

The Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Barber Shop Quartet Singing in America, Inc.

Bulletin Editors Manual

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A service of PROBE

Editor's Note:

Literary purists among us may find this manual appalling. They may be offended at my breezy approach to grammar, style and punctuation. (I hope the spelling is okay.) My intention is to help bulletin editors with what is written, not how it is written.

So if this manual is a bit slangy; a bit irreverent of pure grammatical form; sometimes over- (or under-) punctuated, let it be. The intent is to be cheerfully informative, not ponderously correct.

Layout and Reproduction judges may not care much for the page layouts in here, especially those bottom margins of varying size. There are several reasons for them. One reason is to provide space for written notes. The other reasons are the editor's private business.

Editors, do not take this manual for a role model. Just open the pages, stick in your thumb, pull out a plum and say, "Hey, I can use that!"

*Herb Bayles
Far Western District
December, 1992*

It's time for a new model

The previous issue of the Bulletin Editors Manual was released in 1981, a year when the IBM Selectric typewriter was still leading-edge technology and only a handful of *avant garde* editors were venturing into the new world of computers. The 1981 Manual spoke of gelatin and fluid (spirit) duplicators and mimeograph machines, and noted that photocopy machines are too expensive for chapters to own, and reproductions from them are more costly than from other methods.

Without belaboring the point, it's clearly time for a new model of the Bulletin Editors Manual. Although the age of computers has most certainly arrived, this issue recognizes that many editors and editors-to-be still have the old Smith-Corona, Royal or Underwood manual typewriter on the desk, and have no desire to change. Hence, it still addresses the time-honored methods they might use to assemble a bulletin for print.

Tools and techniques for editors with a computer on their desk will be discussed, but not in detail. Present-day software for word processing and desk top publishing is too diverse—it changes almost *daily*—to be covered in a manual like this.

All editors and editors-to-be, however, may benefit from discussions herein of production techniques. They come from the accumulated knowledge of some of the Society's finest editors.

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Part 1

Why A Chapter Bulletin?

For several reasons, but primarily for the benefit of the chapter members. Benefit that accrues when the editor knows and pursues his purposes. They are:

1. **INFORM** of coming events. List their nature, place and time, and supply the small but important details needed for chapter members to participate effectively in them.
2. **RECORD** recent barbershop events. Your Members' interest in barbershop does not end with "Keep America Singing," each week. They will always find interest in accounts of conventions, contests, HEPs, COTS, Harmony Colleges; things that occur outside the chapter venue.
3. **REFLECT** views of chapter officers and members on chapter activities. (Strengths, weaknesses, future plans, projects, etc.) A vital function. A basic responsibility of chapter officials is to inform members of their work. A well informed membership is a participating, cooperating membership.
4. **RECOGNIZE** efforts and accomplishments of members and others. And not just those which occur in the chapter environment. News of noteworthy deeds in other phases of barbershop, in professions, in careers are interesting to fellow members, and enhance fellowship and understanding.
5. **EDUCATE** about chapter, district and Society history, aims and goals; about various aspects of singing craft; about events and actions that shape the future of barbershopping. Things each member should know. A smart barbershopper is an active and participating one simply because he knows what's going on in his hobby.
6. **PROMOTE** barbershopping in general, together with chapter, division, district and Society events and programs. Each entity needs enthusiastic participation in its activities to survive and prosper. Promotion at the chapter level is where it begins.
7. **RECRUIT** Encourage members to bring guests; support member drives; publicize guests and new members. A crucial function to head off waning membership; to maintain the chapter's vigor.
8. **ENCOURAGE** pride and participation in our hobby and Society. The "Preservation" we all value so highly cannot survive for long without pride and participation among the rank and file.

Another good reason for chapter bulletins is the benefits they provide for non-members of the chapter; wives and families. With information gleaned from the bulletin, they can plan and prepare for upcoming events, keep abreast of the chapter's programs and personalities, and relish seeing their man's name in print from time to time.

Hence, it is important to ensure a bulletin reaches each member's home. Absent members, members with poor memories, members who misunderstand instructions—all have their problems solved with a current, accurate bulletin somewhere around the house.

Still another reason: Some bulletins are distributed to selected barbershoppers outside the local chapter, to district and Society officials, other bulletin editors, etc. The bulletin is the window through which these interested outsiders view and judge the health and welfare of the chapter.

A final reason: Some chapters have active historians; some do not. With each successive issue he publishes, the bulletin editor in fact writes another page of chapter history. If he consistently provides names, dates and thorough descriptions of chapter activities, he is the chapter's *de facto* historian. Research through the past issues he saves will provide a comprehensive picture of the chapter's history.



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Part 2

Who's A Bulletin Editor?

Good question. Ideally, he would be a man with good grammar, spelling and punctuation skills; a man with good written communication skills; a man inquisitive of mind and alert to events around him; a man who can improve the writing of others (yes, edit); a man with some knowledge of page layout, typography and printing; a man with sufficient time to do a thorough job; a man with the tools and equipment necessary to publish. Rarely does such a man exist.

Usually the job falls to the man least reluctant to accept it. Usually he will possess some of the desirable attributes. Rarely more than a few. Frequently he will be among the hardest working, most unsung men in a chapter, spending more solitary time at his task than any other chapter official.

Hence this Bulletin Editors Manual

In the pages to follow, we shall try to ease the burden of experienced and novice editors alike; sometimes with specific instructions, sometimes with guidance and references. The contributors to this manual are not all-knowing. Readers are urged to use it as a “base camp” from which to launch exploratory excursions into the wonderful world of editing and publishing.

Realistically, little can be said here to significantly improve an editor's basic grasp of writing skills. For most of us, our last exposure to formal training in English grammar was back in high school, or perhaps the first year or so of college.

For many of us, what we remember from those years will have to do.

Author Jim Quinn, in his book, *American Tongue and Cheek* —a Populist Guide to Our Language, observes with both logic and humor, “For me, the only sensible standard of correctness is usage by ordinary people. We are the ones who do almost all of the inventing and changing, we are the ones who make English the living and exciting language it is.

“We talk—that's English. And we know how to talk long before we go to school; in fact, except for vocabulary, a six-year-old child is essentially a language adult, who can use all the grammatical forms of English competently. We go to school not to learn English, but to learn that relatively rarer activity, called writing.

“We don't go to school to learn how to talk—luckily. Luckily—as someone once pointed out—we don't have to go to school to learn how to walk either.

“Or we'd be a nation of cripples.

“We do go to school to learn how to write. And thanks to what we learn, and how we're taught, most Americans write like cripples. So they go to books...to straighten out their writing—and come away with advice about as useful and sensible as shortening a short leg.”

Editors can, however, improve the quality of their work by simply acknowledging their shortcomings and referring often to a modest selection of reference works. For starters, a dictionary, a thesaurus and a grammar and punctuation guide will do. And supplementary reading of books on writing style can't hurt.

Surprisingly, the study of writing and English usage need not, as is the study of economics, be “a dismal science.” There exist a great many sprightly, interesting books on the subjects, such as the one quoted above. A short selection of them is listed in the Appendix. Also in the Appendix are four brief and enlightening essays about

style, spelling, punctuation and writing with clarity. They're succinct, interesting, humorous and written by experts. Read them



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Part 3

Where Does All That News Come From?

Another good question. There's scarcely an editor among us who will not agree with the maxim, "Editors should edit the bulletin, not write it." But life isn't that kind. Bulletin editors will always have to pursue their sources, and will always have to do a portion of the writing.

It should be a "given" (but seldom is) that all principal officers contribute to the bulletin on a more-or-less regular basis. Foremost among them is the chapter president. He should always have something to say. If he doesn't, impeach him; he's not doing his job. So, probably, should the secretary, though he can usually get by with a short summary report of the most recent executive board meeting.

Other chapter officials should know they are expected to contribute periodically:

Membership V.P.—as often as he has plans or projects in progress. His report may be brief, but should detail upcoming activities, recent accomplishments, new member profiles, Man of Note awards, and the like.

Program V.P.—a tough job in these days of chorus- intensive chapter meetings. Often he's not allowed the luxury of planning meeting activities. He should, however, be in charge and held responsible for complete planning and detailed information of events appearing in the chapter's activity calendar.

Publicity V.P.—see Membership V.P. comments. Music Committee Chairman—should have things to tell the members rather regularly. Repertoire, vocal training, coaching, learning schedules all are within his purview. He should also be held responsible for accuracy and pertinence of craft stories appearing in the bulletin.

Chorus Director—should have at least a few brief remarks for every issue.

Chorus Manager—periodically, as his needs arise.

Treasurer—occasionally: annual financial statement summaries, reports on show receipts, etc.

Show Chairman—As soon as a show begins to take shape he should become a regular contributor. He can discuss show repertoire, costuming, give a brief scenario, or call attention to needs. His reports should be ongoing right up to show time because an informed, savvy cast can be a great boon to him. And when the show is over, he should prepare the principal wrap-up report and award the appropriate "atta-boys."

POINTS FOR EDITORS TO CONSIDER

1. You will always have to pursue some chapter officials for their bulletin contributions. Ours is an imperfect world.
2. Frequently, brief contributions are better. Some men can say all they know in one paragraph. Anything more is snow. If it's missing, don't ask. If it's supplied, edit rigorously, or don't use it.
3. It's often better to assign a contributor his topic. You get what you'd hoped for more often, and it eliminates tiresome duplications of thoughts and sentiments from several officers, following a major chapter event.
4. Use gimmicks. Give a man a piece of lined note paper, blank except for the topic you've written across the top. Tell him, "Just fill this in for me." Get fresh insights into chapter activities; ask a new man to describe his first show, contest or convention.
5. Seek the full support and cooperation of your chapter president. Once gained, you can let him harangue

recalcitrant officers for their bulletin articles. You're no longer the villain.

6. Earn your contributors' respect. Maintain a dependable publication schedule and be firm about deadlines. Edit scrupulously. Ask for rewrites if copy is confused or inappropriate. Discourage scoldings, harangues and lectures, but don't avoid them if they are truly justified. It's an editorial judgment call.
7. Be flexible. Accept stories recorded on brown paper bags, audio tape or on computer disks—if you're lucky to share equipment capability with a contributor.
8. Make generous use of full names, dates and detailed descriptions of events. You're also part historian for the chapter.
9. Recognize that you may sometimes have to do a full rewrite. If your correspondent has minimal writing skills, accept it. Use the facts he provides and write it yourself. Never publish a bad piece of writing verbatim. It demeans your office.

WHAT'S AN EDITORIAL?

Basically, an expression of the writer's personal views. Editorials contain personal pronouns (i, me, my mine).

An editorial may comment on a news event, but it should not *report* the event. Chapter officers should be discouraged from reporting news, and encouraged to write editorially. Editorial writing fixes responsibilities and tells the readers they are being pursued. It is the editor's responsibility to make this point clear to his officers.

