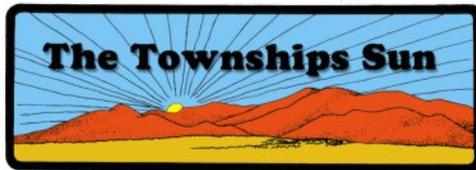


**tylvoices**  
townships young voices

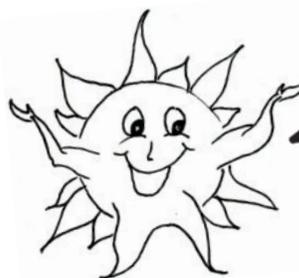


# *e-Guide*

## Art, Photos, Poetry, Fiction & Nonfiction for Magazines

How to create, write, win awards, and have  
your work published in magazines, especially  
in the *Townships Sun*

**R.A. Garber**, Editor, with  
the *Townships Young Voices*  
Coordinator & Workshop Leaders:  
**Cécilia Alain** (Art, Photos)  
**Jan Draper** (Poetry)  
**Scott Stevenson** (Nonfiction)  
**Rebecca Welton** (Fiction)



a little  
space to be  
creative.



Draft 8, November 30, 2022

## The e-Guide Writers

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**Rebecca Welton** of Bromont has an MSc from the London School of Economics. She is an author and writer, and the editor of *Hope and Resilience in the Time of COVID*, an anthology of community writing and artistry.

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# e-Guide

## Art, Photos, Poetry, Fiction & Nonfiction for Magazines

How to create, write, win awards, and have your work published in magazines, especially in the *Townships Sun*

### 1. Introduction

#### **Who Are We?**

The *Townships Sun* is a community magazine. That means two things.

First, our magazine is in the community sector. We are a non-profit organization primarily staffed by volunteers, and governed by a board of volunteer community representatives.

Second, our focus is the English-speaking minority community in the Eastern Townships of Quebec, Canada. We prioritize community life and culture.

We are motivated by love for our magazine and our community.

Hi! My name is Sunny. I'll be offering a few tips and comments as you explore this guide.

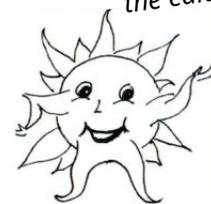


#### **How Did the Townships Sun Get Its Start?**

A group of young people started the *Townships Sun* in the early 1970s, at a time when many English speakers were fleeing the Townships and Quebec. Wanting to help people adjust to life in the new reality of separatist politics, they formed the Eastern Townships Social Action Group, and published the first issue of the *Townships Sun* on February 8, 1974.

For many years, the *Townships Sun* was published in tabloid format; in 2005 it changed to a magazine format. But its content has always been that of a creative community magazine. Over the years, several well known authors have written regularly for the *Townships Sun*, and have had their books published under the label of *Sun Books*.

Hot tip! If you want to write for a magazine, get to know it first. You'll have a much better idea of what the editor is looking for.

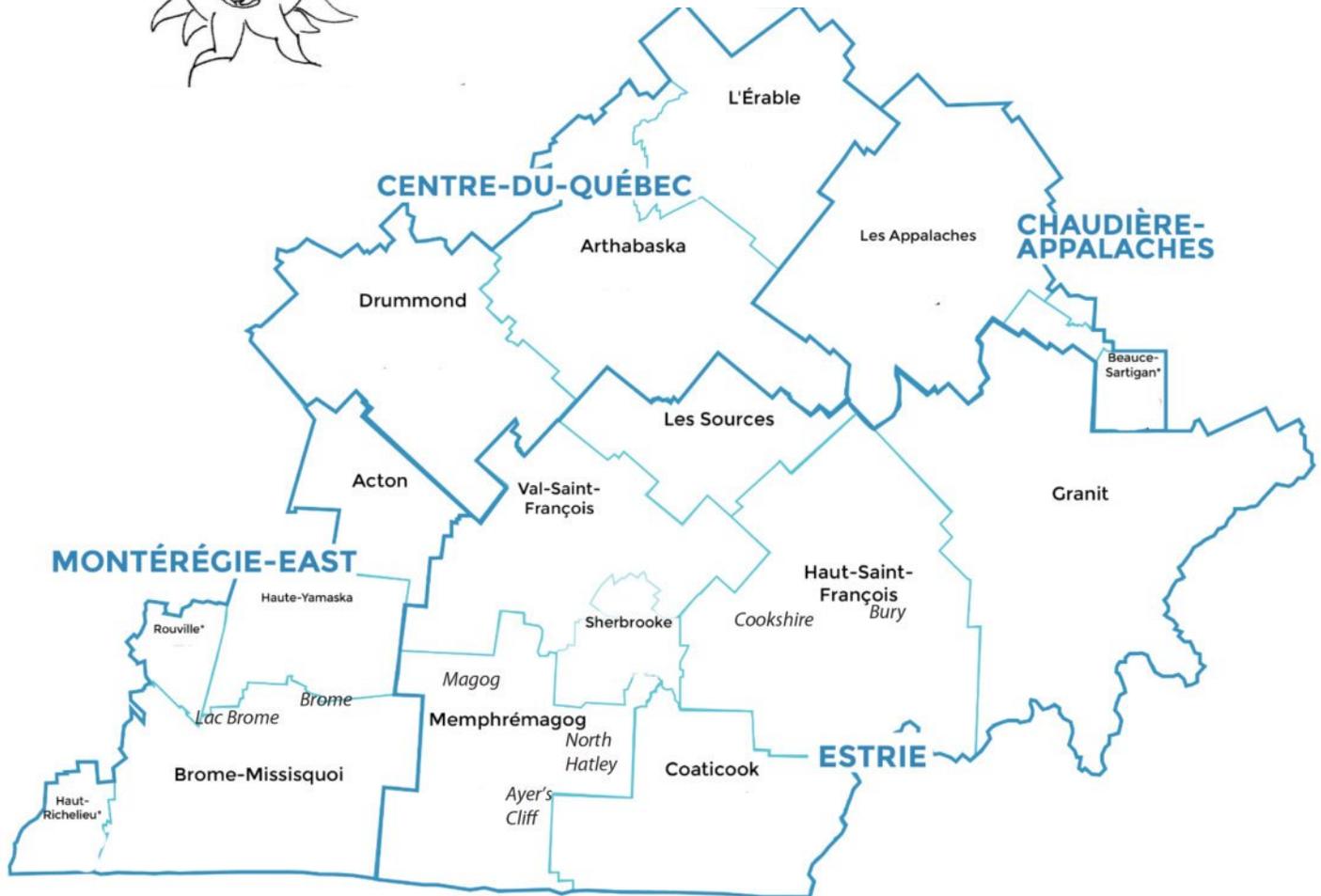
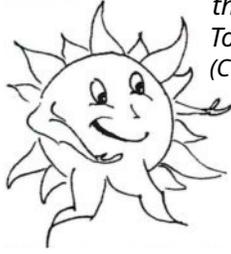


#### **What Are We Like, Today?**

Today, the pages of the *Townships Sun* contain a variety of contributions—stories, articles, poetry, photos and artwork. Each issue highlights a different theme. Some recent themes have been Townships tales and legends, disappeared hamlets, arts, and music and theatre.

We publish nine issues a year, between 24 and 28 pages each, both in print and online, in 8.5 x 11 in. format. We welcome contributors of all generations and from all across the Townships. Our main office is in the Lennoxville Borough of Sherbrooke.

Here is a map of the communities we serve in the historical Eastern Townships of Quebec. (Courtesy Townshippers' Association)



### **Why Are We Writing This e-Guide?**

We want to encourage younger people to be an important part of the *Townships Sun* magazine! All of us—all ages—live together in the Eastern Townships. In the pages of the *Townships Sun*, we can learn from each other and support each other.

This e-Guide is part of the Townships Young Voices project that offers awards and workshops to creative people under 30. We hope it will be a reference tool for TYVoices participants, but also for persons of all ages who want to flex their creative muscles by taking part in our shared community magazine.

Most of all, for emerging creative writers, artists, and photographers, we hope this e-Guide will reveal the ins and outs of contributing to a magazine, both the *Townships Sun* and other publications too.

Welcome to the *Townships Sun* family!

## 2. What is a Magazine, Anyway?

The word *magazine* means “a print periodical containing miscellaneous pieces (such as articles, stories, poems) and often illustrated,” usually by more than one author. The word derives from an Arabic word meaning a *storage place*. You could think of a magazine as a small storehouse of knowledge ([Merriam-Webster](#)).

### What Made Magazines Possible?

In the centuries after the German goldsmith, Johannes Gutenberg, invented the printing press in the 1430s, European readers finally had access to a wide variety of reading. During the 17th century, they had Bibles, pamphlets, novels, almanacs, newspapers and, yes, magazines.

"Publishers sought regular readers with specific interests. But the early magazine was unlike any other previous publication. It was not enough of a news source to be a newspaper, but it could not be considered pleasure reading either. Instead, early magazines occupied the middle ground between the two" ([LibreTexts Social Sciences](#)).

### How Did the First Magazines Do?

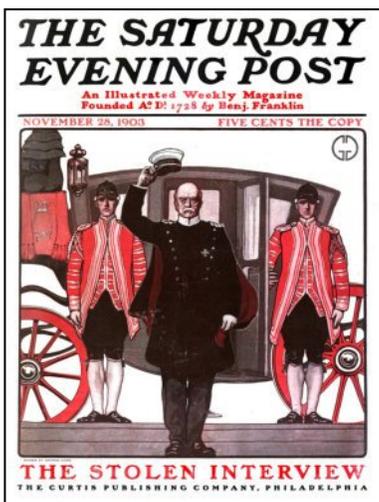
One of the first magazines was *Erbauliche Monats-Unterredungen* (Edifying Monthly Discussions), published between 1663 and 1668 by a German theologian and poet, Johann Rist. Other European and British magazines appeared in the early 18th century, and the idea soon crossed the ocean to North America.

The first two American magazines started in Philadelphia. Andrew Bradford and Benjamin Franklin were in a race to be the first, and their magazines—the *American Magazine* and the *General Magazine*—began in 1741, just three days apart from each other.

But in those days, printing was expensive. It cost a lot to distribute the magazines, too. And too few people could afford to buy them, or had time to read. After a few months, both magazines folded.

### What Launched the Modern Era of Magazines?

The *Saturday Evening Post* was the first successful modern magazine in the United States. It started in 1821, and got more and more popular. It was the first magazine to put artwork on its cover, featuring works of Norman Rockwell and other famous artists.



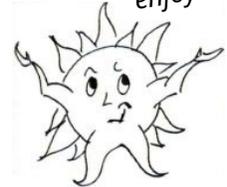
Illustrated by George Gibbs (1870-1942) (Public Domain)

People were eager to buy it, in large part because of the art. But the famous authors who wrote for it also helped make it popular: F. Scott Fitzgerald and Sinclair Lewis, for example.

In the early 20th century, more magazines were launched, and their popularity made them attractive to advertisers. Advertising sales made them even more profitable. News magazines such as *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *Business Week* started up, offering well-researched but succinct news articles for busy readers.

During this time, technical developments in photography helped photojournalism grow, and that led to new picture magazines such as *Life* and *Look*. *National Geographic* had been founded in 1888, but now became known for its stunning photography.

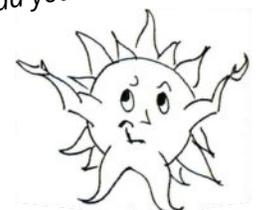
Hmm. How do you write something that's BOTH informative AND enjoyable?



Yikes! Poor Ben Franklin! In his *autobiography*, he never even mentioned his “magazine” experiment. Maybe it was a painful topic?



Puzzling! Did you notice the *Post* cover says it was founded in 1728 by Benjamin Franklin? Which is right—1821 or 1728? You'd need to research! A good place to start is Wikipedia, and that could lead you to other sources.



## How Are Magazines Different from Other Media?

Magazines are most often compared with newspapers. Many different kinds of newspapers are published, and the same is true of magazines, so sometimes there is overlap in what they do.

