write for folks with short attention spans. After you're done writing it, read through it twice – see if you can cut anything out.
- When writing about someone, mention that person by full name the first time (Nikki Fain), and by **last name only** (Fain) each subsequent time.

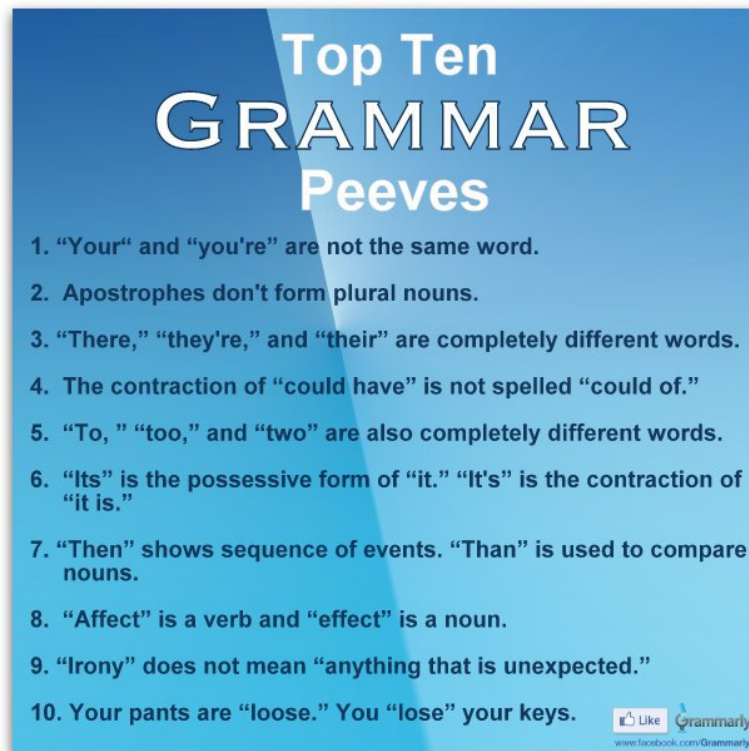
- Give your writing the "So what?" test. How might the reader react?
- Proofread - spell check won't pick up everything.
- The **punctuation** ALWAYS goes **inside the quotation marks**.
- If using an abbreviation or acronym, you must spell it out the first time, and put the acronym in parentheses unless it's very common knowledge. For example, "National Basketball Association (NBA)." You may then use the acronym alone - "NBA" - each time after that.
- **Since we're a SNHU paper - you don't have to spell out Southern New Hampshire University.**

## NUMBERS

- Numbers one through nine get spelled out. Numbers 10 and up are expressed numerically. This does NOT apply to time or money. Always use numerals for time or money (e.g., 2 P.M. or \$3). Make sure you use commas in dollar amounts over \$1,000. Make sure you have the right amount of digits, or it can be a very expensive error!
- Numerals are preferred for all distances and dimensions. Some examples include: She ran 5 miles; he sank a 4-foot shot; the room is 3 feet wide and 7 feet high. The AP Stylebook has a four-page section with 200 examples of when to use figures or not. You can just follow what's been presented in our guide, the document you're now reading.
- Exceptions to the Rule of 10: Use only numerals for ...
  - Ages
  - Amounts of money. (Example: \$2. Include the \$. Do not write the word "dollars.")
  - Dates. (Avoid ordinals - it's September 7, *not September 7th*.)
  - Distance and dimensions (see above paragraph).
  - Percentages (but spell out "percent," instead of "%" for numbers one thru nine).
  - Sports scores. (The Bruins beat the Canucks 4-3.)
  - Certain political/military usages.
- Time:
  - 10 a.m. (Not 10:00 a.m.). Note the period after the letter.
  - Noon and midnight (not 12 p.m. or 12 a.m.)
  - Don't use year with current dates. Class ends December 17 (not December 17, 2020).