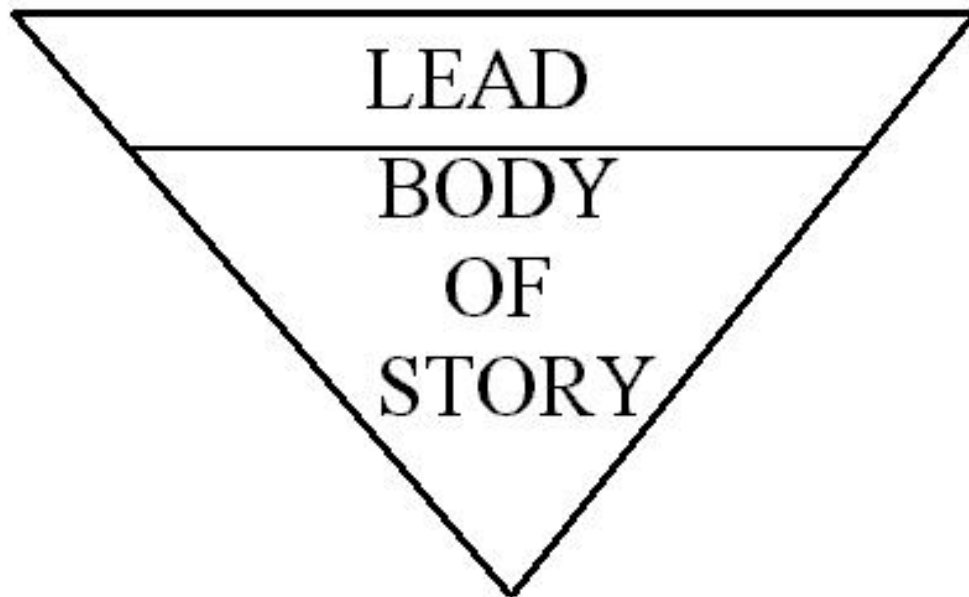
Criticism for its own sake—the dog-in-the-manger or sour grapes variety—should not be allowed in any editorial piece. Constructive criticism should be encouraged. Gripes and complaints should always be accompanied by some suggestions for alternatives; for better ways (in the writer's opinion) to get the job done. This, again, is an editor's judgment call, and he can always ask for a rewrite.

The bulletin editor is in a unique position: as he gathers news about his chapter, he gains first-hand knowledge of unfolding events, and he can witness developing trends. He should almost always have an editorial opinion to express.

BASIC NEWS WRITING

News stories should always try to answer the six basic questions: Who? What? Where? When? Why? How? Good reporting style will place the basic answers to those questions in the story's lead paragraph, with supporting facts in paragraphs that follow.

This is known as inverted pyramid writing, and is illustrated as follows:



This traditional inverted pyramid form calls for a summary lead and supporting facts arranged in a descending order. The facts most easily dispensed with are placed at the apex of the inverted pyramid. The advantage of this form of reporting is that the story may be cut, paragraph by paragraph, from the bottom up without losing its meaning.

The pyramid form will not, however, support a story that contains a lead and a body of ensuing information leading to a final conclusion, based on the information. This sort of writing is found most often in feature stories.



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Part 4

How Does All That News Get On the Pages?

Eventually, it must happen: The editor must finally sit down with all those bits and pieces he's accumulated and make pages out of them. He must assemble them into a coherent whole. He must produce...a bulletin! What else must he do?

Edit—Check the various bits of input for grammar, punctuation, spelling and good syntax. Do the pieces read well? The best test of this is to read them aloud. If questions of grammar or style arise, check references. The *PROBE Style Manual* (Merchandise Catalog No. 4356) and the *Associated Press Stylebook* are good starting places. Look for opportunities to tighten phrases, eliminate unnecessary words, improve meaning, enhance impact. This is *editing*!

Prioritize—Decide on orders of importance. Cookie recipes and birthday/anniversary notices do not belong on the front page. What does? Try for timely reports of recent or upcoming significant activities. Failing that, use the editorials with the most *oomph*. Arrange the rest of the stories on subsequent pages in declining importance. Cookie recipes, if you must, go *way* in the back.

Format—Decide how each page shall look. Text the full width of the page? Two or three columns of equal width? Unequal-width columns balanced on the page? Justified or ragged-right columns? What sort of fonts for headlines and sub-heads? It sounds complicated, but once an editor has settled on a few standard page arrangements, he performs this task almost without thought.

Fillers—It's prudent to have on hand a supply in varying lengths to fill awkward blank spaces, as they are most certain to occur. Fillers may be seasonal graphics, jokes, *bon mots*, artwork, cartoons, borrowed pieces, humor, etc.

Sources—As an editor, you should train your mind and your eyes to spot bits of usable filler as you read. Newspapers, other periodicals and especially other barbershop bulletins are rich sources. But copyrighted materials should be approached with the same caution as copyrighted music. Its use is **illegal** without prior consent. Bits of artwork appearing in short-duration newspaper ads (sale ads, seasonal decorations) are usually copyright-free, but beware those containing copyrighted logos or figures.

Safe Sources—Most of what is found in other barbershop bulletins is quite safe to reproduce unless it's indicated that it is copyrighted and "reprinted with permission." That permission is a one-time-only grant and doesn't extend to you. Stories and features obviously written by other barbershoppers are invariably fair game for copying. In fact, their authors are usually flattered to find their work reproduced in another bulletin. "Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery." **However, be sure to give credit: author, bulletin, editor, chapter.**

Getting Safe—Cartoon panels in newspapers and magazines are *always* copyrighted. Don't use them without permission. Syndicate owners of the copyright sometimes allow the use of their cartoons and waive the customary use fee, but you must plead your own individual case.

Note the name of the syndicate, then telephone 1-800-555- 1212 (800 number information service,) and ask if there is a number listed for it. If there is, call it and state your case. Emphasize that yours is a free bulletin intended solely for members of a charitable, nonprofit organization. Be cordial; be persuasive. You may overcome initial reluctance.

Playing Fair—Professional writers take a dim view of plagiarism; it's stealing from their purses. However, small portions of their work may be used without violating copyright laws or overstepping the bounds of propriety. You

may, for example, print, “Herman Thud, in his book, *Life in The Wilds of Kenosha*, says, ‘Actually, there is no life in Kenosha’.” You may also print, “Herman Thud writes in his book, *Life in The Wilds of Kenosha*, that there is presently no life in Kenosha, and had there been, it’s been extinct for eons.”

The first example quotes directly from Herman’s book. If brief, it’s legal. The second example paraphrases the book and may go on for moderate length without violating copyright law. It’s not too tricky. Just ensure Herman gets credit for the words if you quote directly; for the original thoughts if you paraphrase. Never quote or paraphrase without proper attribution. That’s theft.

The Writing Engine

The machine the editor uses to transcribe to paper the information he’s collected is vital. Its condition, care and judicious use will be the determining factors in his bulletin’s final appearance.

Every editor deserves at least a good typewriter. If he doesn’t have one, his chapter should get one. There are many sophisticated electronic typewriters on the market today, and they are priced at a *very* few hundred dollars. Virtually every chapter can afford one, considering such a machine may also be used to enhance the appearance of chapter correspondence, programs, fliers and the like.

However....

Aged manual machines: There’s nothing wrong with venerable Smith-Corona or Underwood mechanical typewriters. They can do the job in fine fashion provided that the ribbon is fresh, type faces are clean and type bars are adjusted to strike the paper evenly and with equal force.

Simple electric typewriters: Much the same advice applies.

Electronic typewriters: Versatile and inexpensive. Many will type in 10, 12 and 15 pitch, provide bold and italic attributes, center and right-justify automatically, and allow whole-word or whole-line correction. Some even have limited spell-checking capability; a few provide a thesaurus. Most require minimal maintenance.

Personal Computer printers: Sophisticated devices, these, and some, with appropriate computer software, are capable of producing professional looking pages. Some offer a bewildering variety of type fonts and an equally bewildering variety of font sizes.

Beware this wealth of choices. Select and stick with a modest variety of fonts and sizes for headlines, sub-heads, body text, special emphasis and the like. Avoid gimmicky fonts such as Script, Victorian and Old English. They’re suitable for personal correspondence and wedding announcements, but they’re difficult to read in barbershop bulletins—and rather bush league.

Format:

How
Should It
Look?

Format, in this context, refers to the way text and other printed components are arranged on the page.

How many pages: Depends on the needs of the chapter, the depth of its purse, and the resources and willingness of the editor. Four pages printed on letter-size paper (two sheets, printed both sides) is a nice starting point. Eight to 12 pages allow for just about everything a capable editor, editing prudently, needs to publish..

White space: The portions of a page not occupied by text and other printed matter. White space includes all margins, gutters (the space between adjoining columns) and blank areas in graphics, cartoons, etc.

Well-balanced white space is vital to the appearance of a printed page. A page with too little white space is considered “dark.”

A too dark page is unpleasing to the eye and intimidates the reader. He is reluctant to embark on reading the page’s contents. Major contributors to page darkness are inadequate side margins, skimpy top and bottom margins, crowding of separate stories, over-long paragraphs, and inadequate indents. Text that runs the full width of the page for a considerable length is also a major contributor.

To column or not to column: Generally speaking, columned pages look better. You’re not publishing a book. All significant news periodicals use columned pages. If you choose not to use columns, limit paragraphs to as few lines as possible and indent deeply—better still, double space between paragraphs.

The two-column format: the easiest to manage. It is also the one most often used in barbershop bulletins, so “borrowing” a story from another bulletin is a simple matter of “cut-and-paste” onto your page. The usual two-column format on legal or letter size paper (both 8½ inches wide) is two 3½-inch-wide columns with a ½-inch gutter between and ½-inch side margins. This format, with adequate top and bottom margins, provides good balance of white space to dark space and is pleasing to the eye.

More than two columns: A three-column format is possible. Four columns become difficult to handle. Three or more columns dictate that lines of text must be shorter, and margins and gutters narrower. If right justification is used (more about that later) there is a risk of “rivers of white.” They are the obvious diagonal alignment of spaces between words on several successive lines of text. Unless a very small type font is used, four-column format should be avoided. Otherwise, there may be occasions of only two or three short words on a line, with awkward white spaces between them.

Justification: “Justified” print means simply that the last word of every line extends to the right margin of its column or page. The alignment is usually achieved by inserting extra spaces at random between the words on the line until they extend to the right margin. Non-justified type is usually called “ragged-right.”

The jury is still out on this one. Some newspapers mix justified and ragged-right columns on the same page. Others adhere strictly to one or the other. *The National Geographic* uses both. *The National Inquirer*, should you care, sticks with justified columns. Some experts say the human eye tracks more readily from one line to the next with ragged-right text. Multi-columned pages can tolerate narrower gutters with justification. The “rivers of white” mentioned above are more prevalent with justified type. The final choice lies with each editor. (Note that this page is justified.)

Justification is easy with all computers and most electronic typewriters; it’s a built-in option. With manual and simple electric typewriters, justification is another matter.

The complete text must be typed with the number of spaces remaining at the end of each line noted. (Usually by typing in Xs until the margin stop is reached. Then the text must be retyped with the appropriate number of spaces (count the Xs) inserted between words. It’s tedious, but the results are often pleasing.

Type fonts and sizes: For the owners of mechanical and simple electric typewriters, this is not a consideration. They have no choice. Electronic typewriters offer slight variety; most computer printers offer a wide one. Briefly stated, a font is all the characters of a given size in a particular type family (example: Courier). Font sizes may vary from barely readable four-point to glaring headline size, the kind usually used in newspapers to announce disasters. This page is printed in 10-point Times Roman. A more complete discussion of fonts is contained in the Appendix to this manual, under “Typography.”

Attributes: For this discussion, attributes are ways to modify printed text for added emphasis. On manual typewriters, the choices are underlines or all capitals. More sophisticated machines add boldface and italics. Excessive use of any attribute results in distracting copy that is difficult to read.