### What Is a Newspaper?

Most newspapers are written for a general audience. As their name suggests, they report on the news of the day. They cover current events, politics, sports, finance, arts, and various other topics. Whatever happens!

Newspapers are usually published daily or weekly. Traditionally, they have been printed on newsprint, either tabloid size or larger.

Like radio and television news, a newspaper aims to be the first to report **what** happened, **who** did it, **when** and **where** it happened, and **how**. Social media and other internet sources have given traditional newspapers strong competition.

How have today's print media met the challenge of the internet?

If you can't beat them, join them: More and more often, newspapers make use of the internet, including social media. For example, as a subscriber, I get an email whenever the *New York Times* has "breaking news." They often break a news event online using social media even before it appears on radio or TV.

As paper and printing costs have increased, today's newspapers are also published online, sometimes exclusively. Some offer readers a choice between print or online access, as does the *Sherbrooke Record*.

Larger newspapers sometimes also publish a magazine. Two examples are the *New York Times Magazine* and the *Globe & Mail's Report on Business*.

### What Is a Magazine?

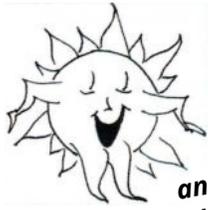
Magazines are usually published for a specific type of audience, on specific themes. They often print articles that are longer than those in a newspaper; that is, feature articles rather than news stories. The focus is more on the story-behind-the-news-story, the *why* of what happened, the causes and consequences of the event.

Fiction stories, poetry and other forms of writing may play an important role in a magazine's pages, too. For example, the early *Townships Sun* published Bernard Epps' books set in the Eastern Townships, chapter by chapter. The prominent Canadian magazine, *The Walrus*, always features a short story and poetry in its pages, alongside feature articles about questions that matter to Canadians.

Many magazines also feature photos or artwork. A good journalistic photo will "tell a story," and this is true for both news and magazine journalism. Beyond that, often a photo or artwork IS the story, and many magazines will explore or showcase images. The "zines" of today that feature graphic novels or stories are a good example of this.

Magazines are usually printed in magazine format, often 8.5 inches by 11 inches, on paper that is better quality than newsprint, often glossy. This allows better reproductions of art and photos. They also tend to publish less often than newspapers, maybe monthly or quarterly.

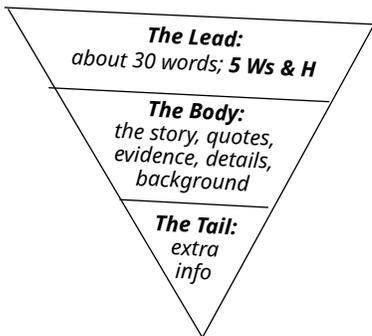
Magazine journalism has also leapt off the printed page. Like many print magazines, the *Townships Sun* publishes an online version. Some, such as *Font Magazine*, are uniquely online. Today's online blogs, webmagazines, radio and TV all offer feature stories on screen or viewed or listened to in audiovisual or audio form. Think podcasts. Think *CBC's Breakaway* or *Ideas*. Think TV docuseries or documentaries.



The 5 Ws  
and the H—

**What, Who, Where,  
When, Why, and How—**  
are the building blocks  
of a hard news story.

Think of an inverted pyramid: At  
the top (in the first sentence),  
you answer the most pertinent  
of these questions, then  
the others follow.



The Broken Pencil  
is an online zine about  
zines. Check it out!  
[brokenpencil.com](http://brokenpencil.com)



## What Is the Allure of Magazines?

"In a year in which Twitter and cable news dispensed non-stop hits of chaos, magazines provided context, the big picture," wrote the editor of *The Best American Magazine Writing 2021* (p. xii).

"They challenge, they juxtapose, they synthesize, they inspire, they sound a call to action. And they provide beauty and comfort and succor and, yes, some blessed diversion, when you need them most" (p. xv).

A good magazine publishes stories that help us understand where we are, where we have come from, and where we are going. Or, as the *Townships Sun* aims to do, content that reflects ourselves and the life and culture of the English-speaking community in the Eastern Townships, our past, our present, and our future.

## Do Magazines Have a Future?

Are magazines going extinct? Do young people shun them?

The short answer is a resounding NO. Let's look at how magazines are evolving.

### Optimism in Canada

As in other industries, the pandemic lockdowns in 2021 brought changes to magazines, [Magazines Canada reported in December 2021](#). Newsstands closed and advertising dried up; more readers went online. Print readership reached a low of 3 percent, and online readership rose to 28 percent. In Canada, 21 million adults (69 percent) read or accessed magazine brand content in an average month.

Magazine publishers got creative and launched new online products such as newsletters. Shifts to digital reading that might have taken 5 to 10 years, in other days, happened in 5 to 10 months.

Yet people suffer from "news fatigue," the report noted. "Now, audiences want someone like a trusted friend to explain and curate vetted, accurate information that cuts through the noise. Magazines can provide this."

### More Magazine Readers in the U.S., Too

A wide-ranging factsheet by the [Association of Magazine Media](#) reports the magazine market is vibrant and growing in the United States. Readership of both print and online magazines has grown to more than 215 million people, and is still growing. A whopping 91 percent of adults in the U.S. read print magazines.

In fact, the top 25 magazines in the U.S. reach more adults than the top 25 primetime TV shows.

And get this: The biggest readership is among people under 35 years of age! The report said that 64 percent of 18- to 34-year-olds "say that even in the digital age, they love the touch and feel of a printed magazine."

This bodes well for the future of magazines, both in terms of subscriptions and in advertising revenues.

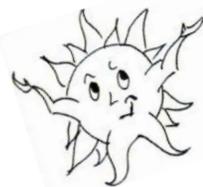
### Can We Rise to the Challenge?

Our challenge, then, is to provide content that is relevant and enjoyable for our readers. To fact-check our information. To offer attractive magazines both in print and online.

Hmm. **The big picture.**  
Also **diversion.** Sound familiar?  
It seems information and  
entertainment are still the twin goals  
of a magazine. What kind of content  
do you enjoy AND learn from?



What do you think  
about these reports? Do  
YOU read magazines?  
What about your  
friends?  
Why... or why not?



## The Many Faces of Magazines

Magazines come in about as many types and personalities as their readers do! Some 2,400 different magazines are published in Canada, and another 7,500 or so in the United States.

Looking at size, some magazines have huge readerships; others publish for a very small and exclusive group. Certain magazines target seniors, some parents, others youth, boys, girls, or other age groups.

*Niche* magazines focus on a particular interest. Chess, for example. Sports. Art. Literature.

Many magazines are consumer magazines, and may use up to half their pages for advertising. Just look at the magazine stand near your grocery store checkout counter for examples of these many glossy magazines.

## What Magazines do Canadians Read?

The first magazines in Canada were founded even before the country was established. First was the *Gazette de commerce et littéraire*, a literary magazine published in Montreal in 1778. After a year, the government imprisoned its publishers, Fleury Mesplet and Valentin Jautard, and halted publication because of their sympathies with the American revolutionaries. In 1782 they were liberated, and began publishing the *Montreal Gazette* as a bilingual newspaper (BAnQ).

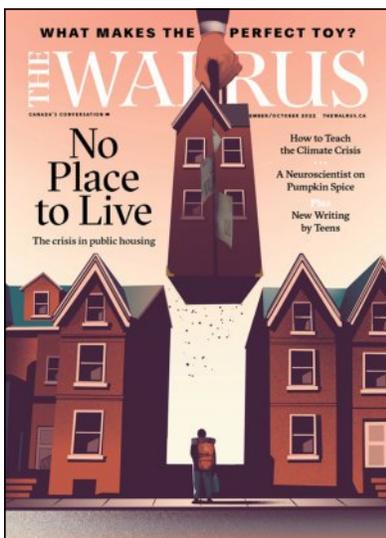
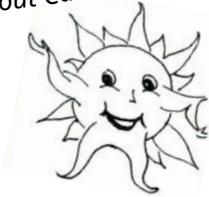
The *Nova Scotia Magazine*, also a literary magazine, was the first Canadian magazine in English, and was published in Halifax in 1789-1792.

Looking at circulation, today these 10 Canadian magazines have the most readers (Agility PR Solutions):

- *enRoute*, by Air Canada; *Travel Pulse Canada*—two travel magazines.
- *Sportsnet*; *TSN*—about sports.
- *HELLO! Canada*—celebrity news.
- *Toronto Life*—Toronto events, social issues, and lifestyle.
- *Maclean's*—news commentary and analysis.
- *Vice Canada*—about crime.
- *Reader's Digest Canada*—stories, human interest, jokes, health tips.
- *Chatelaine*—food, style, home décor, politics, health, relationships.

As reflected in this list, about 75 percent of magazine circulation in Canada consists of consumer magazines, the general-interest or special-interest magazines that people read for enjoyment.

What kinds of magazines are most popular in Canada? What do you think our magazine choices say about Canadians?



Today, almost all magazines have a strong online presence. On yet another list of magazines "ranked by traffic, social media followers, domain authority & freshness," *The Walrus* is Number 7.

Like the *Townships Sun*, *The Walrus* is an independent, non-profit magazine. Its eight issues per year feature current affairs, fiction, poetry and art. It also creates online content, podcasts and a national speaker series, *The Walrus Talks*.

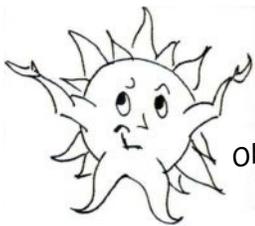
How is *The Walrus* different from the *Townships Sun*? It is much younger, first published in 2003. Its circulation is Canada-wide, and modeled after *Harper's*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, and *The New Yorker* magazines in the United States.

*The Walrus* has a much larger budget than the *Townships Sun*, and many more readers across Canada, with a circulation of more than 30,000 copies. Its content reflects the realities of this readership. Its mandate, says its website, is "to be a national general interest magazine about Canada and its place in the world."

## Small Magazines in Canada

An indepth study of the small-magazine landscape in Canada by [Holland Elizabeth Gidney \(Simon-Fraser University, 2013\)](#) points to the importance of small magazines in Canada. ("Small" is defined as having a circulation of 10,000 or fewer.)

- Canadian magazines play an important role in the creation of Canadian cultural identity. "They overcome the vastness of the world's second-largest country to provide Canadians with a means of sharing and discussing their news, ideas, opinions, literature, and art."
  - The average Canadian reads 6.4 magazine issues each month.
  - Magazines with a small circulation are published across the country. Many are arts and literary publications; others focus on diverse topics such as horse-racing, antiques, and religion.
  - About half of the small magazines are not-for-profit, like the *Townships Sun*.
  - All the small magazines rely on financial support from the Government of Canada, and the majority of their staff members are volunteers.
  - Small magazines have a vital role in developing new talent. They provide a venue where "up-and-coming writers, photographers, and illustrators can debut their work, and young editors and designers can hone their skills and gain experience."
- 



OK! Now we've had a little introduction to:

- the history and role of magazines,
- magazines in Canada,
- and a little bit about the **Townships Sun** and its community.

Before reading further, let's try some creative brainstorming. Here are a couple of questions to get your creative juices flowing.

1. **Look at the magazines around you**—online, in your library, on the newsstand in the grocery store. Which one do you find most intriguing? How would you describe its personality? Does it lean more towards "big picture" background? Is it a "niche" magazine about a particular topic, offering how-to tips? What do you find entertaining about it? If your favourite magazine were a person, what kind of person would it be?
2. **Let's imagine you are going to create a magazine for YOUR COMMUNITY.** First, how would you describe your community? And then, what kind of magazine would the members of your community find informative AND enjoyable?

### 3. Who is the *Townships Sun*?

#### ***Our History***

Russell Pocock, one of the founders of the Eastern Townships Social Action Group (ETSAG), recalls that the group began in about 1972. (ETSAG is known as the forerunner of Townshippers' Association, founded in 1979.)

Pocock then was about 21 and a student at Bishop's University. Now he's an organic farmer at the Sanders Farm in Compton.