## Important AP Style Items

- “Internet” is only capitalized when it’s the first word in a sentence.
  - It’s “website,” not “Web site” or “web site.”
  - It’s “Email” or “email.” The AP Stylebook doesn’t hyphenate this word.
  - It’s “**nonprofit**.” *Do not hyphenate the word!*
  - People who give money to nonprofits are “donors,” not “donators.”
  - **The punctuation always goes inside the quotation marks.**
- **Telephone Numbers**
    - Use figures. The forms: 212-621-1500, 621-1500. *Don’t put the area code in parentheses. I am overruling the AP Stylebook here.*
    - *Do not use period/decimal points (e.g., 617.824-2400). Use hyphens.*
    - For international numbers, use the parentheses around the country code and the city code (where required): (44-20) 7353-1515.
    - If extension numbers are provided: ext. 2, ext. 4071, use a comma to separate the main number from the extension. Example: 212-621-1500, ext. 200.



# ETHICS, BALANCE, THOROUGHNESS, AND OBJECTIVITY

## *How to Create Balance in Journalism*

Borrowed and edited from:

[http://www.ehow.com/how\\_8703308\\_create-balance-journalism.html#ixzz2puJ51fcb](http://www.ehow.com/how_8703308_create-balance-journalism.html#ixzz2puJ51fcb)

Balance in journalism is considered one of the most important characteristics of any news piece. Balance means a lack of bias, and it's crucial that the Penmen Press covers all news in an impartial manner. This means that as a reporter, you should, whenever possible, demonstrate the opposing viewpoints at play in a story. Remember that there are often more than two sides to any story.

So how do you do it?

### **Instructions:**

Interview multiple sources for your story. A source is an individual whom you quote in the article. A balanced news story contains quotes from at least two individuals. A story on a new SNHU baseball field, for example, might include viewpoints from SNHU administrators, the Athletic director, baseball coach, baseball players, athletes/coaches from other teams that don't get a new field, SNHU baseball fans, and even students who thought the money should have been directed to a new theatre instead.

Talk to the silent majority, or the group of people who may remain silent on an issue. News media often interview people with polar opposite viewpoints -- politics being a prime example -- despite the fact that most people hold a view that they might not express publicly. When the vehemently supportive and opposed are the loud minorities, it is the job of the news media to invoke the silent majority.

Avoid unnamed sources whenever possible. In extreme cases, journalists may cite an anonymous source. In certain instances in which privacy is of extreme importance this may be acceptable, but reporters should generally avoid calling upon sources who are not under pressure to be accountable for what they say.

Write the story from a neutral point of view. It is the job of the journalist to dictate the direction the story goes, so she should determine an angle that does not side with one party. The journalist should let the reader make a decision for himself; rather than assign value.

**Your job as a journalist is to present the facts without making yourself part of the story.**

# **Your Journalistic Mission On *All* Stories**

*Borrowed liberally and outright copied from [www.ethicsadviceforjournalists.org/code.asp](http://www.ethicsadviceforjournalists.org/code.asp)*

**The journalist's duty is to further those ends by seeking truth and providing a fair and comprehensive account of events and issues. Conscientious journalists strive to serve the public with thoroughness and honesty. When writing a Penmen Press article:**

- Test the accuracy of information from all sources and exercise care to avoid inadvertent errors. Deliberate distortion is never permissible.
- Make an extra effort to reach all parties involved/affected by news stories to give them the opportunity to respond to allegations of wrongdoing. Try to reach them during normal business hours (9 AM-5 PM Monday through Friday). Don't expect to reach SNHU employees outside of these hours,
- Identify sources whenever feasible. The public is entitled to as much information as possible on sources' reliability.
- Always question sources' motives, and then speak with the Penmen Press Faculty Adviser before promising anonymity. Clarify conditions attached to any promise made in exchange for information. Keep promises.
- Make certain that headlines, news teases and promotional material, photos, video, audio, graphics, sound bites and quotations do not misrepresent or distort anything.
- Never distort the content of news photos or video. Image enhancement for technical clarity is always permissible. Label montages and photo illustrations.
- Avoid misleading re-enactments or staged news events. If re-enactment is necessary to tell a story, label it.
- Avoid undercover or other surreptitious methods of gathering information except when traditional open methods will not yield information vital to the public. Use of such methods should be explained as part of the story
- **Never plagiarize.** Make sure you understand the definition of plagiarism and copyrights. When in doubt, ask the Penmen Press Faculty Adviser.
- Avoid stereotyping by race, gender, age, religion, ethnicity, political views, occupation, geography, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance or social/economic status.
- Support the open exchange of views, even views you might find repugnant.
- Give voice to the voiceless. Official and unofficial sources can be equally valid.
- Know the difference between advocacy and news reporting. Analysis and commentary should be labeled and not misrepresent fact or context.
- Distinguish news from advertising and shun hybrids that blur the lines between the two.
- Recognize a special obligation to ensure that the public's business is conducted in the open and that government records are open to inspection.