The PROBE Style Manual (note the italic attribute) discusses bold face and capitals on page six; italic and underline on page 14. Not discussed in the *Style Manual*, but acceptable in many fields: The use of boldface or italics to imply stress on a particular word or phrase. (**What** is that? What **is** that? What is **that**?) You will find numerous such uses in this manual.

Attributes to emphasize a member's name are often seen in barbershop bulletins. It is acceptable. It causes the name to "jump from the page" at the reader. Again, moderation is advised. Use the chosen attribute at the *first* mention of the name only. Do not apply the attribute to connectives between names ("and" "or").

Headlines: There are a number of devices to make a printed page more interesting to its reader. Most common, and known to all editors, is the headline. Ideally, headlines should be printed in larger type, and perhaps in a contrasting font. Headlines may be enhanced with subheads: statements or phrases that further draw the reader into the story. When possible, subheads should be printed in the same font as the headline, but in an obviously smaller size. (But still larger than the print used for the story text.)

Other devices that may "jazz up" a page are "rules," vertical or horizontal lines to separate columns or non-related pieces of text. Rules, or enclosed boxes, may also be used to define and separate "call-outs," brief quotes from the text or an editorial comment to draw attention to an important point:

Rules, boxes and call-outs add interest.

"Kickers" precede a headline (usually a line above, in contrasting type) and contain a brief phrase that summarizes the headline:

A remarkable achievement:

High school quartet wins district

Drop caps, as shown in this short paragraph, are another effective way to add visual interest to a page of text.

Note: My html skills do not include the use of drop caps at this point...but large first letters - as in the "note" above, are also possible.)

Also effective in limited use are headlines or boxed items rendered in reverse type: Black on white.

REVERSE TYPE

Elsewhere, type fonts and sizes may be varied, with moderation, in headlines and subheads. Too-frequent variations, particularly on the same page, may result in visual confusion for the reader.

Unfortunately, these visual enhancements are more readily available to the computer-equipped editor. Those in the Smith-Corona crowd may, however, approximate them by using a little ingenuity. Rub-on transfer letters and ruling pens (see Part 6) can make some of them possible.

Headlines are the means to draw a reader to read further into stories. They should be short, concise, and contain a verb. "**WE QUIT**" is a perfectly acceptable headline. Rarely will a reader pass up the story without wanting to find out who quit what.

Finally, if the selected format results in facing pages (as in newspapers and magazines,) place the more important stories on the right-hand page. A reader's attention is naturally directed first to that page.

Additional hints on formatting may be found on the bulletin contest Layout and Reproduction judging form included in the appendix of this manual



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Part 5

Some Assembly Required

Preparing a bulletin for printing is the critical stage. All the painstaking effort that has gone before is wasted if care is not lavished on the product that goes to the printer. Many modern typewriters, and certainly all computer word processing softwares, allow their users to directly produce a finished page, “camera ready” for reproduction. However, many editors still use the time-honored “cut- and-paste” method to assemble their pages. The following is primarily for their benefit.

ASSEMBLING THE PAGES

Earlier, formatting was defined as deciding how each finished page should look. Now it’s time to put those decisions to work. Formatting—placing the various stories, articles and graphics bits on the various pages—is somewhat like building a flagstone walkway. The odd- sized pieces must fit together in a pleasing manner, yet fill the predetermined space. Here are things that must be considered:

Paper size: determined largely by economics and the handling capability of the printing method. Standard sizes are 8½ x 11" (letter), 8½ x 14" (legal) and 11 x 17". The 11 x 17" size folds in half to become four letter-size pages. Most copy machines will not feed other sizes; offset printers charge premium prices for special paper sizes.

Orientation: the way text is placed on the page. The two options are “portrait” (the longer dimension of the paper is vertical) and “landscape” (the longer dimension is horizontal). Portrait is the orientation most often used.

Margins: A minimum of ½-inch is acceptable and reduces positioning problems during reproduction. Larger top and bottom margin space is pleasing to the eye. Top and bottom margins may be unequal, but should remain the same from inside page to page.

Assembly: placement of text, graphics, photos, etc., on each page. Again, a relatively simple process with the “cut and paste” feature of most computer software, but another matter altogether for editors without such luxuries.

CUT AND PASTE—*FOR REAL*

There are a number of variations to the technique for placing matter to be printed on the appropriate pages. Basically, it consists of trimming the final proofed copy into manageable pieces, deciding their positions on each page, marking the positions and fastening them in place. The finished products are variously referred to as “mechanicals,” “paste-ups,” or “dummies.” (A dummy may also be a hand-draw representation of a page, showing where various elements will be located—a map.) Mechanicals seems to be the preferred term, and is used in this manual.

Cutting: Remove all extraneous paper. Leave narrow margins on all sides of the materials to be “pasted.” The cutting device may be scissors, razor blade or Xacto knife. The latter two require some sort of a cutting board. A pane of glass will do, but it quickly dulls blades. A piece of Masonite or plywood will work, but in time their surfaces become roughened with use. A superior third alternative is a cutting mat, made from a plastic material that “heals” after every cut so the mat surface stays smooth. Most cutting mats have a printed grid for guidance.

Marking: A lead pencil may be used for marking copy positions on mechanicals, but the marks must be removed before printing. A better choice is pens or pencils designated “photo blue,” a pastel, light blue not visible to copy machines or offset printing processes. A T-square and a drafting triangle are helpful to ensure that marks and

subsequent placement of copy is plumb with the edges of the mechanicals. *This is crucial.* Tiny departures from plumb, scarcely visible to the naked eye, will stick out like the proverbial sore thumb on the printed copy. (See Light Box, Part 6.)

Another alternative is the use of “art boards.” They are heavy sheets of paper (Bristol board) with smooth surfaces on which is printed a grid pattern (available in increments from 1/16th-inch to 1/4-inch) in photo blue. Some also have marks printed to indicate standard margins, page centers, location of three-ring binder perforations and the like. With care, art boards may be reused numerous times.

Art boards are manufactured in sizes appropriate for 8½ x 11-inch or 11 x 17-inch pages. They may usually be found in stores dealing in artists’ and engineering supplies.

Pasting: “Paste-up” is the final step in preparing mechanicals for printing. All items must be firmly fixed to the mechanical, but they should not be permanently mounted. It is often necessary to reposition items for better use of space, or to provide a more eye-pleasing arrangement.

Several types of adhesive do the job well:

1. **Rubber cement**—available everywhere. Messy to apply and residue may accumulate outside the edge of pasted copy and attract dirt which can show up on the finished printing. Users should have a supply of rubber cement thinner (acetone) and a rubber cement eraser at hand.
2. **Hot wax**—less messy. Requires a hot wax applicator: a device with an electrically heated reservoir where the wax is melted and a roller arrangement for applying the melted wax in a thin, stippled coating to the copy. Not readily available; expensive. Least costly is the *LECTRO-STIC*, manufactured by Lectro-Stic Corp., Chicago, Ill. 60613, or from many art supply stores. It is a small, hand-held tool that rolls on a 1½-inch wide coat of wax, so repeated passes are necessary to coat almost all copy. The tool comes supplied with a quantity of wax cubes said to be equivalent to a gallon of rubber cement. Replenishment supplies may be a problem.
3. **Spray adhesive**—Comes in an aerosol container similar to spray paints. Label should specify the adhesive does not provide a permanent bond. Fairly clean, but some method to capture overspray must be used. An empty paper carton makes a good spray booth. A light mist application is sufficient to anchor copy, which may be lifted and repositioned several times before more adhesive is needed. Scotch 3M brand *Spray Mount Artist’s Adhesive* is available in art supply stores for about \$10 per can.
4. **Cellophane tape**—Cheap and easy to use, but may be difficult to remove. Scotch 3M produces a removable tape, but it may not be invisible to copy machines and offset printing processes.
5. **Glue stick**—A recent arrival on the market is a glue stick from Dennison Mfg. Co., Farmingham, MA 01701. It contains a non-permanent glue, much like the adhesive on *Post-It Notes*. Clean, simple to use, but expensive. About \$2.00 for a two-inch applicator tube. Initial tests in preparation of this manual indicate the adhesive is not as reliable as the other methods described



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Part 6

Tools, tricks and gizmos

For editors who do a significant amount of paste-up work, the operations discussed in the Part 5, together with the tools, tricks and gizmos mentioned below can save a world of effort.

Light box—may be purchased from commercial sources, but they are expensive. A handmade one is simple for the home craftsman to construct. If you aren't a craftsman, recruit one. An open-topped box an inch larger in both length and width than the largest mechanical contemplated (12" x 18" is ideal), and five to six inches deep. Inside the box, three or four equally spaced, self-contained, single-tube fluorescent lamp fixtures (the kind sold in hardware stores as "under cabinet lights") wired through an exterior common switch to an appliance cord. The open top of the box has a removable cover of smooth-surface, translucent ("opaline") glass or plastic, such as used for shower doors. Any glass shop can supply it.

In use, an art board or other base material is placed on the translucent cover, with the illumination coming from below. When pieces of copy are then placed on the base material, position marks, grids, etc. on it can be readily seen through the copy, allowing for precise positioning. The light box is a particularly valuable tool when art boards are used.

"Bone"—As copy is pasted onto mechanicals it should be "boned" so that it adheres firmly. That is, it should be rubbed or burnished with a hard, smooth object. (In days of yore, an animal rib bone was used.) A short, soft wood lath or slat makes a good bone. Perfectly suited to the task is a short piece cut from one of those yardsticks hardware stores occasionally give away, or from the wooden paddle paint stores usually include with purchases. A wallpaper hanger's seam rolling tool will also does a nice job.

Tweezers—invaluable for picking up pasted-down copy and repositioning it precisely; not the crude, blunt tweezers ladies use for plucking eyebrows, but the needle-pointed ones doctors use to remove splinters. Medical supply stores have them. Two pairs are better than one.

Tape—Everybody's got Scotch tape, right? How about *removable* Scotch tape? Scotch brand sells it. It has the same sort of adhesive as on their little "Post-it Notes." It may be peeled off without damage to the paper it's stuck to; it's far superior to the old stand-by, masking tape. You'll find endless uses for it.

Ruler—Fifteen inches, if you can find one. And make it steel. The engraved markings are precise and won't wear off, and you can't harm the edges while using it as a cutting knife guide.

Scissors—Don't borrow mother's sewing shears. They aren't designed for paper, and you'll only dull them. Buy good paper shears with long, slender blades.

Knife—There are endless uses for an X-ACTO knife. Get the one with the slender handle; about the diameter of a pencil. And get a generous supply of blades. Best all-around blade is the #11, the one with the narrow triangular shape ending in a needle-like point. Protect the blade (and yourself) between uses by thrusting it into a cast-off cigarette filter tip, or a small cork.

Pencils—Colored, that is: "Non-Photo Blue" for marking mechanicals; carmine red for editing copy. Forget that old story about editors "blue-penciling copy." A strong red stands out much better. Get the Venus brand *col-erase* pencils with erasers, in case you need to edit your editing.

Pens—The calligraphic variety. Handy for ruling lines of various widths. (See "rules," part 4.) The Speedball Corp., long a standard in the field of lettering instruments, makes a line of pens called *Elegant Writer*. They are fiber-tipped pens with firm, chisel points of various widths, and come in a limited variety of colors. (Choose

black.)