"ETSAG had different objectives," he told us. "One was to do research on the English-speaking population; another was to do what we called social animation. My main interest was to help the English-speaking community adapt to what was going on in Quebec. That was the time of the 'great exodus.' A lot of English speakers were scared, a bit, of the nationalist movement, and a lot of people were leaving."

In this context, ETSAG founded the *Townships Sun* in July 1973, and on February 8, 1974, published the first issue.

That means July 2023 is the 50th anniversary of the founding of the *Townships Sun*, and February 8, 2024, will mark 50 years since its Volume 1, Number 1, was published.

Over the years, the capacity of the magazine has varied. For example, the English-speaking population in the Eastern Townships declined sharply, especially during the 1970s, to about 40,000. Also, the funding that non-profit organizations depend on has varied over time, as have advertising sales and volunteer expertise and support.

At present, the *Townships Sun* has a circulation of about 550, including about 80 newsstand sales. This represents an increase of about 28 percent from November 2021 to September 2022.

#### ***Our Support***

Funding from Quebec's *Ministère de la culture et des communications* and the Government of Canada's Department of Canadian Heritage supplements our subscription and advertising revenues.

This year, we also received project funding for *Townships Young Voices* from Townshippers' Research & Cultural Foundation, Townshippers' Association, and the Rotary Club of the Boundary.

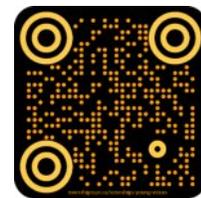
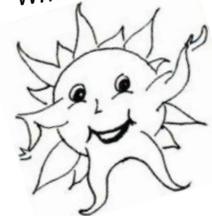
Our archives project to scan all the back issues of the *Townships Sun* and make them publicly accessible received support from the Bélanger-Gardner Foundation.

#### ***Our Personality***

Every magazine has its own personality. Like many magazines, the *Townships Sun* usually has an image—photos or artwork—on the front cover. Starting with the very first issue, our cover images have often been of nature or history.

The inside pages carry a variety of opinion pieces, fictional stories, and feature articles about the community, business, education, leisure, farming, nutrition, language and social issues and history. Sometimes graphic stories using either drawings or photos have been published. Poems and stories have had starring roles. Author Bernard Epps often published historical fiction or nonfiction.

Is ETSAG's  
activist community  
spirit visible in today's  
**Townships Sun?**  
What do you think?



[Townships Young Voices  
page on TownshipsSun.ca](#)



[Townships Sun archives,  
Bibliothèque et Archives  
nationale du Québec \(BAnQ\)](#)

Check it out—  
what does the cover of a  
magazine tell you about  
its inside pages?



Environmental concerns have been a recurring topic, from asbestos mining in the 1970s to the agricultural use of glyphosate (Roundup) in 2022. Satire, irony, and boisterous letters to the editor have all had their place.

In short, the personality of the *Townships Sun* reflects the personality of our region, its nature, and our community, with all its hopes and fears, regrets and ambitions. The voices of our contributors give expression to the experiences of our community. As long-time editor Charles Bury once said, “the *Townships Sun* is about life and culture in the Eastern Townships, its past, present, and future.”

## Our Many Parts

Here are some of the different elements of a magazine, and the vocabulary that goes with them.

**Advertising.** Ads are an important source of revenue for a magazine. In the *Townships Sun*, you’ll see all sizes, from business cards to full-page colour ads.

**Byline.** Bylines give the name of the writer of the article, story, or poem, and the creator of a photo or artwork. They are usually just above the article or below the image.

**Cutline.** Cutlines are usually a short phrase or sentence under a photo that tells the reader about what’s in the photo, or names the people shown. The caption.

**Cutoff Rule.** A solid line sometimes used to separate stories. It shows where one ends, and another begins.

**Deck.** Decks are smaller headlines that may appear right under the first headline of a story. They may summarize the article, or give important information about it.

**Flag.** A flag is the name of the magazine.

**Folio.** Folios contain the page number, along with the magazine’s name and/or date of the issue. You’ll see a folio at the bottom of each page in the *Townships Sun*.

**Gutter.** A gutter is the white space that runs vertically between columns.

**Headline.** A headline is the title of a story or article. It appears in large letters above the text. It is also called a “hed” (“head”) in print journalism, or a “heading” in online pages. It has the same function as a *lead*, to call attention to the story.

**Hook.** A hook is a leading sentence or paragraph designed to entice the reader to read the next sentence, and to set the tone for the rest of the article.

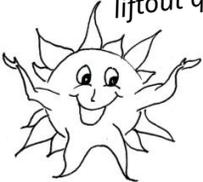
**Initial Cap.** In the *Townships Sun*, the first letter of an article or story is bigger than the rest of the text. This is called the *initial cap*, or *drop cap*.

**Jump.** If there isn’t enough space for a story on a page, you may see a line that says “Continued on page...”. This is called a *jump*, because the story jumps to another page.

**Lead.** (Or *lede*.) A lead is the first and most important paragraph of a story. In a news story, it tells the what, who, where, when, how, or why. In a feature article, it contains the *hook*, drawing readers in and encouraging them to continue reading.

**Liftout Quote.** This is a pithy quotation from the article that the editor pulls out and puts in large letters, often in a text box, to catch the reader’s attention.

Want to see how these  
terms look in real life?  
Take a look at a recent  
**Townships Sun**. Can  
you find a byline or a  
cutline? A lead? A  
liftout quote?



**Logo.** A logo is a small boxed title that goes along with a type of story or column that is a recurring feature. For example, two logos in the *Townships Sun* are “ETRC History Quiz” and “The Townships Sun awards a Townships MOON to...”.

**Masthead.** People sometimes confuse this with the *flag*. But the *masthead* is, in fact, the place in the magazine that lists the name of the editor, publisher and board members, the magazine’s address, and publishing and circulation information. In the *Townships Sun*, this is on page 2, inside the front cover.

**Media Kit.** A document that gives information for potential advertisers about placing ads in your magazine: sizes, prices, specifications, and so on.

**Mugshot.** A small photo, usually the face of a writer, columnist, or other contributor. You can see the mugshot of the writer at the end of most articles in the *Townships Sun*.

**Pic.** Picture; a photo or other image.

**Subhead.** This is not the same as a deck! A *subhead* consists of words that are bolded within the article. It is like a mini-headline within the text, giving the reader a clue about what’s coming up next in the article.

**Teaser.** These are words or pictures that appear on the front cover of the magazine to tell readers what to expect on the inside pages. *Teasers* often go just above the flag, or on either side of it.

**Text.** The actual article, story, or poem in the magazine.

## Types of Content

The first priority of a **newspaper** is **Hard News** stories, objectively reporting events that happened since the last issue of the paper. They present facts and quotes.

This kind of news story is not usually found in a magazine. However, news stories are a good source of ideas for feature stories.

**Feature articles** are the meat of most **magazines**. They take an indepth look at persons, places or events, at the story-behind-the-story, or highlight an issue that has not received attention. Feature articles need to be objective and balanced, but they may also be very personal. They may offer anecdotes and quotes that create a scene in the reader’s mind. Feature articles are nonfiction, even if they are sometimes constructed in a way that’s similar to fictional stories.

Several types of feature articles are:

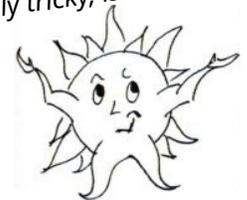
- Human interest stories
- Informational features (may be based on history, science, “how to,” or more)
- Interviews
- Personal experience stories
- Personality sketches

**Fiction.** Short stories have pride of place in a magazine. These could be adventure, biography, mystery, romance, satire, science fiction, tragedy, or more.

**Editorials** and **commentaries.** Often essays, these express an opinion or idea. They are ordinarily, but not always, written by the editor or a columnist.

**Listicles.** Another kind of nonfiction writing, a listicle is an article that is comprised of a list. For example, the top ten sources of organic seeds for your garden. The best three ways to get the job of your dreams.

Hmm. To take a balanced and objective view of your own personal story. That's really tricky, isn't it?



**Memoir.** Tell your own personal story, or that of someone close to you.

**Pics.** Photos and artwork not only support and enrich written work, they are also, in their own right, an important expression of a magazine's personality. The image on the front cover, for example, reflects the theme and content of the whole issue. They can stand alone or form a series that tells a story.

**Poems.** Even general interest magazines, such as the *Townships Sun*, regularly contain poems.

**Quizzes.** These could be on a topic of general interest to the magazine's readers.

**Reviews.** These offer information and an assessment about a book, a movie, a CD, a play, or an art or photo exhibit, and so on.

## **What We Publish**

What kinds of contributions is the *Townships Sun* looking for?

Each edition has a theme. The upcoming themes are listed in the Contribution Guidelines on the *Townships Sun* website, [townshipssun.ca/submit/](http://townshipssun.ca/submit/). Submissions are also invited that relate to the time of year, holidays and Townships events, persons, organizations, or other pertinent topics.

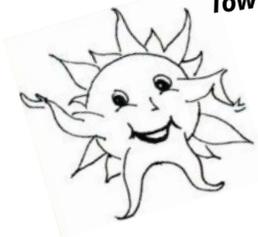
The editor looks for a variety of contributions for each issue. We want personal opinion. We want fiction. We want photos and art. We want personal experience, supported by research. We want well-researched feature articles, supported by personal experience.

We are looking for contributions from all age groups. We all live in the same region and share the same culture. We need to talk to each other.

Don't worry too much about what the editor expects. If you are authentically expressing yourself in your voice, your creation will be new and fresh. Surprise us!

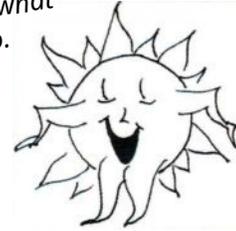
What is your view of the  
world? What puzzles you?  
What do you care about?

Chances are, others in  
your community care too.  
Writing about it lets you  
think more deeply about it  
and discuss it with others...  
in the pages of the  
**Townships Sun!**



Do you have a creative urge? (Welcome to the human race!) What kinds of things interest you? How about having a little discussion with yourself? Here's a CLUSTERING exercise you might try.

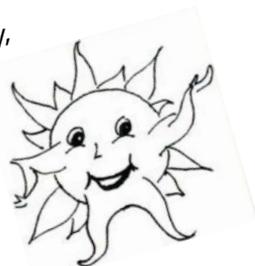
1. In the centre of a blank paper, write a word, phrase or question like "What am I interested in?" Circle it.
2. Then draw a line from that circle and write another word, phrase or question that's related to it, and circle it.
3. Spiraling out from the second circle, add and circle any other ideas that come to mind. And you can continue drawing lines from your central idea, like spokes radiating from a wheel, writing other related ideas or questions.
4. If you have trouble coming up with material, try another main idea. If you produce too much, take one of the secondary circles and concentrate just on that one.
5. Take a little break, then look at your cluster drawing again. What stands out to you? Write it down in just a sentence or so. Now you have a good starting point for what you might want to write, art you might want to create, or a photo project to do.



## Wrap-up

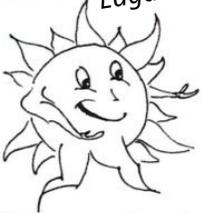
Well! That was a whirlwind exploration of the *Townships Sun*! We've seen our history and personality, the many parts of a magazine, and the different kinds of content we publish. Variety is the lifeblood of a magazine.

The coming pages of this little guide will give you even more suggestions about how you might express your creativity in the pages of a magazine, whether in fiction, nonfiction, poetry, art or photography. Let's read on!



**A short story  
should be "no  
longer than can be  
read in a single  
sitting."**

Which famous writer  
said that?  
Edgar Allan Poe!



## 4. Writing Fiction for Magazines

*by Rebecca Welton*

Writing a short story to be published in a magazine can seem daunting, but writing short stories is a lot of fun. There is an immediacy that you don't find in writing longer pieces of work.

You can knock out a short story in a day, and have that feeling of accomplishment carry you for the rest of the week. You can play and experiment with short stories in a way that writers can be reluctant to do with a novel.

