

NJLA Newsletter: Writers' Guidelines for Great Articles

- 1.** Before submitting an article, communicate with the newsletter editor (newsletter_editor@njlamembers.org) to get your exact assignment, article length, and deadline. Please don't send unsolicited articles because they may overlap others that have already been assigned.
- 2.** As you write, be sure that you tell your story chronologically. It's clearer for readers that way.
- 3.** Use an informal, but informative, tone. No need to write academic prose; no citations required. Use active voice ("I did it"), not passive ("work was done.").
- 4.** Please only use a single space after a period.
- 5.** If you cite a lot of works and need to use footnotes, please do NOT use the footnote option that automatically puts your notes at the bottom of each page. (This does not carry over into the publishing software.) Instead, simply insert your own superscript¹ numbers² and then type the cite text at the end of your document. Use any citation format you like; just use it consistently throughout.
- 6.** In the electronic newsletter, we can use live links. However, we shouldn't link words themselves, b/c some people will still print the newsletter. So you still need to include the URL itself, and make that live. For example: "You can learn more at our website, www.anytown-library.org." Not "You can learn more at our website." Do make your links live so we can click on them to check them.
- 7.** Be sure to include a headline (which may be changed later to fit the space, but still write one). Also write a byline, your name exactly as you want it to appear.
- 8.** Also write a short biography at the end of the article, *in this exact format*: "[your name] is [title] at [organization] in [city]. He / she holds an [degree] from [school] in [city, state]." Then mention any special experience you have that qualifies you to write the article or any related projects or published works. End with "His / her email address is []." Note: If school or library is in NJ, no need to specify state. Also, do not repeat the city or state if it's in a school or library name. For instance, use "The Darien Library in CT" -- not "in Darien, CT."
- 9.** It is great if every article can have graphics. Please think about photos, charts, flyers, or screenshots that could accompany your article and clarify your points. The .jpg format is best. Please include captions. Note: Captions get periods if they're full sentences (subject-verb), just like any other sentence.
- 10.** Submit the article by 5 p.m. the day of your deadline. In the days that follow, expect an email from the editor that will ask for answers or further info as your article is processed.

Writers' Grammar & Punctuation Cheat Sheet

The NJLA Newsletter uses the Associated Press Style as a guide for writing with a few exceptions. Below are some commonly referenced rules.

Acronyms & Abbreviations: Spell out full name on first reference and use acronym or abbreviations on later references (no periods necessary in abbreviations). For these “well-known” ones, we do not have to spell out at all: ACRL, ALA, NJ, NJLA, NJSL, PL, SLA

For academic degrees, use periods in abbreviations. Also, you do not need to use the word "degree" after the abbreviation. So, just "B.A." not "B.A. degree."

Capitalization: Capitalize only proper names and titles. Lowercase formal titles and job titles of people if they appear without a person's name, follow a person's name, or are set off before a name by commas.

Always CAP the word following a hyphen in a title. Examples: Re-Opening, Open-Access Policy, etc.

Always CAP the first word after a colon if it starts a complete sentence.

Example: "The problem was clear: Nobody knew the library had started loaning e-books."

Do not CAP words such as “association,” “library,” “department,” “branch,” or “newsletter” unless you're using the full name.

Do not CAP "anniversary" in things like "... marked its 100th anniversary." (The only exception would be an official event title, like "The Great JM Library 400th Anniversary Extravaganza.")

Commas: Always use the last comma before the and / or (called the “serial comma”). So we'd say “We ordered bacon, eggs, and toast.”

Dashes: To clarify all the kinds and lengths of dashes:

- is a Hyphen, used to tie compound words together

– is an En dash, used only between numbers and similar ranges

— is an Em dash, used for a long pause, for emphasis

There should not be any spaces before or after any of these dashes.

Example: The new-members meeting will be from 4–6 p.m. Thursday—not from 3–6 as originally announced.

Diction: that/which: Use “that” for essential clauses, important to the meaning of a sentence, without commas.

Example: I remember the day that we met.

Use “which” for nonessential clauses, where the pronoun is less necessary, and use commas.

Example: The team, which finished last a year ago, is in first place.

Lists: When a numbered list is within a sentence, then, 1) use parentheses for each number, 2) separate with commas, and 3) end with a period.

When a numbered list is spread out:

1. Use periods (not parens) after numbers.
2. Use periods at the end of complete sentences.
3. Capitalize the complete sentences.
4. for phrases, no caps or periods
5. Never make it one huge sentence w/ period at the end!

Numbers: Spell out words for one–nine; use numerals for 10 and above.

EXCEPT: Always use numerals for anything to do with time or dates.

Example: We expect three visitors to arrive at 3 p.m. on Jan. 7, 2011.

Percent: Always use the % symbol instead of spelling out the word. (No space between the number and the % sign.)

Phone Numbers: Use all dashes: 732-732-7327

Placement of Quotation Marks: Periods and commas go *inside* the quotation marks.

Examples: The only word that comes to mind is “kind.”

She’s selling her car “as is,” and I know it needs a lot of work.

Colons and semicolons go *outside* the quotation marks.

Examples: I learned a lot from the article “Sending and Receiving Electronic Messages”; I recommend it highly.

These people contributed to the article “Mikey Made a Million”:
Karen Jenkins, Steven Lattimore, and Keith Wilson.

Question marks and exclamation points go *inside* the quotation marks when they punctuate just the quoted material.

Examples: I’d like to read “How Did the Bubble Burst?”

I read an article called “Change Happens!”

Question marks and exclamation points go *outside* the quotation marks when they punctuate the entire sentence.

Examples: Did Jim say, “I won’t work on that project”?

I hated the article “Mikey Made a Million”!

Tech Words and Companies:

- *cellphone*
- *download*
- *eBay Inc.* (use *EBay Inc.* when the word begins a sentence)
- *e-book*
- *e-book reader*

- *e-reader*
- *email*
- *Facebook*
- *Google, Googling, Googled*
- *hashtag*
- *IM (IMed, IMing; for first reference, use instant messenger)*
- *Internet*
- *iPad, iPhone, iPod* (Rewrite if the word begins a sentence)
- *LinkedIn*
- *social media*
- *smartphone*
- *Twitter, tweet, tweeted, retweet*
- *web page*
- *webmaster, website*
- *YouTube*
- *3-D*

(Source: Arnold, C., Cook, T., Koyama, D., Angeli, E., & Paiz, J. (2014, Dec. 2). *Associated Press Style*. Retrieved from <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/735/02/>)

Titles: Articles: Quote marks (“Working Smarter” article in *ACRL News*)
 Books & Magazines in print: Italicize (*Meatball Sundaes*)
 Committees: Capitalize full proper names (Newsletter Editorial Board, or later references, w/o full name: “the board”)
 Conference & Major Event titles: Capitalize main words (Attend Newark’s Grand Re-Opening Gala!)

Conference Sessions, Project or Campaign Names: Capitalize main words AND use quote marks to set them apart. (At the NJLA Annual Conference, don’t miss the session on “Wacky Grammar Rules” and learn about the award-winning “Best Patron Campaign.”)

Job titles: Capitalize (Assistant Director)

URLs: Do not add underlines; the links in an online newsletter can be live and so they will appear with underlines already.

Remove the “http://” to save space; start URLs with “www.”

EXCEPT: Certain URLs have no “www”—in that case, keep the “http://”

For help, remember this rule: a URL always has to start with either “www” or “http://”—it can never just start with the letters.