Cash register tape—A trick for editors using two-column format and a garden-variety typewriter. Type your text copy on 3-7/16" or 3-5/8"-wide cash register tape (the latter may be hard to find) instead of typing paper. You'll never have to trim the edges of your paste-up material again. Just rip four or five feet of tape from the roll, feed it into your typewriter, set the margins and go to it.

Transfer type—or "rub-on lettering." These are micro- thin alphabet letters that may be transferred to paper from the semi-transparent material they are mounted on by placing them in the desired positions and rubbing or burnishing them through the mounting material. They are available in a wide variety of fonts—many of them "display" (decorative style)—and sizes. For bulletin headlines and sub heads, choose 16 point (5/32") to 24 point (1/4"). Larger sizes are handy for fliers, programs, etc. Larger than 24 point sizes increase in multiples of six points, each equal to an additional 1/16" in height. Buy small sheets of letters for special or one-time applications. For frequent use, buy large (10" x 13") sheets. They contain sufficient quantities of every letter for a large number of headlines or sub-heads.

Burnishing tools for transfer letters are available at some expense, but the job is done quite well with a manicuring orange stick, or a ballpoint pen that has run dry.

A major supplier of transfer type is CELLO-TAK Mfg. Co., 35 Alabama Ave., Island Park, NY 11558. Others are CHARTPAK, 1 River Road, Leeds, MA 01053 and FORMATT, Graphics Products Corp., Rolling Meadows, IL 60008. These products are available in art supplies stores and many stationery stores, or write their customer service department for a catalog and a retailer in your area.

Clip Art—The generic term for a vast array of line art supplied in books from which it may be clipped out and pasted into mechanicals. There are several major suppliers, and their collections are usually segregated into several volumes of related subjects: holidays, industrial, sports, decorative borders and frames, "old times," the four seasons, and many others. Some books include numerous cartoons and framed witty sayings.

Major suppliers of clip art are: Dover Publications, Inc., 21 E. 2nd St., Mineola, NY 11501 (ask for their "Clip Art Sampler" catalog), Clip-Art Company, 18 Chabot Drive, Citrus Heights, CA 95621, and "Graphic Source Clip Art" supplied by Graphics Products Corp., Wheeling, IL 60090. Clip art handy hint: don't clip out the art pieces. Make a photocopy of the desired piece and crop it to fit your page.

Paper—Buy in quantity and buy cheap. If your major use is letter-size paper, buy it from one of your local copy shops. The paper they use in their machines should be available by the ream for \$3 to \$5. During preliminary stages of your work, save the waste copies and use the other sides. If you're computerized, and use a tractor-feed printer, buy 20- pound paper in the continuous fold, laser- perforated (letter- edge) 2,500 sheet boxes.

Be aware that not all white paper is exactly white. Inexpensive white paper, especially recycled paper, is not quite white. Use the cheap stuff for preliminary work, then for the final mechanicals bound for the printer, switch to a "brilliant" white paper. Those papers using the word "laser" in their description are measurably whiter than run-of-the-mill copy paper, and have a slightly glossy finish. Your copy will appear much brighter and cleaner to the printing process on very white paper. The cost for laser paper is about \$8.00 per ream.

Morgue—In newspaper lingo, a reference file of back issues, photos, clippings and what-have-you. Every bulletin editor should have one. Those little seasonal artwork clips from newspaper ads—found too late for this year's bulletin—can be filed in the morgue for next year. (Hint: newsprint darkens rapidly with age. Photocopy the fresh clips and save the copies.)

File personal profiles and stories about chapter members. You may someday have to write an obituary. (Hence the name "morgue file.") File useful stories from other bulletins, cartoons, quotes, jokes, pithy sayings, etc., etc., *ad infinitum*, *ad nauseum*. Establish categories. Be sure to note sources so you can give credit when they are used.

Keep in separate folders or envelopes to minimize morgue searches.

Boiler plate—For this discussion, boiler plate is defined as those portions of your bulletin that appear the same in every issue. Some examples are the nameplate that appears at the top of page one and identifies the bulletin, the chapter, etc. Then there's the mashead: the list of chapter officials. Other examples might include the bit of graphic art atop your activity calendar; the mailing address portion of your back page; standard headers or footers that appear on every inside page.

You can add pizzazz to your bulletin by having the boiler plate printed in color—often at no additional cost. Many print shops offer “free color” days. On Mondays you can have your job printed in blue at no extra charge. Tuesdays are red, and so forth.

Estimate the amount of paper you'll need for the next half- dozen issues, add ten percent for spoilage and extra runs and have your boiler plate printed in advance. Then, each month, you simply have the bulletin printed with black ink on the pre-printed paper stock from your supply and you have a snappy two-color bulletin.

Pages with fixed, repetitive information are sometimes called “style sheets.” If they occur in your bulletin, make 100 copies, then bring them out as each issue is being assembled. Naturally, the boiler plate must always appear in the same location on the appropriate style sheet.



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Part 7

How Do I Handle Photos?

Well-composed, pertinent photos are always a definite plus in a bulletin, but care must be exercised in their selection.

Composing—Avoid broad, panoramic photos (of the whole chorus, for example). Avoid head-to-toe photos of quartets or individuals (especially those including generous views of the floor and ceiling). Avoid photos of groups or individuals in dark clothing posed before an equally dark background. Avoid photos with shadows or objects in the background that appear to sprout from the subjects' heads.

Try for head-and-shoulder shots of small groups and individuals. If the subject is a quartet, try to compose their heads in a diagonal or diamond pattern, rather than a horizontal line. When photographing the chorus, try moving to one side, focusing a head-and-shoulder shot of a few closely grouped individuals, with the rest of the chorus falling out of focus in the background. Avoid rigid poses. Try to imply some action in the photo. If using a flash, beware of harsh, distracting shadows cast on nearby background surfaces.

Film choices—Although modern reproduction technology is closing the gap, monochrome film still produces better reproductions for non-color printed applications than do color films. But monochrome film has lost ground to color print film in the area of processing time. Color films can be processed in an hour in automated processing machines, while black and white films may take many days to return from processing.

Recently, the Ilford Film Co. produced a monochrome film that bridges the time gap. It's called Ilford XP2 and has an ASA-400 speed rating. Available in 35mm, the film may be developed with the C-41 process used in all automated film processing machines. Depending upon lighting conditions during exposure, and more often on the condition of the processor's chemical solutions, prints may come out purple and white, or blue and white. However, the contrast values and balance are such that the photos are quite suitable for conventional printing processes.

Printing photos—Some modern copy machines do a good job reproducing both color and monochrome photographs. Others can't handle photos at all. Offset printing methods cannot handle photos at all without the introduction of an intermediate process called a "screened print." (Often called a "half-tone," or "Velox.") Such prints may be obtained from shops providing graphic arts services and from many photo shops.

Screening imposes tiny dots onto the reproduction of an original photo. Thus, whites are not glaring featureless areas; blacks are not solid clumps. The dots provide texture to the whites and blacks (and all the intervening tones) that the offset printer's camera can "see" and register on the printing plate for deposit on paper as microscopic dots. A close inspection of any printed photo will reveal the presence of these tiny dots.

Screens are graded by the number (and size) of dots provided per lineal inch. An 80-line screen is adequate for bulletin photos with offset printing. A coarser screen (larger dots, fewer per inch) will usually appear grainy when printed. Caution: Do not attempt to screen a photo reproduction that already has been screened. The result is dots imposed over dots: a moiré, or frosted appearance that will not print well.

Ordering half-tones—If you take six photos to a graphic arts shop and ask for screened prints of them, that's what you'll get: Six photos of your six photos with a dot screen imposed on them, and you will be charged for photographing, developing and printing of each of them. A money-saving tip: Crop (trim) the photos to the finished size you want to use, then paste them up on a sheet of paper in an area no larger than 8" x 10" (standard size for photographic paper) and have them screened as one print. Caution: Photos grouped together on the sheet of paper should have about the same levels of contrast. (Variations from lightest to darkest tones.) In other words,

don't mix under-exposed and over-exposed photos on the same sheet.

Note: Photos may be enlarged or reduced to you needs as they are being screened, but size changes after screening may result in unwanted changes in the size of the dots imposed on the photo.

If photos are loaned to you and can't be cut up, you may be forced to have individual half-tones made. If that's the case, you can crop and re-size at the same time. Decide how much of the photo you really want to use, and make vertical and horizontal crop marks on the photo margins with a china marking pencil—these can be rubbed off later. Using simple mathematics or a proportional scale (a rudimentary circular slide rule available at most stationery stores,) calculate the percentage of increase or decrease needed to make the half-tone fit a desired space—such as a column-width. Remember, when a photo is screened as a half-tone, it should be used at that size; enlarging or reducing by photocopy process may undesirably alter the dot size.

A half-tone option—For photos in bulletins reproduced on copy machines there is a product called “Copyscreen,” produced by Graphic Products Corp., Wheeling, IL 60090, that will allow acceptable (but not great) results. It is a reusable clear film material on which a graphic screen is printed in an off-white color. In use, the film is placed between the page to be copied and the glass plate of the copy machine. When a copy is made, anything darker than the screen will have the tiny, light-colored dots imposed on it. Thus, dark areas of photos will be enhanced to a considerable degree. The technique works best with monochrome photos.

The Copyscreen sheet is 9 x 12 inches in size. The off- white color of the screen is such that it won't register in white areas of a copy, but it will be evident if placed over printed text. Thus it is advisable to cut the film to a size that matches the photo to be reproduced. Though Copyscreen is relatively inexpensive (about \$4.00) it is advisable to decide on a standard few sizes of photos to be used before slicing up the film.

Copyscreen is available in 65-, 85- and 100-line screens of 30% density. The 100-line screen is too small for use in most chapter bulletins and on most copy machines.

Photo cutlines—Sometimes referred to as captions. Nothing is so useless to the reader as photos with missing or inadequate photo cutlines. Always provide cutlines to fully explain what is going on in the photos and clearly identify those depicted; top to bottom and left to right. If space for cutlines is a problem, try this: Place the photos on a left-hand page with small but distinctive numerals or letters in their lower corners. Along the near edge of the facing page print the same numerals or letters together with the cutlines that go with them. Provide an appropriate header (caption in this instance) to tie the cutlines to the photos on the opposite page



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Part 8

The Mechanicals are done. Now what?

Well then, it's time to hippity-hop to the printing shop. But first there are some decisions to be made.

How many copies?—The minimum number, naturally, is one per chapter member, plus a few extras.

Okay, how many extras?—Every editor should have a minimal mailing list. Who should it include? Society headquarters in Kenosha (Attn.: Publications Editor), selected district officers (the president, the district communications officer, the district bulletin editor, at least;) the editor of PROBE's *PROBEmoter*, community agencies and media, chapter friends, future/former members. The list may be limited only by the editor's postage budget. The first few shown here should be musts.

And don't forget to put aside a copy for your chapter's archive.

What's the cost?—*Aye, there's the rub!* It's something every bulletin editor must work out on his own turf. Some general guidelines:

Printing costs may vary widely in the same town. There's a reason. Some job printers are accustomed to orders for *thousands* of copies and won't want to bother with an order for 200. They will quote a price accordingly. Other printers can work in a small job, using paper left over from a large one. Their quote is apt to be more attractive. Still other print shops are hungry for any kind of work and will give good quotes. It pays to shop around.