Short fiction comes with various word limits—from five-word flash fiction to 10,000-word short stories. No matter what the length, writing short stories is a great way to fine-tune your writing skills. The limited word count forces you to really think about every character, every action, and every word.

Before you start writing your short fiction, think about what types of stories you like.

Some different types of fiction stories are, for example:

- comedy (maybe a holiday gone wrong),
- sci-fi (what if lost aliens knock on the front door),
- buddy stories (your main character finds a friend in the neighbour who has just moved in),
- romance (maybe your main character has a crush on the boy who works in the local depanneur),
- fantasy (what if the teacher at school turns out to be a vampire/witch/ werewolf).

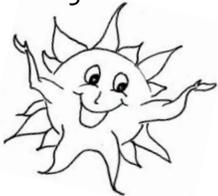
You are more likely to write a better story if you are writing in a genre that you enjoy and writing about things that you love. Perhaps you like dogs. So why not write a comedy with a main character who is a dog-walker?

### ***What Should a Short Story Include?***

A short story shows a journey—something happens to someone (often your main character) and, as a result of the something, that someone is changed.

So, for example, Jules (someone) is a twelve-year-old girl who is very shy. So shy that she can't talk to adults outside of her family. On her way to the shops, Jules and her mom have a car accident (something happened). Jules is scared but she drags herself and her mom out of the car, and runs to the nearest house. There, although it is extremely difficult for her, she overcomes her shyness and is able to ask for help. Her mom is taken to hospital. After that experience, Jules no longer has a problem talking to other adults (someone is changed).

**TOP TIP!**  
Remember to do your  
research into the  
magazine you want to  
write for. What types  
of stories do they  
publish? What is the  
word limit? Who is the  
target audience? What  
are their submission  
guidelines?

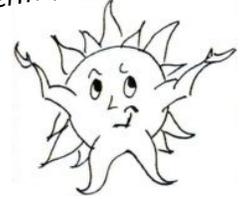


## Story Essentials

Certain basic elements make a good story, whether it is a short story or a novel. These include:

- It should be a complete story, with a beginning, a middle, and an end.
- The main character should have a goal. What do they hope to achieve? Why do they want this?
- It should have conflict—internal and/or external. What is stopping them from achieving their goal?
- There should be an internal journey—the main character will be different in some way at the end of the piece.

*In the little story above about Jules, do you think her conflict was internal, external, or both?*



## What Do We Mean by Conflict?

When we refer to conflict in stories, we mean the struggle between two opposing forces.

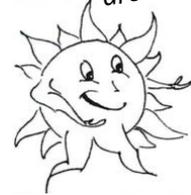
The main character will have a goal, something they want to achieve. But something is stopping them from achieving this goal. This conflict can be internal, external, or both.

## Internal Conflict

This involves a struggle within a character—their own fears, emotions, or wants get in the way of their achieving their goals.

Perhaps Max wants to try out for the swim team. All of Max's friends are on the team and he is worried that if he doesn't make the team as well, they will stop hanging out with him. On the day of the try-outs, though, Max can't get in the water. Two years ago, he almost drowned in a boating accident. Now he is too scared to get into the swimming pool, even though he desperately wants to be on the swim team.

*Internal conflict can drive character development—it shows how your character is changed from the start of your story to how they are at the end of it.*

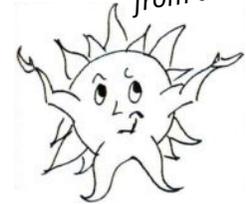


## External Conflict

With external conflict, someone or something else is stopping the main character from achieving their goals.

This time, maybe Max is stopped from trying out for the swim team by his little sister who is jealous of his being such a good swimmer. So she sneaks into the changing rooms and hides his swimming costume. What does Max do?

*External conflict can increase the tension in a story as the character tries to reach their goals but is stopped from doing so.*



## Tips for Writing Short Fiction Stories

### 1. Grab the reader from the first line.

Set the scene instantly. Hook the reader and drop them straight into the conflict or the main thrust of the story.

### 2. Make every word count.

You need to consider every word, every character, every action in your short fiction. Is it needed? Is there one word that can convey what these seven do? Don't waste words on details that are not important to the story. In short stories, there is nowhere to hide, no space for digression!

### 3. Use powerful imagery.

Using strong imagery can get your point across in fewer words. If readers can visualize it, you're halfway there.

### 4. Use emotions.

Know what your characters are thinking and feeling. Use the emotion and get to the core of it. Emotions can quickly connect the reader to the character and to the story.

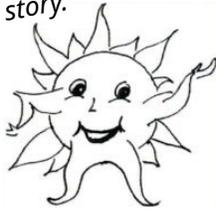
### 5. Have only one or two settings.

Moving between locations often takes up too many words.

### 6. Characters—less is more.

Too many characters clutter up a short story. It is difficult to write them as real people that readers can connect to as you don't have the word count to make them all full-formed characters. Aim to have between one and four characters in your story.

**Exposition** is the detail that gives the reader the background information necessary to understand the story.



## ***The Opening of a Short Story***

You need to hook the reader, and the editor. Even if the rest of your piece is amazing, it won't matter because if the opening is not amazing too, the reader and editor won't read that far.

You don't have the word count available to take too many words to set the scene, or give lots of exposition.

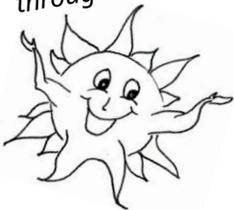
Some writers recommend starting as close to the end of the story as possible. So, you could, for example:

1. Drop the reader straight into the action (whether this is a bank robbery or someone missing their train). This is called in medias res.
2. Start with a sentence that creates intrigue. For example, "Maggie claimed she lost the key."

This sentence makes the reader want to read on. It makes them wonder.... Who is Maggie? What does the key open? Did Maggie really lose it?

3. Start with an image – a brief description of a person, location or object that will resonate with the reader and leave a lasting impression.

Structuring a short story is a little like building a house, isn't it? You have to think about the size and placement of the rooms (scenes), and how the reader moves through the house (time).



## ***How to Structure Your Short Story***

**Structure** refers to:

1. the length and arrangement of scenes;
2. how you distribute the exposition; and
3. the movement through time, including the use of flashbacks and flashforwards.

Structure and pace are important in short stories. You don't want to rush the story so that the reader doesn't feel its full impact, but you also don't want your reader to fall asleep, start counting pages, or stop reading altogether.

You have different options for how to structure your short story. Let's take a look at two:

### The 3-Act Structure.

This is similar to the 5-act structure often used for novels:

1. **Introduction** – introduce your characters and setting. Some crisis (the inciting incident) will take your protagonist out of their comfort zone.
2. **Confrontation** – the protagonist hits an obstacle in achieving their goals.
3. **Resolution** – the protagonist takes action to overcome the obstacle.

### ABDCE Structure.

1. **Action** – begin the story with action. Make it compelling enough that the reader will want to know more.
2. **Background** – show the readers the characters, how they came to be there, their relationships to each other, and how their past has affected who they are now.
3. **Develop** – develop your characters. What are their goals, what are their motivations? What are the internal and external conflicts? Raise the stakes and raise the tension.
4. **Climax** – everything comes together for the big climax, after which the characters are in some way different from how they were before.
5. **Ending** – how did it change the character? Who are they now? What did it all mean?

For more information on the ABDCE structure, read *Bird by Bird* by Anne Lamott.

### The Middle of Your Short Story

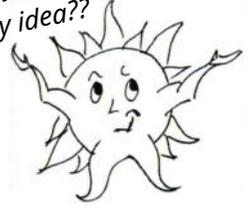
The middle is where the plot can often get bogged down. Keep these things in mind to keep your story flowing:

- The middle should have conflict.
- The main character should hit an obstacle or a set-back in achieving their goals.
- The middle builds towards a moment of change for the main character.
- You don't have the space to introduce lots of minor characters, change locations repeatedly, or add a subplot.
- Remember to stay focused on the character's goals.
- Keep up the pace – don't slow it down too much.
- Every sentence should either reveal character or advance the action.

In the middle of a short story, you get the chance to develop your characters.

You can use feelings and emotions to help connect the reader to your main character or characters. How are they being affected by the events? You can raise the stakes (and the tension) for your main character by making sure the goal and/or the set-back is personal to them. You can also use dialogue to make your characters come to life, and to show the reader the characters' reactions, feelings, and thoughts.

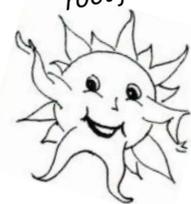
*The protagonist is the main character in your story.  
Who is the protagonist in the story of your life?  
Any idea??*



*Make sure your main characters are fully formed and not two-dimensional. Think about what the motivations are of your characters.  
How do they deal with set-backs?  
How do they handle conflict?*

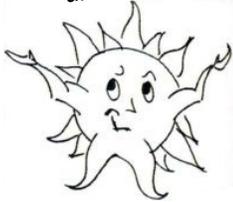


*Aim to give the reader at least one character they can root for.*



Read short stories and see how other authors have ended their short fiction. What worked and what didn't?

For example, each **Townships Sun** publishes a short story. Take a look at the most recent one. How does it end? How do you feel about the ending?



## The Ending

Endings are just as important as the opening and the middle of your piece. It is the part the reader is most likely to remember.

When you are writing the ending, ask yourself:

- Does it bring everything together?
- Is the ending satisfactory?
- Does it give meaning to the whole piece?
- Did you tie up loose ends?

## Six Possible Ways to End a Short Story

### 1. The Resolved Ending

Here, loose ends are tied up and all plotlines and character questions are answered. This type of ending works well in mysteries where the reader finds out who did it, how, and why.

### 2. The Unresolved Ending

Something in the plot is left unfinished, and the character arc is left unknown. Readers have to imagine or guess what might have happened. This can be an unsatisfactory ending for the reader, though. The unresolved ending is not that popular in short stories, but it works well with serials.

### 3. The Implied Ending

Similar to the unresolved ending, what happens at the end is not explicitly stated, but there are hints that there could be different outcomes. The implied ending lets the reader make up their own mind.

### 4. The Twist

This is the unexpected ending, where the writer adds new information that changes what the reader thought they knew. Perhaps a hero becomes a villain (or the other way around), or a character is alive when previously they were thought to be dead. The twist used to be very popular in short stories, but is less so now. The twist can be fun to write and read, and can provide the most memorable stories.

### 5. The Tie-Back

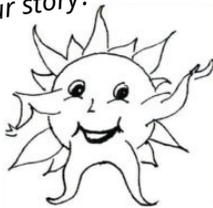
Here, the story begins and ends in the same way. The opening of the story is actually how it ends, and then the writer fills in the blanks of how this came to be. When the reader gets to the ending, it is where they started the story. The majority of the story could therefore be a flashback, but it doesn't have to be.

### 6. The Crystal Ball

You end the story with a flash-forward where the writer shows what happens to your characters years after the events in the main part of the story.

Hmm. You have a lot of options for your ending!

Look at one of your favourite short stories. What kind of ending does it have? Would you want to use a similar kind of ending for your story?



## What Do You Do When You're Finished?

### Edit, Edit, Edit!

There is no such thing as a perfect first draft. Often the best writing is that which just comes naturally. So, don't worry about grammar, dodgy dialogue, awkward transitions, or flat characters. Just relax, write, and have fun! Once you have finished, then go back and edit.

### Final Thoughts

Writing short stories for magazines is a great way to earn cash, develop your writing skills, and have fun—you can play with your stories, try out new things, and write from different points of view.

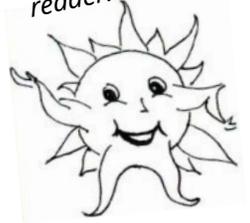
We have looked at some tips and guidelines to help you get started in writing short stories but remember that there are no set rules with writing. Just give it a go and see where it takes you.

### Activity

Can you try out the 3-act structure for your story?

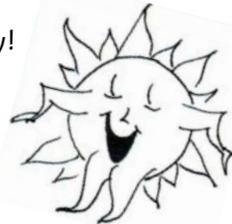
You can write a summary of what happens in each section, or list the key events.