## **Minimize Harm**

Ethical journalists treat sources, subjects and colleagues as human beings deserving of respect.

- Show compassion for those who may be affected adversely by news coverage. Use special sensitivity when dealing with children and inexperienced sources or subjects.
- Be sensitive when seeking or using interviews or photographs of those affected by tragedy or grief.
- Recognize that gathering and reporting information may cause harm or discomfort. Pursuit of the news is not a license for arrogance.
- Recognize that private people have a greater right to control information about themselves than do public officials and others who seek power, influence or attention. Only an overriding public need can justify intrusion into anyone's privacy.
- Show good taste. Avoid pandering to lurid curiosity.



- Be cautious about identifying juvenile suspects or victims of sex crimes.
  - Be judicious about naming criminal suspects before the formal filing of charges.
  - Balance a criminal suspect's fair trial rights with the public's right to be informed.
- 

### **Act Independently**

Journalists should be free of obligation to any interest other than the public's right to know.

- Avoid conflicts of interest, real or perceived.
- Remain free of associations and activities that may compromise integrity or damage credibility.
- Refuse gifts, favors, fees, free travel and special treatment, and shun secondary employment, political involvement, public office and service in community organizations if they compromise journalistic integrity.
- Disclose unavoidable conflicts.
- Be vigilant and courageous about holding those with power accountable.
- Deny favored treatment to advertisers and special interests and resist their pressure to influence news coverage.
- Be wary of sources offering information for favors or money; avoid bidding for news.

### **Be Accountable**

Journalists are accountable to their readers, listeners, viewers and each other.

### **Journalists should:**

- Clarify and explain news coverage and invite dialogue with the public over journalistic conduct.
- Encourage the public to voice grievances against the news media.
- Admit mistakes and correct them promptly.
- Expose unethical practices of journalists and the news media.
- Abide by the same high standards to which they hold others.

## MORE ABOUT PHOTOGRAPHY

### *Images, Images Everywhere...But Can I Use Them?*

By [Laura Mossteller](#)

With one simple search, we find an endless lineup of enticing images. But can we grab the best ones, drop them into our work and call it a day? As we uneasily suspected, the answer is no. Creative work is copyrighted unless the artist gives permission to use it.

Image [copyright](#) protects the creator from having others use a part of the image, manipulate the image or hire someone else to recreate the exact image.

This may sound discouraging, but wait; don't skim past this article just yet. There are ways to avoid copyright infringement and source images by following the proper guidelines.

- 1) Contact the creator and ask for permission to use their work.

2) Use a Creative Commons image. [Creative Commons](#) is a nonprofit organization that provides free copyright licenses to artists who want their work to be shared without always having to give direct permission. Artists refine their copyright terms from having *all rights reserved* to *some rights reserved*. There are [different levels](#) of Creative Commons licensing. You must [review the restrictions](#) and ask the questions:

- Can the work be modified?
  - Can the work be used for commercial purposes?
  - Is the work restricted to a specific country?
  - Is author attribution required?
- 3) Use a [Public Domain](#) image. Public Domain images are not subject to copyright law - their copyrights have expired, or they were never protected by copyright in the first place. Rules for public domain images vary among countries, but in general a Public Domain image is:
    - Any image created before 1923.
    - Any image created as work for the U.S. Federal government. For Example, most [NASA](#) images are in the public domain.
    - Any image that has an expired copyright (the time it takes to expire depends on when the work was originally created).

So there you have it – the image usage situation is not so dire after all. And to leave you with even better news, here are some links to resources that offer great Creative Commons and Public Domain images.

[Creative Commons](#);  
[Wikimedia](#);  
[Flickr](#);  
[USA Government Graphics](#);  
[Public Domain Pictures](#);