Don't overlook copy (as opposed to print) shops. They may not offer the range of other services found in print shops, but their prices often compare quite favorably for straight duplicating.

Printing choices—The days of gelatin and spirit duplicators (pesky stencils and lurid purple ink) are over. Gone, too, are the faithful mimeograph machines. All relegated to the junk heap by the ubiquitous photocopy machines. No one's sorry to see them go. Today the choices for commercial reproduction services are pretty well limited to:

Photocopy—Photocopy machines have come a long way since the days of the cranky old machine in the corner of the office storeroom. Today's machines provide excellent copies, may operate at high speed, automatically feed stacked originals, print both sides, fold, collate, staple and handle originals as large as 11 x 17 inches.

Their advantage is the lack of set-up costs inherent to offset printing and their ability to provide instant test copies from your mechanicals. Their disadvantage is high initial acquisition cost, which must be recovered through the operator's printing prices. As a rule, small printing jobs (to 200 or 300 copies) can be handled cheaper and faster in a photocopy shop. Again, shop around. Most copy shops will give telephone quotes.

Photo-offset printing—As the name implies, printing is done from photographic images of your mechanicals. It is often done on presses which may print both sides of several sheets at one time, feeding paper stock from large rolls, much like newspaper presses. Much of the expense for this type of printing involves photographing your mechanicals, then press set-up and clean-up time. Clean-up costs can be high if special colored inks are ordered. Paper is a minor commodity to offset printers. Thus, a press run of 200 copies may cost little more than one of 100 copies. Some printers offer colored paper at no extra cost. If colored paper is used, avoid dark or garish hues, and don't overlook opportunities to use seasonal or holiday colors.

Time-savers—Most print shops and many photocopy shops offer services that are a boon to the customer.

Among them are collating, folding, stapling, staking (shearing page edges for even appearance) perforating and binding. Costs for these services will vary, but usually don't exceed one or two cents per page.

Know your printer—Establish good rapport with your printer. He can provide valuable advice and bail you out of potentially disastrous situations. A cordial attitude and a couple of free passes to your annual show can work wonders



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Part 9

What Do I Do With All These Freshly Printed Bulletins?

DISTRIBUTE THEM!

Obviously, you want everyone to have a copy of your latest masterpiece. Ideally, a copy should be in the home of every one of your chapter members so their families may admire it too. There are two principal ways to get it done:

Hand 'em out—The simplest, cheapest method. Take the bulletins to chapter meeting and hand them out or place them in a prominent place where members may pick up a copy.

But there's a problem with this: Members present may forget to take their copy; absent members miss out altogether. There's no solution for the first. For the second some editors check with the man taking meeting attendance and mail a copy to the absentees. Costly and inefficient, but it gets the job done.

Mail 'em all—Very costly if first-class postage must be used. Less than half the cost if the chapter has a bulk mailing permit and the editor has a mailing list of at least 200 names.

Simple mathematics show that 100 copies mailed at the present (circa 1993) 29¢ first-class postal rate will cost \$29. Two hundred copies mailed at the present rate (also c. 1993) for bulk, non-profit users will cost \$22.40; a saving of \$6.60 each issue. Of course, the major portion of that saving will be lost to the expense of printing an additional 100 copies.

So why bulk mail?—The advantage of a bulk mail permit becomes obvious if, periodically, a chapter sends out hundreds (or thousands) of fliers for its annual show, membership drive, open house or other special event. The bulletin editor takes advantage of the bulk permit simply because it's there; already bought and paid for. It bears the same annual renewal cost whether it's used or not.

The editor may cost the chapter a few hundred bucks in postage each year, sending out at least 200 copies per issue (the minimum required by the U.S. Postal Service) but there are unseen benefits: The bulletin can be directed to a number of non-member friends valued by the chapter, and the editor can establish an extensive exchange with other bulletin editors throughout the Society.

The principal disadvantage to bulk mailing (other than expense) is preparation. Pieces must be sorted and bundled according to Postal Service regulations. This requires that they be segregated by state and/or distribution centers and/or zip code prefixes. A time consuming task requiring preparation and practice. Complete instructions and labelling supplies are available from the bulk mailing clerk at your local main post office. It should be noted that bulk mail may not be delivered promptly. Delays of as much as two weeks have been experienced.

Addresses—A real chore. Hand-addressing a few bulletins is arduous; scores or hundreds, painful. Pre-printed adhesive labels are the answer, but there's get-started effort involved.

Computer buffs with data base management software can establish a simple data file of names and addresses that can be sorted by state and zip codes prior to printing. Then it's a simple matter to print the file on adhesive labels supplied on continuous rolls.

For non-computerized editors, adhesive labels are supplied on 8½ x 11-inch sheets that may be printed from

master sheets in most copy machines. The Avery Label Company is the best-known supplier of the sheets, and their products are available in most stationery shops.

The major effort with this method is the typing and updating of the master sheets, with all the zip codes arranged in numerical order.

Handy hint: Print two copies of the master sheets onto label sheets. Use one copy to label the current issue of the bulletins. Use the second copy as an alternate master for the next issue. Interim changes that occur may be entered on the alternate master by simply peeling off the label to be changed and sticking on a new, corrected label in its place.

This method is effective only as long as the mailing list remains relatively stable. Numerous additions and deletions can result in a royal foul-up



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Part 10

Computers: for the experts, the not-so-experts and the hope-to-be experts.

Well, for the latter two, actually. To paraphrase an old adage, “You can always tell a computer expert...but you can’t tell him much.”

We’ll be talking about personal computers here. “PCs,” we’ll be calling them (thus saving 14 letters with each mention.) PCs are wondrous devices. Full of mystery and intrigue. But on close examination they turn out to be nothing more than tidy little boxes containing literally millions of stupid little electronic gizmos. Stupid because they can make only two decisions about their present state. “Am I open or closed?” “Am I off or on?” “Am I positive or negative?” Or in computer lingo, “Am I zero or one?” Their report on that state is called a *bit*.

Unexciting, right? One gizmo, one of two states; mathematically, 2¹. Link two gizmos together (2²) you can get four different states. Still pretty dull. But try linking eight gizmos together (2⁸) and you get something interesting: 256 different states.

But first, let’s give that interesting octet of bits a new name. It’s a *byte*. A byte, capable of indicating 256 different states, can easily indicate any one of the characters on a typewriter keyboard; either upper or lower case. Type the letter “x” on a computer keyboard and somewhere in that tidy little box a corresponding gizmo gets “set” in its active state, a “1.”

Bits are too numerous and too insignificant to count, so the computer folk speak mostly of bytes. A modern floppy disk may contain 1.2 megabytes. That’s 1.2 million times eight bits, or 9.6 million bits. A modest-sized hard drive on a modern PC can handle 40 megabytes (320 million bits.)

Those stupid little gizmos are capable of changing or reporting their states rather quickly: in billionths of a second. (*Nanosecs*, the experts call them.) You put a few hundred million stupid, but speedy little gizmos in a box together with other gizmos to store, translate and transmit their states and, *voila*, you have a computer. But a computer ain’t dirt until it has instructions for how to handle all those millions of states and changes of states.

That’s where *software* comes in. Software provides the instructions. Using bizarre, arcane forms of mathematics, (binary, Boolean, octal and hexadecimal, to mention a few,) software tells a PC’s central processor what to do with the information received from every bit in every byte.

Information from vast groups of bytes is constantly zipping to and from busses, registers, buffers, input/output devices and gizmos at a dizzying rate. The computer operator is unaware of all this traffic. He’s happy as long as characters appear on his computer monitor or are typed by his printer. That’s the way computers are supposed to work.

Rarely, a computer’s innards foul up. Bits fail their bytes. Bytes fail to forward their stored information. Gizmo-rich devices “crash.” **FATAL ERROR** is the monitor message every computer operator dreads, but it does occasionally occur. More frequently, the PC operator misuses or fails to understand the software he’s using. In this event, the PC central processor recognizes a “glitch”, stalls, and displays a message on the monitor that usually means little to the operator.

Man and PCs are not equal partners in the processing of data, whatever its form. Man is supposed to be the master, but the PC invariably gains the upper hand.

So much for PC basics. Love ‘em or hate ‘em, they can do wonders for bulletin editors. Let’s get on to specifics.

HOW MUCH PC DO YOU NEED?

For PCs, bigger, faster, better are the criteria. There’s no such thing as too much processing speed or too much memory (megabytes.)

But for the guy whose primary interest is bulletin editing, a number of compromises are available. In most cases, his requirements are twofold, but simple. He needs capacity to process his words, and a simple system that will manage his mailing list. Both are modest demands, so blinding speed and enormous memories are not a first consideration.

If the editor has other requirements, for business applications, as well as bulletin publishing, then go for the “bigger, faster” critter.

LET’S TALK ABOUT SOFTWARE

Remember, software is nothing more than a body of instructions that tell your PC how to handle the output from all of those stupid little two-state gizmos. For all intent and purpose, there are today only two kinds of PCs: the Apple-MacIntosh family and all the rest. All the rest are, in general, considered IBM clones. There are other systems still around, but most of them are on the brink of extinction. Their fans keep them alive. No serious developments of software or new features exist solely for them.

All PCs have one common need: An operating system that tells them how to process the information they store. It’s called a *disk operating system* (DOS). The Apple MacIntosh family has a shared one; the IBM clones share a couple of others (PC-DOS and MS-DOS.) All softwares for either family of computers rely on the disk operating system to do the spadework for the features they offer.

Word Processing vs. Desktop publishing—there used to be a distinction....

Word processing used to be somewhat limited, allowing you to enter and manipulate, to a degree, written text. You could amend, move, erase, “cut and paste” your words, but that was about all.

Desktop publishing, on the other hand, allowed you to take text files created by word processing and arrange them into columns, alter text fonts, create page formats, introduce art work, and in other ways create pleasing pages.

Early “heavy hitters” in desktop publishing were *PageMaker*, *PrintShop*, *PFS First Publisher* and *Ventura Publishing*. They’re still around, still viable and still offer a wealth of valuable features. But along have come recent issues of word processing heavyweights such as *Word*, *WordPerfect*, *WordStar* and *Ami Pro* offering much the same features.

Today, the line of demarcation between word processing and desktop publishing has almost disappeared. Today, word processing is desktop publishing, at least in general form.

WHAT DOES AN EDITOR REALLY NEED?

Examine this manual. [*Note: You obviously do not have access to the original printed manual this sentence referred to, but if you are reading this online, you can also easily accomplish all of this.*] Do your needs exceed what you see here? The manual was produced on *Ami Pro*, Release 3.0. Apart from the conventional editing features common to all word processing software, the only others used were:

- Changing type font sizes. (The entire manual, with a few minor exceptions, is printed in varying sizes of

Times Roman and Helvetica type face.)

- Introduction of type attributes (bold and italic.)
- Organizing pages in two-column format.
- Introduction of graphics (cartoons) from external sources (floppy disks) at the beginning of each section.
- Automatic page numbering.
- Semiautomatic preparation of the Table of Contents.
- “Stacking” of files. Each section was written and edited as a separate file, including header and cartoon, then assembled, using the “append,” or “insert” feature to compile them into one continuous document.

These so-called “desktop publishing” features are common to all but the most primitive of today’s word processing softwares.