Try reading your story aloud – either to yourself or to someone else. This can highlight where writing sounds great in your head but doesn't work for a reader.



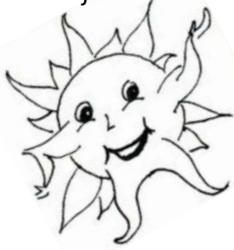
Here's an example of a story with a 3-act structure:

- 1. Introduction** – Max is a 13-year-old boy who loves comic books and playing games with his friends. All of his friends join the swim team and want Max to join too. His friends point out that training is every weekend, so if Max doesn't join, he'll never get to see them (this is the inciting incident). However, Max is scared of the water after a boating accident two years ago.
  - 2. Confrontation** – Max realizes that not only will he have to get into the pool but he will have to try out for the swim team in front of the whole school (the set-back).
  - 3. Resolution** – Max thinks about his favourite comic book hero, AquaMan, and how brave he is. This helps him to stay calm and overcome his fear of the water.
- Now it's your turn. Give it a try!



Mark Twain said that fiction is obligated to stick to possibilities; truth is not.

Hmm. Is that why they say truth is stranger than fiction?



## 5. Writing Nonfiction for Magazines

*by Scott Stevenson*

Nonfiction writing is factual, as opposed to fiction, which is invented. In nonfiction articles, you're writing about real people, events, and news. You're not making it up.

Otherwise, the qualities that make a good fiction story also make a good nonfiction story: It's a pleasure to read and it's informative; you enjoy it and learn something from it.

Many of the tips shared in this guide by Townships Sun editor Rachel Garber and fiction writer Rebecca Welton, as well as poet Jan Draper, also apply to nonfiction writing.

My focus is on three of the aspects that I find most important to writing a good nonfiction story.

### ***Getting to the Heart of the Story***

My first important lesson in getting to the heart of a story was when I was a fishing guide. You might think I'm about to tell you a big-fish story, but this is actually about storytelling.

It was a remote trout-fishing camp in the Laurentian hills north of Quebec City, and I was hired to guide customers each day, along with about 10 other guides. Two small cabins were our accommodations, set away from the main camp that housed guests and other staff.

Each evening, the guides would all gather around the woodstove in one of the cabins and tell stories—in French, which is not my first language. I discovered that I was clumsy at storytelling, partly because of the language difference but also because I had yet to learn one of the three important aspects of telling a good story.

As we sat around the stove, someone would inevitably start telling a story. As their story wound down, another guide would jump in and tell his story, usually related somehow. That would prompt another guide to jump in, when he could. And so on the evening would go. When I tried jumping in with some story that came to my mind, I never usually got very far. I hadn't learned the art of getting to the heart of a story quickly.

When you don't do that, sitting around a woodstove with others, it won't be long before someone else cuts in and takes over the conversation. And when you don't do that in writing, it won't be long before you lose your reader. They jump to another story in the magazine, or close the pages.

### ***What Is the Heart of the Story?***

The heart of a story is the part that makes it worth telling, worth writing, and worth reading. In the Fiction Writing section of this e-guide, Rebecca describes conflict as one of the essentials to a good story; often it is the heart. The change that happens because of conflict is also often part of the heart of a story.

In the story I just told you about being a fishing guide, the heart is how I was unable to capture my fellow guides' interest.

In magazine writing, you want to communicate the heart of the story very early on, or at least give the reader a tantalizing sense of what the heart might be.

Getting to the heart of a story is all about the difference between telling about an event and telling what's important and interesting in the event. Remember that: The heart is what is important and interesting about an event or person, not necessarily the overall person or event itself.

If you tell your friends, "I went to see the new Halloween movie last weekend..." you've told them generally about your event. But if you say, "The new Halloween movie is so scary..." then you've not only communicated the heart of the story early on, but you've also grabbed their attention so you can tell the rest.

## ***How to Get There***

Getting to the heart of the story takes practice. In my writing for magazines and newspapers, I learned with the help of good editors. Here are some tips, which also apply to good nonfiction writing in general.

1. **Learn** and experience everything you can about your subject.
2. **Listen** to yourself. What is important to you about the subject? How does it make you feel?
3. **Know your readers.** What is important to them?
4. **Know what's going on** in their world. Read their newspapers and magazines, listen to their radio, follow their media.
5. **Read** what others have written on the subject and notice what hasn't been written.
6. **Take time to think** about the subject, the events, and the people—before and after. Let it sink in, and let your mind work on it for a while. Important and interesting aspects will come to you, especially with practice.
7. **Be curious** and open-minded. Set aside your assumptions. Ask lots of questions. Ask "Why?" a lot.

Try to identify the heart of your story before you start writing, so you can bring it out early or at least hook your readers with a taste of it. (Sorry, another fishing metaphor there!) That way, you can also organize your story around its heart.

If you don't identify it before you start writing, look for it after you've written a first draft of your story. Remember, and ask yourself: What is most interesting and informative about this story that I want to tell?

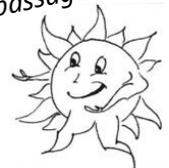
## ***Writing Concisely and Beautifully***

Music makes a nice metaphor for good writing. I like a text to flow like music. I like to hear the musician's voice, either in their singing, their instrument, or in their personality showing in what they've created.

And, like music, if a text is too wordy, goes on too long, or is too clumsy, I lose interest. I'm no longer moved by it.

Learning to appreciate poetry, in addition to music, can help you write beautifully. In this *e-Guide*, author Jan Draper gives tips on the flow of syllables in poetry, among all its other qualities. To me, good prose writing has rhythm and many other elements of poetry and music.

*A good first sentence—the lead (or lede)—of an article will lead the reader to the heart of the story. Look at a story you've written, or one you've read. Does the "heart" appear in the opening passage?*



An important part of that beauty is your own voice. Readers will get a sense of your outlook on the subject—and the world—either directly or indirectly through your writing, even your nonfiction reporting. Your voice is also expressed through the structure you choose for your story and your style. Read about the many qualities of style and structure in this *e-Guide* and others. Recognize your own preferences, and cultivate them in your writing.

Whatever they may be, writing clearly and concisely is almost always preferred. Get to the point. Take out unnecessary words—as you write and after, when you edit your work. This takes practice and especially the help of good editors.

*The Elements of Style* by William Strunk and E.B. White is a classic and helpful guide, and for a long time I appreciated *The Canadian Style* by the Government of Canada. It has now become an online tool in the [Language Portal of Canada](#) entitled *Writing Tips Plus*.

Another resource is *The Canadian Press STYLEBOOK: A Guide for Writers and Editors* (2021), which the *Townships Sun* follows.

## ***Linking Your Story to the Larger Web of Our Lives***

Everything is connected. But this truth is not always reflected in nonfiction writing. You can improve yours by linking your story to the larger web of life.

I'll set aside my fishing and web metaphors here and go back to the heart. Everything inside us is connected: the heart depends on the brain, the lungs, our digestive system, and so much more. In turn, the brain depends on the heart, and both affect our thoughts and moods. Yet we often describe the heart and the head as separate; in our culture, medicine even treats them separately, to a large degree.

Then outside our bodies, we are connected to each other, family, friends, and the people around the world who produce the things we need and want. We depend on the land around us, its soil, the water, the air. A tree is connected to the other trees in a forest—they even communicate with one another through the long filaments of mushroom plants. A forest itself is connected to us, to the air, and water: it cools its environment, creates moisture, even rainfall. It builds soil that filters the water, holds it in the ground, and nourishes many of the things we depend on for food and so much more.

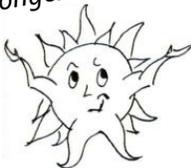
Back to fishing: if you write about salmon stocks in a major river, you also want to know about what's happening in the forest in that river's watershed. You want to know about the climate affecting it, the pollution, and what humans and animals are doing in the area. How much salmon do they eat?

When you link your story to the larger context of our lives, you make your article all the more important and interesting.

Here are some tips for doing so:

- 1. Step back** from your immediate subject and think about it from a wider perspective, from a distance.
- 2. Be a generalist**, not a specialist. Broaden your interests.
- 3. Think** of your experience and knowledge in other areas and how they might apply to your story, especially in terms of what's currently relevant to your readers.
- 4. Read** about a lot of different subjects. Listen to and read a wide variety of media. This in itself may be the one tip that helps me the most in linking my writing to the larger web of our lives.

The art of critical thinking! It means asking the important questions about your topic. It means researching the answers. And it means questioning the old answers that are no longer obvious.



**5. Ask questions.** Just as you do in order to get to the heart of your story, ask many questions—and ask them of different people from different backgrounds.

**6. Think about important current affairs** in the life of your readers. How does your story relate to them? This might even help reveal the heart of your story.

One day, a newspaper editor called me over to his desk to give me a story idea. He said he knew of someone who had been informed by the federal government that they would be getting a certain support payment late, and that I should write about this.

Okay, I thought, a typical human-interest story of troubles with the government. Fine, I'll do it.

Not just that, he said, as he started connecting the story to a larger picture: this was a low-income single mother, and the delay meant that she wouldn't get money she depended on until after Christmas.

Hmm, yes, a more dramatic, important story.

Then he continued: the notice she got suggested that she was not the only one. Low-income people across Canada would be affected. You could sell this story to a national newspaper, he offered.

And so I did. CBC also ran it on its flagship daily national news in the evening. And, thanks to the pressure from our news coverage, the government changed its plan and got the money to people who depended on it before Christmas.

My editor had taught me about connecting a story to the larger web of our lives. About identifying what's important and interesting in a story. And about making a difference in our world.

You can do this too. Enjoy it!

## ***The Many Faces of Nonfiction***

Nonfiction writing for magazines comes in many different forms. Today, this is true more than ever, as creative nonfiction writers invent new approaches.

Here are a few traditional forms of nonfiction writing, published in both magazines and books.

### **1. History: Stories That Really Happened**

The Eastern Townships region has an interesting history, so this category is of particular interest. A good example is *Richmond, Now and Then: An Anecdotal History from the Eastern Townships* by Nick Fonda.

Other examples are the many historical articles by Bernard Epps, published in early issues of the *Townships Sun*. Another is a short history of round barns in the Townships, "The Perfect Circle" by Louise Abbott in the December 2022/January 2023 *Townships Sun*.

### **2. Memoir: Stories from Your Own Life**

In either book or short-story form, memoir pieces are true-life stories from your own life or that of someone you know.

"My Ride on the Townships Real Estate Bubble," a memoir piece in the July/August 2022 *Townships Sun*, recounts Angela Leuck's tumultuous story of how she and her husband quickly sold their house in Hatley, and—zap!—found a new one in Coaticook.

**HOT TIP!**  
Keep track of who tells you what. Record your interviews. Make sure your quotes are accurate.

That way, you have evidence to back you up in case your editor, the interviewee, or a reader challenges you.



### 3. Travel Writing: Stories from Far...and Near

Think about your experience last summer prospecting for gold in Chartierville, or exploring the location where the *Three Pines* movie was made in the western end of the Townships. Showing the reader what you saw; telling what happened, how you felt, and what you learned on your trip—that’s a good piece of travel writing!

### 4. Essays: What Do You Think?

An essay can offer commentary, opinion, insight, philosophy, or humour. A good example of an essay in the September 2022 *Townships Sun* is “Three Priorities for Education,” by Don Atkinson. His three priorities? Critical thinking, focus on local problems, and happiness. Atkinson’s essay offered commentary/opinion, insight and philosophy all in one package.

In each *Townships Sun*, the “Editor’s Note” usually offers a short essay, sometimes incorporating a personal story.

### 5. Reviews: Windows into Our Culture

Certain magazines are devoted entirely to reviews of certain art forms, such as visual arts, for example, or books. A review may focus on a new book, an art exhibit, a theatre piece, a restaurant meal, or it may take a longer view, perhaps interviewing a writer or explaining the background story behind a new production. In either case, an important role of the *Townships Sun* has always been to offer a window into the cultural life of our region.