Aside from a word processor, about all else the bulletin editor needs in his computer is a simple file management software program to handle his mailing list. One that may be sorted in a number of ways to meet his needs. Keep it simple; don’t spend a lot of money, but get one with the capacity to handle the chapter’s roster, show mailing list and other needs.

This manual would not dare to discuss software systems other than in passing, as above. They’re too numerous, and updates and new ones come on the market almost daily.

Nor will this manual pretend to tell how to buy a computer. The philosophy espoused earlier, “get as much memory and speed as you can afford,” is amended only to add, “then add 10 percent more.”

No one, it seems, ever bought the right computer the first time. If you’re a first-time buyer, try to define your needs as best you can, then present them to a dealer for his opinion. Then get another opinion. Then get another opinion. Then get...

When you finally buy, get everything (hardware and software) from the same supplier, but make sure he knows all about them before you put down your cash. That way, when things go to worms, you can simply unhook the box full of electronic gizmos, take it to the store, put it on the counter and holler **HELP!** (We’ve done just that.)

A BRIEF WORD ABOUT PRINTERS

Ya’ gotta’ have one! Spend more than you can afford. Daisy wheel printers limit you to the font on the wheel. Nine-pin dot matrix printers, for the most part, can’t output anything but basic fonts with any quality. Twenty-four pin dot matrix printers do much better. Laser printers are lovely...but expensive. Dot matrix printers are usually quite fast. Laser printers may be painfully slow when required to reproduce out-of-the-ordinary fonts or graphics.

A LESS-BRIEF WORD ABOUT SOFTWARE: NON-WORD PROCESSING SOFTWARE, THAT IS.

Application software is the general term for systems of instructions for things a computer can do. We’ve discussed word processing at some length and touched on data base management as it applies to mailing address lists. Another major software group is called “spread sheet management,” or variations on that theme. This group provides the computer with mathematical instructions for processing bookkeeping, accounting and myriad other statistical functions—What the computer buffs term “number crunching.”

There are other groups of software that are not complete systems of themselves. They merely “plug in” to application software to supply additional features or functions. Some such softwares are of interest to computer-

equipped editors.

The first is type management. *Adobe TypeManager* (Adobe Systems, Inc., Mountain View, Calif. 94039- 7900) stands almost alone in this field—at least for the IBM clone family of computers.

Adobe TypeManager (ATM) introduces a font-handling routine called “Postscript outline font technology” into word processing application software. Simply put, ATM smoothes out the appearance of typed letters on the computer screen and enables even inexpensive printers to print fonts that are crisp and smooth. ATM also opens the access path to literally hundreds of Postscript fonts, available from the Adobe Systems library or other sources. And ATM assists with scaling these fonts to sizes ranging from four points (very tiny) to 72 points (an inch high.)

Font libraries can supply a wide array of interesting and attractive fonts. As mentioned above, Adobe Systems has an extensive library, but their fonts are rather expensive. MicroLogic Software, Emeryville, Calif. 94608, provides software called *MoreType* for a wide variety of eye- catching fonts—packaged in groups of about two dozen—that are more reasonably priced.

An interesting companion to ATM is *Adobe TypeAlign* (TA.) In brief, TA allows for type set on curves, formed to irregular shapes and otherwise manipulated to create attention-getting displays of words and phrases.

Windows is an operating system that has overwhelmingly captured the market among MS-DOS and PC-DOS users. It is a “copycat” of the graphic approach to operating system instructions introduced in the Apple-MacIntosh family of computers. Basically, it incorporates groups of related functions in “pull-down menus” and allows the user to use a “mouse,” an external device that moves a cursor around the monitor screen, to “point and click” (select) one of dozens of visual objects (icons) or simple word phrases to activate a function. A vast improvement, most computer users agree, to memorizing scores of formulated key stroke combinations to achieve the same end. One of today’s main thrusts in software development is in programs for *Windows*. There is a monthly magazine devoted to them, and new applications seem to crop up almost daily.

Beginners and non-experts should be warned about the new software systems—all varieties of them. They require enormous quantities of computer memory. Many will simply not function in computers of just a few years ago. Others will, but in a sorely limited capacity.

A final group of non-system softwares interesting to computer editors is graphics. They are gaining sophistication with every passing day, but simply put, computer graphics convert things other than type fonts into bits and bytes. Thus they may be introduced, along with words, onto a printed page. The cover and all of the cartoons in this manual are derived from graphic images stored on computer floppy disks.

Like type fonts, there are graphics collections in commercial libraries. Some Society bulletin editors have created extensive libraries of specialized barbershop graphics. Our headquarters staff in Kenosha has a limited collection of barbershop images in the works. It will eventually be available from the merchandise department. Of the commercial suppliers, The ARTMAKER COMPANY, Claremont, Calif. 91711, has an extensive collection, handily grouped in many categories and reasonably priced.

There are a number of software formats for storing graphic images, but the two most popular are “PC Paintbrush” (PCX) and “Tagged Image File Format” (TIFF.) These are the systems nearly all commercial libraries supply, because they are the most adaptable to a wide variety of application softwares.

A detailed discussion of graphics is neither appropriate nor possible here. Let’s just say that images—be they photographs or simple line drawings—are stored as thousands of bits, either black, white, or some shade of color. They require huge amounts of memory. The cover of this manual, a simple line drawing and a few words of text, requires 96 thousand bytes



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PART 11

Contests: Do I have to put myself through that wringer?

Of course you don't! To compete or not is the individual editor's personal decision. But before you dismiss bulletin contests altogether, let's have a look at them.

As in quartet contests, chorus contests and horse races, competition improves the breed. It's a fact. The reason, of course, is preparing for competition makes us all strive for perfection. We rarely attain, but we *do* strive.

And there *are* positive results. Example: not long ago an editor rose from worst bulletin in his district to Bulletin Editor of the Year in the space of only three years. How? Well, he submitted to competition, took considerable lumps from the contest judges, and applied to his bulletins everything he learned from the experiences.

Isn't that a rosy story? A great many editors don't see it that way. "I don't publish for a bunch of blankety-blank judges," they grumble, "I publish what my chapter wants to read."

That's all well and good. Certainly, it's a legitimate opinion. But there's a side to bulletin competition other than striving for honors. It's that improvement of the breed we just talked about. That last-to-first place story can easily happen again. And is there something wrong with publishing "...what my chapter wants to read" in a first-class format and style?

Whether an editor chooses to compete or not, he should have a thorough knowledge of the criteria applied to bulletin contests. They are the distilled savvy from a lot of good editors gone before. The criteria, diligently laid on, are guaranteed to produce chapter bulletins that are attractive and easy to read, and provide the services to members discussed in Part 1 of this manual.

The judges' score sheets for the three bulletin contest categories, Grammar and Style, Layout and Reproduction, and Content, appear in the appendix to this manual. Give them a thorough reading. Note the things the category experts deem important to a good bulletin. How many of them are in your chapter's bulletin? How many could be, with a little more effort on the editor's part?

There's precious little reward in the bulletin editor's job. It's often quite a thankless task. About the only gratification guaranteed a bulletin editor is the quiet, personal satisfaction that he's doing a whale of a good job. That's what keeps veteran editors plugging away at the task, year after year after year.

Some say that today's bulletin contests are rigged in the favor of computer-equipped editors. There may be a grain of truth in that, but the advantage, if there truly is one, is minute. It would have to lie within the Layout and Reproduction Category, because the fanciest computer in the Society can't give an advantage in either the Content or the Grammar and Style categories. They depend solely on the editor's skills.

So don't turn your back on bulletin contests without consideration. They offer valuable lessons to be learned, and if you put out a little effort, there are a great many wonderful bulletin editor pen pals to be cultivated. Give it some thought.



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Typography

A partial definition of *typography* is, “The art of printing with type.” Certainly the design of type fonts is an art of itself.

Our alphabet (at least its capital letters) comes directly from the Romans, who borrowed heavily from the earlier Greeks and Etruscans. However, scholars can trace our alphabet even further back, to the Phoenicians, more than 3,000 years ago. Much later, toward the end of the first millennium A.D., Charlemagne’s court standardized on a written form which included most of the features of our lower case alphabet.

Then, some 500 years later, with the invention of movable type—first as letters carved on wood blocks, later as metal castings—typography sprang to life as an art. It has developed unabated ever since. Today it is also a science, with type designers concerned not only with the appearance of new fonts, but with their psychological impact on readers and with their incorporation into new and broadening fields of type reproduction. A few basic facts about typography are worth knowing.

A *font* is a complete set of characters in one size and typeface. 12-point Courier is one font. The same set of characters in another size constitutes another font. Fonts are identified by their size, typeface family, weight and style. For 12-point Courier bold italic, 12-point is the size, Courier the typeface family, bold the weight and italic the style. Where the weight and style of a font are “normal,” their terms are usually omitted.

Font size is usually expressed in a number of “points.” A *point* is a printer’s measurement, equal to 1/12 a pica, or 1/72 of an inch. Point size is the approximate distance from the top of a font’s tallest character to the bottom of its lowest character. Approximate because some fonts are designed to be taller. 11-point Helvetica may appear as tall, or taller than 12-point Times Roman.

Point size does not describe the width of characters. They will vary. Obviously, the letters “i” and “l” do not occupy the same horizontal space as “m” or “w.” Moreover, many font families have *compressed* or *expanded* variants. Fonts for typewriters and daisy wheel printers are quite limited in number, and the width of their characters is determined by the mechanical means used to advance type across the printed page.

In such cases, fonts are not measured by point size, but by characters per inch (cpi), referred to as pitch. A 10-pitch font will produce 10 characters per inch, each occupying its discrete 1/10-inch of space (*monospacing*.) Virtually all typewriters of a few decades ago used 10-pitch Courier. More modern printing devices— including some electronic typewriters—are capable of producing *proportional spaced* fonts. In this case, advancing the type across the paper is determined by the relative width of each character in the font. Hence, the results when comparing 12-pitch Courier (mono) and 12-pitch Roman (proportional):

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz (mono)
 abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz (proportional)

Note: *If your computer does not have these fonts loaded, you may not be able to tell the difference between those lines.*

The difference between mono and proportional spacing becomes most obvious with the examination of spaces between letters h–l on the two lines.

Serif and *sans serif* are terms used to describe the forms into which most type falls. Serifs are the little “finishing strokes” that appear, for example, at the bottom and at both ends of the crossbar on this letter “T”, printed in 12-point Times. Printed in 12-point Helvetica, the “T” clearly lacks any trace of serifs. Serif fonts are generally considered more suitable for printed text. The more modern appearance of sans serif fonts is better suited for

advertising, headlines and computer applications such as spread sheets.

Style and *weight* refer to the variants possible in most fonts. Style is commonly available in two variations: *roman* (upright) and *italic* (slanted to the right.) Weight is an approximate measure of thickness for the various stroke elements that make up each character in a font. Added weight is usually expressed with the term “**bold**”.

Kerning is another term that crops up in discussions of typography. Basically, kerning is the discrete adjustment of spaces between printed characters beyond that usually provided by the printing equipment and the type font. It is useful for improving appearance of such things as very large fonts in display ads and the like. Kerning is a feature of many typesetting systems and computer programs, but will not be discussed further here.



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How to write clearly

By Edward T. Thompson
Editor-in-Chief, *Reader's Digest*

Mr. Thompson shares some of what he learned in nineteen years with Reader's Digest, a magazine famous for making complicated subjects understandable to millions of readers.

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If you are afraid to write, don't be. If you think you've got to string together big fancy words and high-flying phrases, forget it.

To write well, unless you aspire to be a professional poet or novelist, you need only to get your ideas across simply and clearly.

It's not easy. But it *is* easier than you might imagine.

There are only three basic requirements:

- First, you must *want* to write clearly. And I believe you really do, if you've stayed this far with me.
- Second, you must be willing to *work hard*. Thinking means work--and that's what it takes to do anything well.
- Third, you must know and follow some *basic guidelines*.

If, while you're writing for clarity, some lovely, dramatic or inspired phrases or sentences come to you, fine. Put them in.

But then with cold, objective eyes and mind ask yourself: "Do they detract from clarity?" If they do, grit your teeth and cut the frills.

Follow some basic guidelines

I can't give you a complete list of "dos and don'ts" for every writing problem you'll ever face.

But I can give you some fundamental guidelines that cover the most common problems.

Outline what you want to say

I know that sounds grade-schoolish. But you can't write clearly until, *before you start*, you know where you will stop.

Ironically, that's even a problem in writing an outline (i.e. knowing the ending before you begin.)

So try this method:

- On 3"x5" cards, write--one point to a card--all the points you need to make.
- Divide the cards into piles--one pile for each group of points *closely related* to each other. (If you were describing an automobile, you'd put all the points about mileage in one pile, all the points about safety in another, and so on.)
- Arrange your piles of points in a sequence. Which are the most important and should be given first or saved for last? Which must you present before others in order to make the others understandable?
- Now, *within* each pile, do the same thing--arrange the *points* in logical, understandable order.

There you have your outline, needing only an introduction and a conclusion.

This is a practical way to outline. It's also flexible. You can add, delete or change the location of points easily.

Start where your readers are

How much do they know about the subject? Don't write to a level higher than your readers' knowledge of it.

CAUTION: Forget about that old--and wrong--advice about writing to a 12-year-old mentality. That's insulting. But do remember that your prime purpose is to explain something, not prove that you're smarter than your readers.

Avoid jargon

Don't use words, expressions, phrases known only to people with specific knowledge or interests.

Example: A scientist, using scientific jargon, wrote, "The biota exhibited a one hundred percent mortality response." He could have written: "All the fish died."

Use familiar combinations of words

A speech writer for President Franklyn D. Roosevelt wrote, "We are endeavoring to construct a more inclusive society." F.D.R. changed it to, "We're going to make a country in which no one is left out."

CAUTION: By familiar combinations of words, I do not mean incorrect grammar. *That* can be *unclear*.

Example: John's father says he can't go out Friday. (Who can't go out? John or his father?)

Use "first-degree" words

These words immediately bring an image to your mind. Other words must be "translated" through the first-degree word before you see the image. These are second/third degree words.

First-degree words are usually the most precise words, too.

First-degree words	Second/third degree words
<i>face</i>	<i>visage, countenance</i>
<i>stay</i>	<i>abide, remain, reside</i>
<i>book</i>	<i>volumn, tome, publication</i>

Stick to the point

Your outline--which was more work in the beginning--now saves you work. Because now you can ask about any sentence you write: "Does it relate to a point in the outline? If it doesn't, should I add it to the outline? If not, I'm getting off the track." Then, full steam ahead--on the main line.

Be as brief as possible

Whatever you write, shortening--*condensing*--almost always makes it tighter, straighter, easier to read and understand.

Condensing, as *Reader's Digest* does it, is in large part artistry. But it involves techniques that anyone can learn and use.

- *Present your points in logical ABC order:* Here again, your outline should save you work because, if you did it right, your points already stand in logical ABC order--A makes B understandable, B makes C understandable and so on. To write in a straight line is to say something clearly in the fewest possible words.
- *Don't waste words telling people what they already know:* Notice how we edited this: "Have you ever wondered how banks rate you as a credit risk? **You know, of course, that it's some combination of facts about your income, your job, and so on. But actually,** Many banks have a scoring system...."
- *Cut out excess evidence and unnecessary anecdotes:* Usually, one fact or example (at most, two) will support a point. More just belabor it. And while writing about something may remind you of a good story, ask yourself: "Does it *really help* to tell the story, or does it slow me down?"

(Many people think *Reader's Digest* articles are filled with anecdotes. Actually, we use them sparingly and usually for one of two reasons: either the subject is so dry it needs some "humanity" to give it life; or the subject is so hard to grasp, it needs anecdotes to help readers understand. If the subject is both lively and easy to grasp, we move right along.)

- *Look for the most common word wasters:* windy phrases.

Windy Phrase	Cut to
at the present time	now
in the event of	if
in the majority of instances	usually

- *Look for passive verbs you can make active:* Invariably, this produces a shorter sentence. "The cherry tree was chopped down by George Washington." (Passive verb and nine words.) "George Washington chopped down the cherry tree." (Active verb and seven words.)
- *Look for positive/negative sections from which you can cut the negative:* See how we did it here: "The answer **does not rest with carelessness or incompetence. It lies largely in** (is) having enough people to do the job."
- Finally, to write more clearly by saying it in fewer words: when you've finished, stop



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How to write with style

By Kurt Vonnegut

Kurt Vonnegut, author of such novels as "Slaughterhouse-Five," "Jailbird" and "Cat's Cradle" tells you how to put your style and personality into everything you write.

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Newspaper reporters and technical writers are trained to reveal almost nothing about themselves in their writings. This makes them freaks in the world of writers, since almost all of the other ink-stained wretches in that world reveal a lot about themselves to readers. We call these revelations, accidental and intentional, elements of style.

These revelations tell us as readers what sort of person it is with whom we are spending time. Does the writer sound ignorant or informed, stupid or bright, crooked or honest, humorless or playful--? And on and on.

Why should you examine your writing style with the idea of improving it? Do so as a mark of respect for your readers, whatever you're writing. If you scribble your thoughts any which way, your readers will surely feel that you care nothing about them. They will mark you down as an egomaniac or a chowderhead--or worse, they will stop reading you.

The most damning revelation you can make about yourself is that you do not know what is interesting and what is not. Don't you yourself like or dislike writers mainly for what they choose to show you or make you think about? Did you ever admire an empty-headed writer for his or her mastery of the language? No.

So your own winning style must begin with ideas in your head.

Find a subject you care about.

Find a subject you care about and which you in your heart feel others should care about. It is this genuine caring, and not your games with language, which will be the most compelling and seductive element in your style.

I am not urging you to write a novel, by the way--although I would not be sorry if you wrote one, provided you genuinely cared about something. A petition to the mayor about a pothole in front of your house or a love letter to the girl next door will do.

Do not ramble, though.

I won't ramble on about that.

Keep it simple.

As for your use of language: Remember that two great masters of language, William Shakespeare and James Joyce, wrote sentences which were almost childlike when their subjects were most profound.

"Should I act upon the urgings that I feel, or remain passive and thus cease to exist?"
"To be or not to be?"

"To be or not to be?" asks Shakespeare's Hamlet. The longest word is three letters long.

Joyce, when he was frisky, could put together a sentence as intricate as a necklace for Cleopatra, but my favorite sentence in his short story "Eveline" is this one: "She was tired." At that point in the story, no other words could break the heart of a reader as those three words do.

Simplicity of language is not only reputable, but perhaps even sacred. The Bible opens with a sentence well within the writing skills of a lively fourteen-year-old: “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”

Have the guts to cut.

It may be that you, too, are capable of making necklaces for Cleopatra, so to speak. But your eloquence should be the servant of the ideas in your head. Your rule might be this: If a sentence, no matter how excellent, does not illuminate your subject in some new and useful way, scratch it out.

Sound like yourself.

The writing style which is most natural to you is bound to echo the speech you heard when a child. English was the novelist Joseph Conrad’s third language, and much that seems piquant in his use of English was no doubt colored by his first language, which was Polish. And lucky indeed is the writer who has grown up in Ireland, for the English spoken there is so amusing and musical. I myself grew up in Indianapolis, where common speech sounds like a band saw cutting galvanized tin, and employs a vocabulary as unornamental as a monkey wrench.

In some of the more remote hollows of Appalachia, children still grow up hearing songs and locutions of Elizabethan times. Yes, and many Americans grow up hearing a language other than English, or an English dialect a majority of Americans cannot understand.

All these varieties of speech are beautiful, just as the varieties of butterflies are beautiful. No matter what your first language, you should treasure it all your life. If it happens not to be standard English, and if it shows itself when you write standard English, the result is usually delightful, like a very pretty girl with one eye that is green and one that is blue.

I myself find that I trust my own writing most, and others seem to trust it most, too, when I sound most like a person from Indianapolis, which is what I am. What alternatives do I have? The one most vehemently recommended by teachers has no doubt been pressed on you, as well: to write like cultivated Englishmen of a century or more ago.

Say what you mean to say.

I used to be exasperated by such teachers, but I am no more. I understand now that all those antique essays and stories with which I was to compare my own work were not magnificent for their datedness or foreignness, but for saying precisely what their authors meant them to say. My teachers wished me to write accurately, always selecting the most effective words, and relating the words to one another unambiguously, rigidly, like parts of a machine. The teachers did not want to turn me into an Englishman after all. They hoped that I would become understandable--and therefore understood.

And there went my dream of doing with words what Pablo Picasso did with paint or what any number of jazz idols did with music. If I broke all the rules of punctuation, had words mean whatever I wanted them to mean, and strung them together higgledy-piggledy, I would simply not be understood. So you, too, had better avoid Picasso-style or jazz-style writing, if you have something worth saying and wish to be understood.

Readers want our pages to look very much like pages they have seen before. Why? This is because they themselves have a tough job to do, and they need all the help they can get from us.

Pity the readers.

They have to identify thousands of little marks on paper, and make sense of them immediately. They have to read, an art so difficult that most people don't really master it even after having studied it all through grade school and high school--twelve long years.

So this discussion must finally acknowledge that our stylistic options as writers are neither numerous nor glamorous, since our readers are bound to be such imperfect artists. Our audience requires us to be sympathetic and patient teachers, ever willing to simplify and clarify--whereas we would rather soar high above the crowd, singing like nightingales.

That is the bad news. The good news is that we Americans are governed under a unique Constitution, which allows us to write whatever we please without fear of punishment. So the most meaningful aspect of our styles, which is what we choose to write about, is utterly unlimited.

For really detailed advice

For a discussion of literary style in a narrower sense, I commend to your attention *The Elements of Style*, by William Strunk, Jr. and E.B. White (Macmillan, 1979). E.B. White is, of course, one of the most admirable literary stylists this country has so far produced.

You should realize, too, that no one would care how well or how badly Mr. White expressed himself, if he did not have perfectly enchanting things to say



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How to spell

By John Irving

John Irving, a author of “The World According to Garp,” “The Hotel New Hampshire” and “Setting Free The Bears,” among other novels—and once a hopelessly bad speller himself—teaches you how to improve your spelling.

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Let’s begin with the bad news. If you’re a bad speller, you probably think you will always be. There are exceptions to every spelling rule, and the rules themselves are easy to forget. George Bernard Shaw demonstrated how ridiculous some spelling rules are. By following the rules, he said, we could spell fish this way: ghoti. The “f” as it sounds in enough, the “i” as it sounds in women, and the “sh” as it sounds in fiction.