The *Townships Sun* almost always publishes a book review and a restaurant review. Other reviews are also welcome!

## Magazines Love Personal Essays

The personal essay is a form of creative nonfiction writing that incorporates personal experience, or bits of memoir, with another form of nonfiction writing, specifically an essay.

In recent years, this form of writing has become more and more popular. We humans love stories, and a personal essay reads like a good story—a good story that happens to be true! On top of that, it offers interesting information or opinion, fulfilling the magazine’s aim to both entertain and inform.

Writers keep inventing new ways to write personal essays. Here are six different approaches to get your creative juices flowing ([Writer’s Digest](#)).

#### 1. Personal Reportage Essay

Remember the inverted-pyramid shape of hard news stories, with the 5 Ws and the H? (See page 6.) In sharp contrast, a personal reportage essay uses the fictional tools of storytelling. Sometimes writers even includes themselves in the narrative.

Still, essayists adheres to the cardinal rule of nonfiction: to tell the truth. Personal-reportage writers likely do extensive research, maybe online or in news media. They read historical documents and interview a number of different people.

Surprise! The way they record the information reads like a short story. They build suspense, conflict, and craft the story’s ending. Their characters have distinctive voices, their stories have plot twists, and their dialogues are engaging. But—and this is a big but—they stay true to the facts of the story.

This approach tells “a compelling story in a way that engages readers and prompts them to take action,” touching them emotionally ([Brewer, 2022, Writer’s Digest](#)).

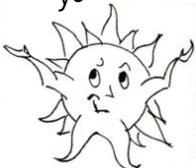
Have you seen an art exhibit that grabbed your attention? Or a book by a Townships author?

Why not write a short review about what you found interesting? The **Townships Sun** editor would love to see it.

**HOT TIP:** Usually the editor can give a “review copy” of the book to the reviewer, free of charge. Email: [editor@townshipssun.ca](mailto:editor@townshipssun.ca).



The personal reportage essay sounds a bit like memoir writing, doesn’t it? You tell it like a story, using your best story-writing strategies, but you stick to your promise to **TELL THE TRUTH** to your readers.



## 2. Braided Essay

The braiding technique brings together threads of writing that complement or compete with each other, carrying each thread forward in turn. For example, your feature story about ceramic arts in the Townships could braid together (1) the history of ceramic arts, (2) interviews with artists, and (3) your own personal experience working with clay.

A historical essay might braid together, for example: (1) the story of a kidnapping; (2) the story of how you researched the story; (3) the consequences of the event, and where the victim and perpetrator are today; and (4) interviews with experts who explain how and why it came about, and its impact on history or the family.

The writer of a research article might weave together a personal story, expert interviews, and statistics. In one paragraph, you might intertwine a segment of the story, an expert's view about the problem, and related stats. Standing alone, a half-page of stats might make for difficult reading. But presented bit by bit, in the context of the developing story, they can have a much stronger impact.

The risk in this approach is that the writer or the reader will lose focus on which thread is being handled at a given time. "But when a writer nails the various threads, the whole can become greater than the sum of its individual parts (or threads, sort of like a braided rope being stronger than any individual thread of twine) through the correlation and juxtaposition of each thread" (Brewer, *Writer's Digest*, 2022).

Movies often use the braided technique, going back and forth between two or more parallel characters' points of view or stories. Could that partly explain why this form of writing is so popular today?



## 3. Fragmented Essay

A fragmented essay is like a collage or a narrative mosaic, composed of several smaller pieces that may or may not connect with each other. The fragments may be out of chronological order. Each piece may have a different tone or meaning. The essay could begin at the end or the middle. The beginning could bring up the end, or both beginning and end could be found somewhere between the middle parts.

Both poetry and fiction may use the fragmented technique. In an essay, it is a technique for building tension, especially if the story's normal linear timeline is lackluster.

## 4. Lyric Essay

A lyric essay uses poetic devices to deliver creative nonfiction, and may even incorporate poems into the text. This experimental form may use prose poems, lists, imagery, metaphor, alliteration, symbolism, rhythm, and so on. (See pages 31-37.) It may also use aspects of the braided essay or the fragmented essay. You don't need to be a poet to try this form. You just need a spirit of adventure!

## 5. Hermit Crab Essay

This form of essay was named by Brenda Miller and Suzanne Paola in their book, *Tell It Slant: Creating, Refining, and Publishing Creative Nonfiction* (3rd edition, 2019). They built upon the metaphor of a hermit crab, who makes its home in various species' shells or other objects. Likewise, the hermit crab essay houses itself in another pre-existing form of writing. For example, it could be a personal essay written as a social media post, a list, an obituary, or a recipe.

Sometimes the writer can create the content in a form that interacts with the actual topic. A listicle (article in the form of a list) might describe the story of your day in the form of a *to-do* list, for example.

Wow. How in the world do you choose what form of article to write?

Good question, but first things first. What do you want to write about? When you have a topic that interests you, think about how you will research it. Think about what you want to convey to your readers. Only then, think about the best form of writing to achieve your intention.



## 6. Graphic Essay

A graphic essay is fun! It uses images to complement the writing. Maybe it is presented as comic-book panels, graphics, or photos with captions. But even though it is more visual in nature, the graphic essay requires good essay-writing skills. The content need to be engaging, the story compelling, and the information fact-based.

## Getting Ready to Write Creative Nonfiction for a Magazine

Let's look at four basic steps to getting published in a magazine.

### 1. Idea

Come up with a compelling story idea—find the “hook” that interests you, and will interest the editor and the magazine’s readers.

Check out the target magazine. Read it! Notice the topics and titles of its articles. How do they usually begin? What types of sources or statistics do the writers cite? How many sources does one article use? Who reads the magazine? Is it a good match for your work?

### 2. Query

A good pitch is also called an “elevator speech.” You’re on an elevator with an editor. In the time it takes an elevator to get to the next floor, you can say a sentence or two that attracts the editor’s attention and arouses their curiosity. An eye-catching pitch is the key to a successful query.

The query is a one-page email that shows the editor you have a good idea. It is your chance to show that you can write. Describe the research you plan to do; show the editor you know how to do research. If your idea is pertinent to the magazine’s readers, the editor will see that you know the magazine, too.

Basically, your one-page email will have four paragraphs.

- (1) **A “pitch” paragraph**, a lead that attracts the eye. This may be the same lead you will use in the article itself.
- (2) **Article description**. Tell what research you will do (Interviews? Articles? Books?). What approach or form will you use? Will you have photos? What title do you suggest? What’s your estimated word length? How much time will you take to complete the article?
- (3) **Your background**. What qualifies you to write this article? Can you give a link to previous work? Or have you attached a sample of your writing?
- (4) **Contact information**. Give your full name, phone number, address, and email address.

### 3. Defend Your Idea

If the editor is interested, they may have some questions. Be ready to discuss them with the editor. Maybe they want to know more about the research you plan to do. They may have a slightly different angle to suggest for their readership. They could want to learn more about why you are interested in this topic, or about your background.

## 4. Get to Work

Once your query is approved, and you have a deadline and word limit, get to work!

If this is the first time you have written for this magazine, the editor will likely ask you to submit “on speculation.” That means they have the option not to publish it if they find it is not, after all, a good fit for their magazine. You may receive a contract that stipulates that you have to submit the article by deadline in order for it to be published. Payment may also be explained in the contract, and copyright conditions.

## Researching Your Nonfiction Article

Journalists carry out different types of research for articles, especially nonfiction, or feature articles, calling on various sources.

### 1. Primary Research

This kind of research calls upon direct experience and primary (or original) sources. These are experiences, documents, recordings, artefacts, or other first-hand sources with direct knowledge or experience of the events or topic.

Getting direct experience of your topic can be fascinating. Here are a few examples.

Nellie Bly (1864-1922) pioneered investigative journalism. In the 1880s, she went undercover to enter a mental institution in New York City, and wrote a devastating exposé based on her experience and her secret interviews with other inmates. Title: “Ten Days In a Mad-House.”

A survey carried out by the *Townships Sun* was the basis for an article by Scott Stevenson, “Toward a Healthier Countryside: Can Farmers and Tourists Find Common Ground?” (July/August 2022). It told which Townships municipalities regulate the use of pesticides.

A series of articles by Rachel Garber explored the social effects of Bill 21 through an experiment of wearing a hijab in various locations in the Townships. Another series was based on an observational study of her flock of chickens.

### 2. Secondary Research

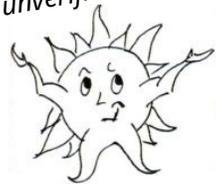
This kind of research is based on second-hand reports or secondary sources. For example, if you are researching an event in the 1980s in the Eastern Townships, you will likely want to consult reports from those days in the *Sherbrooke Record*, the *Stanstead Journal*, *La Tribune*, other newspapers, or the *Townships Sun* itself.

Online, you might find relevant information or comments via a google search, on Facebook or other social media. You might read research or government reports. You might interview a university prof, or someone affected by a new law or policy.

Word to the wise: Keep a written record of the sources and articles you consult. Online, don’t just note the link; download the post or article itself, and note the date it was downloaded. The sands of the online world shift often. When you or your editor return to fact-check your article, your source may have disappeared.

It’s always a good idea to record your interviews, too. Some interviewers make sure to have two recorders going, in case one stops recording for some reason. Being able to check your facts on your recording can save you pain later on.

**RED ALERT!**  
Be sure to fact-check  
your secondary sources.  
If they quote another  
source, go directly to  
that source (person,  
article, book, post, etc.)  
and verify the facts. Or at  
least make sure to say  
their statement was  
unverified.



## ***Interviewing Your Sources***

It's a good idea to interview different kinds of sources. For example, for the *Townships Sun* article, "Sexual Politics on Campus" (September 2022), Rachel Garber interviewed three different kinds of sources. First, the Dean of Students, as the person responsible for the sexual violence prevention policy at Bishop's University. Second, the social worker who staffed the Sexual Violence Support Centre. Third, a student who was involved in a student group combatting sexual violence on campus. You can see how each of these three informants would offer a different perspective.

Here are a few tips for interviewing your sources.

### **1. Prepare a List of Questions**

Even if you are great at ad-libbing, keep a list at hand in case of need. At the end of the interview, you may want to take a minute to check whether you have forgotten something. ("Just a minute," you might say, "I'd just like to check whether there's something else I wanted to ask you.")

### **2. Open Questions**

Ask open questions that require an open-ended answer, rather than a "yes" or "no" response.

For example, don't ask "Do you feel ok about that?" or "Did you stop your car when you saw the accident?" Instead, ask questions such as:

"How do you feel about that?"

"How did that happen?"

"What did you do then?"

"How did that turn out?"

To help identify other sources you might wish to interview, you could ask:

"Who else should I talk to about this?"

"Who might disagree with you about that?"

### **3. Wrapping Up the Interview**

If you have any touchy or potentially offensive questions, leave them for last. Near the end of the interview, you might ask:

"What is the most important thing you would want people to know about this topic?"

"Is there anything else you'd like to tell me?"

"Is there anything I haven't asked that I should have?"

"Where can I reach you if I have any follow-up questions?"

Of course, you have recorded your interview. And you have listened really intently. Now you will go home and transcribe your recording. It is surprising what you will learn from that process! But you may find you have not asked a question that now seems really important, or you can't decipher a certain response. It is very likely you will have a follow-up question or two. Don't hesitate to call your source. Sooner, rather than later!

Some of these sample questions are from Carol Tice's (2012) online article, "[The 15-Step Freelance Writers' Guide to Writing for Magazines](#)." This is a good little resource to look at for more tips to help you research and write your nonfiction article.

## 4. Interviewing FAQs

### "How long should the interview be?"

Don't waste time. Get straight into the questions as soon as you can, but don't rush the interviewee. If you told the person it would be a 10-minute interview, respect that, or ask permission to continue longer.

### "What if the interviewee asks to see the article before you submit it?"

No. Never let the interviewee read your article beforehand. You are not a public relations writer. Subjecting your article to the approval of the interviewee could jeopardize your objectivity, or at least raise questions about your independence.