With such rules to follow, no one should feel stupid for being a bad speller. But there are ways to improve. Start by acknowledging the mess that English spelling is in--but have sympathy: English spelling changed with foreign influences. Chaucer wrote “geese,” but “guess,” imported earlier by the Norman invaders, finally replaced it. Most early printers in England came from Holland; they brought “ghost” and “gherkin” with them.

If you’d like to intimidate yourself--and remain a bad speller forever--just try to remember the 13 different ways the sound “sh” can be written:

shoe suspicion sugar
ocean nauseous conscious
issue chaperone nation
mansion schist fuchsia
pshaw

Now the good news

The good news is that 90 percent of all writing consists of 1,000 basic words. There is, also, a method to most English spelling and a great number of how-to-spell books. Remarkably, all these books propose learning the same rules! Not surprisingly, most of these books are humorless.

Just keep this in mind: If you’re familiar with the words you use, you’ll probably spell them correctly--and you shouldn’t be writing words you’re unfamiliar with anyway. USE a word--out loud, and more than once--before you try writing it, and make sure (with a new word) that you know what it means before you use it. This means you’ll have to look it up in a dictionary, where you’ll not only learn what it means, but you’ll see how it’s spelled. Choose a dictionary you enjoy browsing in and guard it as you would a diary. You wouldn’t lend a diary, would you?

A tip on looking it up. Beside every word I look up in my dictionary, I make a mark. Beside every word I look up more than once, I write a note to myself--about WHY I looked it up. I have looked up “strictly” 14 times since 1964. I prefer to spell it with a k--as in “stricktly”. I have looked up “ubiquitous” a dozen times. I can’t remember what it means.

Another good way to use your dictionary: When you have to look up a word, for any reason, learn--and learn to spell--a new word at the same time. It can be any useful word on the same page as the word you looked up. Put the date beside this new word and see how quickly, or in what way, you forget it. Eventually, you’ll learn it.

Almost as important as knowing what a word means (in order to spell it) is knowing how it’s pronounced. It’s

government, not goverment. It's February, not Febuary. And if you know that anti- means against, you should know how to spell antidote and antibiotic and antifreeze. If you know that ante- means before, you shouldn't have trouble spelling antechamber or antecedent.

incomprehensibilities

This is one of the longest English words in common use. But don't let the length of a word frighten you. There's a rule for how to spell this one, and you can learn it.

Some rules, exceptions, and two tricks.

I don't have room to touch on all the rules here. It would take a book to do that. But I can share a few that help me most:

What about -ary or -ery? When a word has a primary accent on the first syllable and a secondary accent on the next-to-last syllable (sec're tar'y) it usually ends in -ary. Only six important words like this end in -ery:

cemetery monastery millinery
confectionery distillery stationery
(as in paper)

Here's another easy rule. Only four words end in -efy. Most people misspell them --with -ify, which is usually correct. Just memorize these, too, and use -ify for all the rest.

stupefy putrefy liquefy rarefy

As a former bad speller, I have learned a few valuable tricks. Any good how-to-spell book will teach you more than these two, but these two are my favorites. Of the 800,000 words in the English language, the most frequently misspelled is alright; just remember that alright is all wrong. You wouldn't write alwrong, would you? That's how you know you should write all right.

The other trick is for the truly worst spellers. I mean those of you who spell so badly that you can't get close enough to the right way to spell a word in order to even FIND it in the dictionary. The word you're looking for is there, of course, but you won't find it the way you're trying to spell it. What to do is look up a synonym--another word that means the same thing. Chances are good that you'll find the word you're looking for under the definition of the synonym.

Demon words and bugbears.

Everyone has a few demon words--they never look right, even when they're spelled correctly. Three of my demon words are medieval, ecstasy, and rhythm. I have learned to hate these words, but I have not learned to spell them; I have to look them up every time.

And everyone has a spelling rule that is a bugbear--it's either too difficult to learn or it's impossible to remember. My personal bugbear among the rules is the one governing whether you add -able or -ible. I can teach it to you, but I can't remember it myself.

You add -able to a full word: adapt, adaptable; work, workable. You add -able to words that end in e--just remember to drop the final e: love, lovable. But if the word ends in two e's, like agree, you keep them both: agreeable.

You add -ible if the base is not a full word that can stand on its own: credible, tangible, horrible, terrible. You add -ible if the root word ends in -ns: responsible. You add -ible if the root word ends in -miss: permissible. You add -ible if the root word ends in a soft c (but remember to drop the final e!): force, forcible.

Got that? I don't have it, and I was introduced to that rule in prep school; with that rule, I still learn one word at a time.

Poor President Jackson

You must remember that it is permissible for spelling to drive you crazy. Spelling had this effect on Andrew Jackson, who once blew his stack while trying to write a Presidential paper. "It's a damn poor mind that can think of only one way to spell a word!" the President cried.

When you have trouble, think of poor Andrew Jackson and know that you're not alone.

What's really important.

And remember what's really important about good writing is not good spelling. If you spell badly but write well, you should hold your head up. As the poet T.S. Eliot recommended, "Write for as large and miscellaneous an audience as possible"--and don't be overly concerned if you can't spell "miscellaneous." Also remember that you can spell correctly and write well and still be misunderstood. Hold your head up about that, too.

As good old G.C. Lichtenberg said, "A book is a mirror: if an ass peers into it, you can't expect an apostle to look out"--whether you spell apostle correctly or not.



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How to punctuate

By Russell Baker

Russell Baker, winner of the Pulitzer Prize for his book, "Growing Up," and for his essays in "The New York Times" helps you to make better use of punctuation, one of the printed word's most valuable tools.

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When you write, you make a sound in the reader's head. It can be a dull mumble--that's why so much government prose makes you sleepy--or it can be a joyful noise, a sly whisper, a throb of passion.

Listen to a voice trembling in a haunted room:

"And the silken, sad, uncertain rustling of each purple curtain thrilled me—filled me with fantastic terrors never felt before..."

That's Edgar Allan Poe, a master. Few of us can make paper speak as vividly as Poe could, but even beginners will write better once they start listening to the sound their writing makes.

"My tools of the trade should be yours, too. Good use of punctuation can help you build a more solid, more readable sentence."

One of the most important tools for making paper speak in your own voice is punctuation.

When speaking aloud, you punctuate constantly--with body language. Your listener hears commas, dashes, question marks, exclamation points, quotation marks as you shout, whisper, pause, wave your arms, roll your eyes, wrinkle your brow.

In writing, punctuation plays the role of body language. It helps readers hear you the way you want to be heard.

"Gee, Dad, have I got to learn all them rules?"

Don't let the rules scare you. For they aren't hard and fast. Think of them as guidelines.

Am I saying, "Go ahead and punctuate as you please?" Absolutely not. Use your own common sense, remembering that you can't expect readers to work to decipher what you're trying to say.

"Punctuation puts body language on the printed page. Show bewilderment with a question mark, a whisper with parentheses, emphasis with an exclamation point."

There are two basic systems of punctuation:

1. The loose or open system, which tries to capture the way body language punctuates talk.
2. The tight, closed structural system, which hews closely to the sentence's grammatical structure.

Most writers use a little of both. In any case, we use much less punctuation than they used 200 or even 50 years ago. (Glance into Edward Gibbon's "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," first published in 1776, for an example of the tight structural system at its most elegant.)

No matter which system you prefer, be warned: punctuation marks cannot save a sentence that is badly put together. If you have to struggle over commas, semicolons and dashes, you've probably built a sentence that's never going to fly, no matter how you tinker with it. Throw it away and build a new one to a simpler design. The better your sentence, the easier it is to punctuate.

Choosing the right tool

There are 30 main punctuation marks, but you'll need fewer than a dozen for most writing.

I can't show you in this small space how they all work, so I'll stick to the ten most important—and even then can hit only highlights. For more details, check your dictionary or a good grammar.

Comma [,]

This is the most widely used mark of all. It's also the toughest and most controversial. I've seen aging editors come almost to blows over the comma. If you can handle it without sweating, the others will be easy. Here's my policy:

1. Use a comma after a long introductory phrase or clause:
After stealing the crown jewels from the Tower of London, I went home for tea.
2. If the introductory material is short, forget the comma:
After the theft I went home for tea.
3. But use it if the sentence would be confusing without it, like this:
The day before I'd robbed the Bank of England.
4. Use a comma to separate elements in a series:
I robbed the Denver Mint, the Bank of England, the Tower of London and my piggy bank.
Notice there is no comma before and in the series. This is common style nowadays, but some publishers use a comma there, too.
5. Use a comma to separate independent clauses that are joined by a conjunction like and, but, for, or, nor, because or so:
I shall return the crown jewels, for they are too heavy to wear.
6. Use a comma to set off a mildly parenthetical word grouping that isn't essential to the sentence:
Girls, who always have interested me, usually differ from boys.
Do not use commas if the word grouping is essential to the sentence's meaning:
Girls who interest me know how to tango.
7. Use a comma in direct address:
Your majesty, please hand over the crown.
8. And between proper names and titles:
Montague Sneed, Director of Scotland Yard, was assigned the case.
9. And to separate elements of geographical address:
Director Sneed comes from Chicago, Illinois, and now lives in London, England.

Generally speaking, use a comma where you'd pause briefly in speech. For a long pause or completion of thought, use a period.

If you confuse the comma with the period, you'll get a run-on sentence: The Bank of England is located in London, I rushed right over to rob it.

Semicolon [;]

A more sophisticated mark than the comma, the semicolon separates two main clauses, but it keeps those two thoughts more tightly linked than a period can: *I steal crown jewels; she steals hearts.*

Dash [—] and Parentheses [()]

Warning! Use sparingly. The dash **SHOUTS**. Parentheses whisper. Shout too often, people stop listening; whisper too much, people become suspicious of you.

The dash creates a dramatic pause to prepare for an expression needing strong emphasis: *I'll marry you—if you'll rob Topkapi with me.*

Parentheses help you pause quietly to drop in some chatty information not vital to your story: *Despite Betty's daring spirit ("I love robbing your piggy bank," she often said), she was a terrible dancer.*

Quotation marks [“ ”]

These tell the reader you're reciting the exact words someone said or wrote: *Betty said, "I can't tango."* **Or:** *"I can't tango," Betty said.*

Notice the comma comes before the quote marks in the first example, but comes inside them in the second. Not logical? Never mind. Do it that way anyhow.

Colon [:]

A colon is a tip-off to get ready for what's next: a list, a long quotation or an explanation. This article is riddled with colons. Too many, maybe, but the message is: "Stay on your toes; it's coming at you."

Apostrophe [']

The big headache is with possessive nouns. If the noun is singular, add 's: *I hated Betty's tango.*

If the noun is plural, simply add an apostrophe after the s: *Those are the girls' coats.*

The same applies for singular nouns ending in s, like Dickens: *This is Dickens's best book.* And in the plural: *This is the Dickenses' cottage.*

The possessive pronouns hers and its have no apostrophe. If you write it's, you are saying it is.

Keep cool

You know about ending a sentence with a period (.) or a question mark (?). Do it. Sure, you can also end with an exclamation point (!), but must you? Usually it just makes you sound breathless and silly. Make your writing generate its own excitement. Filling the paper with !!!! won't make up for what your writing has failed to do.

Too many exclamation points make me think the writer is talking about the panic in his own head.

Don't sound panicky. End with a period. I am serious. A period. Understand?

Well...sometimes a question mark is okay.



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† Recommended reading



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