You can tell the interviewee that take your responsibility for accuracy very seriously, and you will certainly call them to verify any point if you are at all in doubt. In a recent workshop, journalist Samanth Subramanian of *The Guardian* said he always tells his interviewees that a fact-checker WILL call to verify references or quotations. He advised writers to be prepared to give the editor the interview recording and source material for fact-checking.

## Editing & Fact-checking

After you've organized your ideas and your information, and you've written your first draft, an important phase begins: rewriting, or if you will, self-editing. Here are a few tips.

**Big Picture.** Lay the article aside awhile—an hour, a day, or a week. Print it out, or change the font to help you see it afresh. Then look at the overall article. Imagine someone else has written it and ask yourself:

- Does the introduction hook the reader? Does it go to the heart of the story?
- Do the ideas and the paragraphs flow logically?
- What kind of ending does it have?
- Read it aloud to yourself or someone else. How does it sound? What do you notice?

**The Second Edit.** Next, look more closely at the various sections of the piece and the paragraphs. Review your notes for juicy tidbits or quotes. Read the article again and again.

- Are ideas repeated? Try to choose the best place for each idea without repetition.
- Does each paragraph contain just one topic?
- Can you break up long blocks of text with subheadings or paragraph breaks?
- Are your points supported by data, statistics, and quotations?
- Are the quotations and facts accurate? Check your notes and recordings.

**The Third Edit:** Now we are ready to look at the sentences and words. Read again. Systematically edit each line.

- Do the sentences vary in length? Short sentences can be very powerful; use them for big ideas. Run-on sentences can be unclear; break them into two shorter ones.
- Make every sentence, every word, count. Delete unnecessary words and phrases, and you will strengthen the remaining ones.
- Replace inexact or commonplace verbs or adjectives with stronger ones. Avoid clichés.
- Use the active voice whenever possible. ("She did it"; not "it was done.")
- Get permission to use others' photos, art, or long quotations.
- Finally, proofread for grammar, spelling and punctuation.

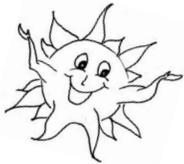
**And now you are ready to begin working with the editor!** (See page 42.)

Ernest Hemingway  
said the only kind of  
writing is rewriting.  
Before you send your  
work to the editor,  
read it over several  
times. How could it  
better express what  
you want to say?



Note to poets!  
Are you wondering  
about topics for poems  
you will submit to the  
**Townships Sun?**

Check out "Our  
Personality" on pages  
10-11 of this **e-Guide**.  
Keep in mind that  
people like to read  
poems that do not  
confuse them.



## 6. Writing Poetry for Magazines

*by Jan Draper*

When you begin writing poetry, write all the time. Keep every poem and even every scrap you write. Don't worry about form. Read everything aloud and listen to what you read. Read to anyone who wants to listen and is encouraging.

Most of all, have fun!

### **Images**

What makes poetry and fiction different from philosophy?

It is *images*. That is, words which describe what we perceive with our five senses. Creating images requires us to use all our senses: sight, hearing, taste, touch, and smell.

Here are some images.

- Can you see an orange next to your computer?
- Can you imagine the smell of coffee?
- What does it feel like to stroke your pet?
- Take a minute and listen to your favorite song. Can you hear it in your head?
- I just sent a parrot to your house. He is sitting on top of your computer. Can you see him?

We use images to capture emotions and to revive memories.

Poems and short stories can be like movies. We feel everything that the characters feel and we experience the moods created by the settings. All of this connects to our memories.

Poems and fiction are better than movies because we develop our own film from the writer's words. Readers' responses are immediate. They can easily identify with what the writer says.

The writer may not see things exactly as the reader does but they can still create a multi-sense picture.

What does that mean for you as a poet?

## Reading and Responding

Everyone sees a different picture and hears different sounds when they read this poem. What do you see, hear, taste, touch and smell when you read it?

### Haiku Poem

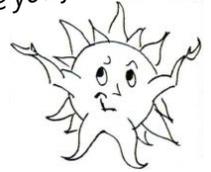
by Basho, a poet from Japan

*In the abandoned boat*

*The hail*

*Bounces about*

Try reading the poem aloud. What image comes to your mind? What kind of boat is it? Where is it? What do you see? Hear? Taste? Touch? Or smell? How does it make you feel?



## Writing Practice 1

Choose an emotion and write a poem describing it in terms of the five senses.

Here are some possibilities:

- Joy
- Loneliness
- Excitement
- Sadness
- Nostalgia
- Contentment
- Boredom

## Kinds of Imagery

- **Visual** imagery appeals to the sense of sight, and is the most common kind of image.
- **Auditory** imagery describes specific sounds within the story or poem.
- **Olfactory** imagery describes a particular scent.
- **Gustatory** imagery describes a particular taste.
- **Tactile** imagery describes something we can touch.
- **Kinesthetic** imagery refers to movements.
- **Organic** imagery / subjective imagery, refers to “personal experiences of a character's body, including emotion and the senses of hunger, thirst, fatigue, and pain.”

([Wikipedia](#))

Hmm. I'm closing my eyes, and imagining what I enjoy doing the most. What do I see? What do I hear? What do I smell? What do I feel or taste? You try it!



## Writing Practice 2

Tell a story using images. (Two characters will work best.) Show the reader what happens with no comment and not too many adjectives. Use as many senses as you can.

Here are some possible plots for your story using images:

- Two people meet for the first time.
- Two people have a disagreement.
- A customer chooses a gift and talks to a salesperson.
- A first lesson—piano, dance, riding, or something else.

## Metaphorical Language: Figures of Speech

**Literal language** has one level of meaning. Example: "Last month the store sold six toasters."

**Figurative** or metaphorical language has several levels of meaning, depending on the interpretation of the reader. Metaphorical language relates two essentially unlike objects. For example:

*"My love is like a red, red rose."* (Robert Burns)

*"A light rain as tranquil as an apple"* (Anne Sexton)

**Metaphor** is an implied comparison. Here are some examples:

*"She held out / Her deck of smiles. I cut and she dealt"* (Randall Jarrell)

*She is good at mixing the ingredients of life.*

*The winter of his days....*

*The ice of those words...*

*She swam, a dolphin, in the pool*

*Her words, music to the child, comforted and soothed*

*Their marriage, a graceful dance, into old age*

**Simile** uses "like" or "as" to compare two unlike elements.

*"Strawberries ripen like Buddhas"* (Sylvia Plath)

*Her smile, like a 500-watt bulb, lit the room.*

**Metonymy** uses a part to signify the whole. For example:

*Twenty head of cattle*

*All hands on deck*

**Synecdoche** represents something by using an object that is close to it. For example:

*The crown....*

*The pen is mightier than the sword*

**Oxymoron** is a contradiction in terms.

*A lively death*

*Government intelligence*

### Writing Practice 3

Find another writer and play around with some figures of speech.

Which ones do you like the most?

Why?

Here's a line from a famous poem by Pablo Neruda:

**"I want to do with you what spring does with the cherry trees."**

Hmm. What feeling does this line bring up in you?

What kind of figure of speech is it?



How's this?

"My poem is a flowerbed. In its shelter, I spread my roots wide like Japanese knotweed, on my way to conquer the earth."



## Personification

Personification represents an inanimate object as a human being, giving the object human qualities such as emotions, or gestures or even speech. Here are three examples of non-human objects or concepts taking actions that makes them seem to be persons.

*The wind howled as the storm grew stronger.*

*Time ran away from him.*

*The car died in the middle of the road.*

## Writing Practice 4

Try writing a poem that gives an inanimate object some characteristic or characteristics of a human being. Think about an object that you really like, a building, or maybe a plant.

## Synesthesia

Synesthesia means using one sense to describe another. For example, using colour to describe sound or scent. Like this:

*The golden sound of the trumpet*

*Perfume as blue as twilight*

*The sound of a symphony, like a garden full of flowers*

## Writing Practice 5

Let's try a few synesthetic lines. Use taste to describe something you can see, for example. What is the taste of music? Or the sound of fragrance?

## Sound and Sense

**Onomatopoeia** refers to words which sound like what they mean. "The sound must seem an echo to the sense," wrote Alexander Pope in *An Essay on Criticism*.

Here are a couple of examples:

*"gluglugluglug went the toilet"* (Tom Wolfe)

*"I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore."* (WB Yeats)

Read the last sentence aloud, and notice how the arrangement of the words accentuates the onomatopoeia.

## Repetition of Sounds

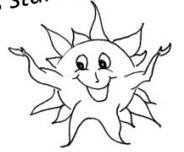
**Alliteration** is a poetic device using words that repeat the same sound in a line or sentence, especially the same initial sound.

*Sarah was singing softly in the sunlight.*

In a poem, **alliterative verse** is when each line has at least four stressed syllables of alliterative words. This style of writing was used in Old Norse and Anglo-Saxon poetry. More recently, writers such as J.R.R. Tolkien in the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy have used alliterative verse. ([Study.com](http://Study.com))

*Bob bragged// boldly speaking*

Here's my attempt:  
"Mouth gaping wide  
in one gulp  
the nebula  
swallowed up the  
hapless starship



O-no-ma-to-po-ET-ic  
words are fun!  
Young children's  
books, such as those  
by Dr. Seuss, are full  
of them!



**Assonance** is another poetic device, using the repetition of vowel sounds. Like this:

*[a bird] flits nimble-winged in the thickets.* (Sylvia Plath)

**Consonance** means the repetition of consonant sounds. For example:

*She steps and slips on rocks under the dripping leaves*

## Rhyme

**Rhyme** is when sounds of words or the endings of words correspond with each other, especially when they are used at the ends of lines of poetry. Let's look at different kinds of rhyme.

**Perfect rhyme**, where words repeat the same sound. Here are a few examples:

*trestle and pestle*

*water and daughter*

*balloon rhymes with moon*

**End Rhyme** is when the words at the end of a line rhyme. This accentuates the impact of the rhyme, especially if there is a comma or period at the end of each line. The pattern of the end rhyme can emphasize the theme.

The **ballad form** (ABAB) is a common form of end rhyme. The ABAB rhyme scheme means that for every four lines, the first and third lines will rhyme with each other and the second and fourth lines will also rhyme with each other. Here's an example from Robert Frost's poem, "Neither Out Far Nor In Deep":

*The people along the sand*

*All turn and look one way.*

*They turn their back on the land.*

*They look at the sea all day.*

Notice how "sand" and "land" rhyme with each other, as do "way" and "day."

Many poets today do not use this kind of perfect end rhyming. They would be more likely to use *slant rhyme* or to write *prose poetry*, or *free verse*. We'll learn more about these kinds of poetry in a moment.

**Half rhyme**, or **slant rhyme** is a device where words have similar, but not identical, sounds. They may sound a bit weird but somehow our brain picks up and makes a link between the two items being described. Like these words:

*egg and desk*

And a few lines by Emily Dickenson:

*Hope is a thing with feathers*

*That perches in the soul*

*And sings the tune without the words*

*And never stops at all...*

Notice how "soul" and "all" don't quite rhyme with each other, but our ear can hear the similarity.

Slant rhyme  
surprises the ear.  
It's just a little bit  
different from  
what the reader or  
listener expects.  
I like it!



**Internal Rhyme** is when words rhyme within the line. This is more subtle. For example:

*I am the daughter of Earth and Water,  
And the nursling of the Sky;  
I pass through the pores of the ocean and shores;  
I change, but I cannot die. (Shelley)*

Notice how “daughter” is echoed by “water,” and “pores” by “shores.”

## Prose Poem

A prose poem uses the standard forms of prose, sentences and paragraphs to organize its ideas, but it also incorporates elements common to poetry such as symbols, metaphors, and other figures of speech.

“Though the name of the form may appear to be a contradiction, the prose poem essentially appears as prose, but reads like poetry.” ([Academy of American Poets](#))

Here is an example of a prose poem written by Gertrude Stein (1914), entitled “A Long Dress.” It was published in her book, *Tender Buttons* (public domain).

*What is the current that makes machinery, that makes it crackle, what is the current that presents a long line and a necessary waist. What is this current.*

*What is the wind, what is it.*

*Where is the serene length, it is there and a dark place is not a dark place, only a white and red are black, only a yellow and green are blue, a pink is scarlet, a bow is every color. A line distinguishes it. A line just distinguishes it.*

## Writing Practice 6

Want to give it a try? Write a short prose piece that tackles an unusual subject and uses the same language as a poem.

## Rhythm

Here is a quick look at different kinds of rhythm used in various types of poetry.

**Free Verse** is a commonly used form of poetry today. It has no pattern of rhyme or regular meter, following instead the rhythm of natural speech. Like this:

*Listener up there! what have you to confide to me?  
Look in my face while I snuff the sidle of evening,  
(Talk honestly, no one else hears you, and I stay only a minute longer.)*

*Do I contradict myself?  
Very well then I contradict myself,  
(I am large, I contain multitudes.)*

These few lines are by Walt Whitman, from his poem, “Song of Myself” (1891, public domain).

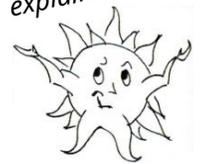
**Iambic pentameter** is a common form in English, and is similar to speech. It is used in sonnets and in Shakespeare’s plays.

It includes ten syllables with the accent on every second one. For example:

*I love ' to dance ' and sing ' those cra ' zy songs '.*

**Blank verse** are lines of iambic pentameter used without end rhyme.

Hmm. What images do this prose poem bring to your mind? It uses questions to suggest something that may be unclear or difficult to explain.



**Syllabic Verse** is poetry in which each line has the same number of syllables. Like this:

*Overnight, very  
Whitely, discretely,  
Very quietly  
  
Our toes, our noses  
Take hold on the loam  
Acquire the air.*

These lines are from “Mushrooms” by Sylvia Plath (1959). Notice the use of sound in this poem.

## ***What Works for You?***

Confused about rhythm? Don’t worry about it. Write in free verse, as if you are speaking. Read it aloud...again and again and again! Reading your poem aloud will let your ear absorb the rhythm.

Write about something that intrigues you.

“Incident on the Vaillancourt Road” is a narrative poem written in free verse by Townships poet Steve Luxton. It was published in the October/November 2022 *Townships Sun*. Steve read the poem for us, standing at the side of Vaillancourt Road near Hatley, Quebec. Listen to his reading, and notice the conversational rhythm he uses ([YouTube/@Townships-Sun](https://www.youtube.com/@Townships-Sun)).

Or start small. Check out Angela Leuck’s short videos on the shortest form of poetry, haiku. You will find them at [YouTube/@TYVoices](https://www.youtube.com/@TYVoices). You can do it too!

# 7. Art & Photography for Magazines

by Cécilia Alain & R.A. Garber

## How Do You Create Art & Photos for Magazines?

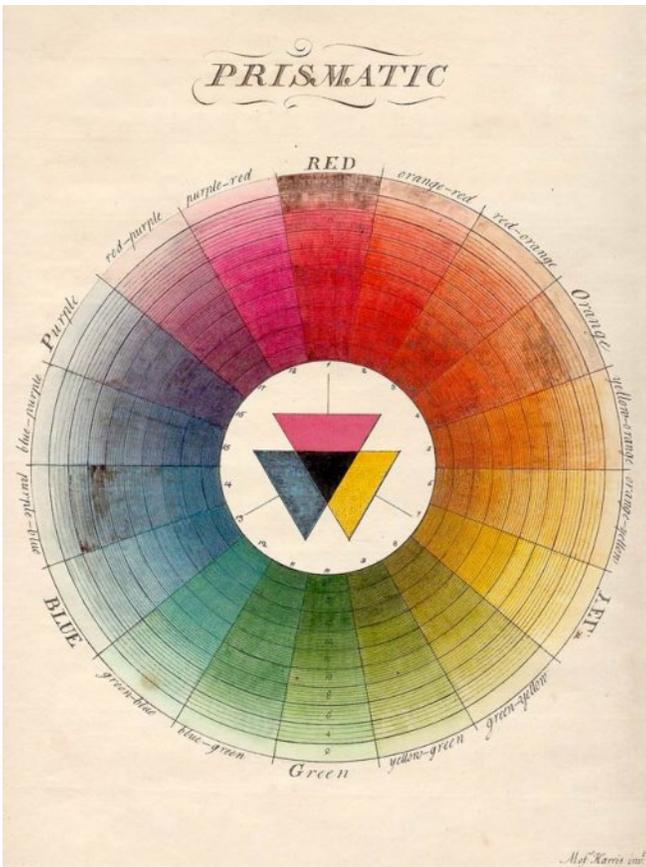
Art and photography can seem like two very broad categories, but they are both images that will be printed in a magazine. Images have a clear purpose: to tell us something, whether that is a story, a message, or maybe just a feeling.

There are many components of visual communication that you can keep in mind while creating your image:

- **Medium**

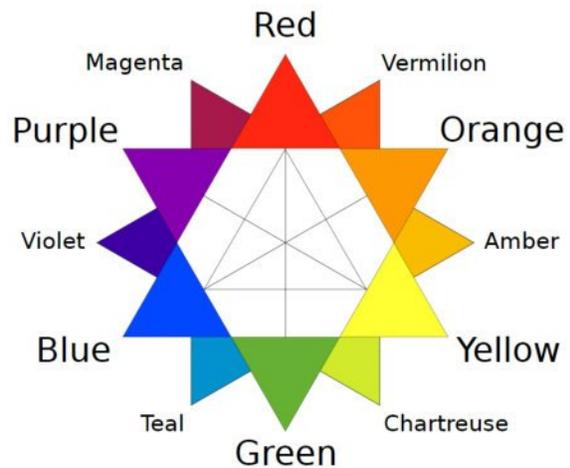
How is it made? Art media range from drawing with pencil, charcoal, and other dry tools, to painting with acrylics, oils, or watercolours. You may use photography or film. Or collage, using paper or a vast variety of other objects. Or mixed media, combining any array of media.

“Medium” is singular;  
“media” is plural.  
The word refers to  
the art materials  
used to create  
your image.



- **Colour**

How are your colours arranged? You might consider using **complementary** colours, or opposites on the colour wheel, such as red and green, or violet and amber. Or maybe split-complementaries, such as magenta, yellow and green (the two colours on both sides of magenta’s complementary colour, chartreuse).

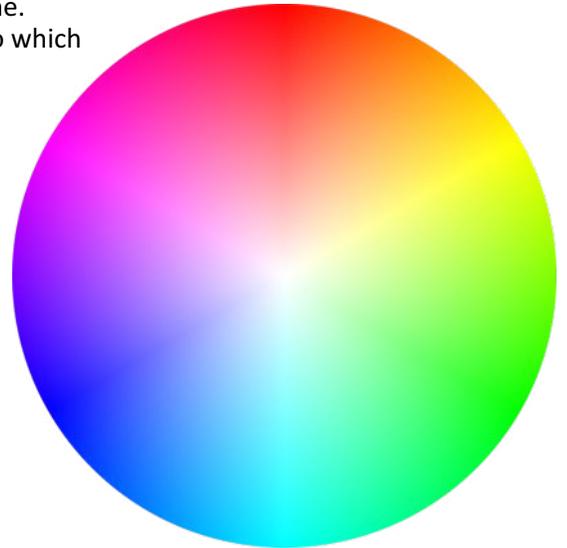


↑ by DanPMK at English Wikipedia, CC BY-SA 3.0

← by Moses Harris, in *The Natural System of Colours* (1776).

**Saturation** is another aspect of colour to consider. In this Colour Circle, white is at the center, and fully saturated colors are at the outer edge. The circle is the circular face of the HSV (Hue-Saturation-Value) color cone. Saturation means the intensity of a color, expressed as the degree to which it differs from white.

**Colour Balance** is especially important in photography. See the photo of a lily, below, both as shot and manually white-balanced. On the left is a digital photo as it came from the camera with no further adjustment to color. On the right is the same photo, using the Photoshop Levels adjustments that make a gray surface in another photograph taken in the same light come out gray.



*Original SVG by Crossover1370, Rasterization of File:Color circle (RGB).svg, CC BY-SA 4.0*

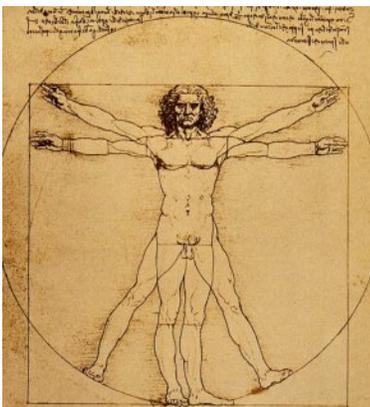


*by Fg2, Public Domain*

Color balance is “the global adjustment of the intensities of the colors (typically red, green, and blue primary colors). An important goal of this adjustment is to render specific colors – particularly neutral colors like white or grey – correctly” ([Wikipedia](#)).

## • Composition

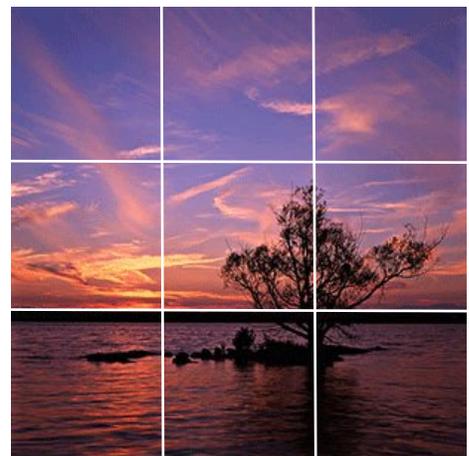
How is the subject placed in the image? How do you arrange the components in your artwork or photo? “The term composition means ‘putting together.’ It can be thought of as the organization of the elements of art according to the principles of art. Composition can apply to any work of art, from music through writing and into photography, that is arranged using conscious thought” ([Wikipedia](#)).



*by Leonardo da Vinci (public domain)*

**Symmetry** in art is created by mirroring two parts of the composition. This kind of composition can be made more interesting by slightly varying the two parts.

**The Rule of Thirds** is another guideline for both artists and photographers. It suggests “if you divide your composition into thirds, either vertically or horizontally, and then place focal areas of your scene at the meeting points of them, you will get a more pleasing arrangement and layout for your compositions” ([Virtual Art Academy](#)).



*Moondigger (Wikimedia)*

These “rules” are for you to play with, not to follow slavishly. Have fun bending them!

- **Value**

How light or dark is it? Is there a good range between the lightest and darkest areas?



- **Contrast**

Are there stark differences? You can create striking contrasts in your artwork by using extreme elements such as light and dark values, complementary colours, or sharp and blurred focus.

- **Focus**

Where does our attention go first? That's the focus in any visual image. In photography, focus also refers to the depth of field (DOF). That is the distance between the nearest and the furthest objects that are in acceptably sharp focus. Some photos use out-of-focus blur to highlight a certain element, or to create a special mood.



Aperture =  $f/1.4$ . DOF=0.8 cm



Aperture =  $f/22$ . DOF=12.4 cm

by Alex1ruff, CC BY-SA 4.0  
([Wikimedia](#))

- **Point of view**

A point of view refers to where a viewer is located in relation to the objects in the image. For example, if you have a bird's eye view, you will see the objects below you. Or you could see them from a low angle, or even upside down.

- **Lighting**

How does light affect the subject? You might go for a spotlight effect, long shadows, or highlights.

- **Tone**

Tone can be emotional. Is your image serious, or not serious? Is it comic? Ironic? Tragic? Calm and neutral?

Tone can also refer to how light or dark a colour is. Each colour has an almost infinite number of tones. For example, think of the range of almost infinite variety between pastel yellow and gold.

- **Mood**

What feeling does your work convey? Does it make the viewer feel sad, happy, or calm? Is it scary? Mood also includes the atmosphere portrayed by an artwork.

*"Art is the emotional expression of human personality," Eugène Véron wrote (1882, L'Ésthetique).*



## The Many Kinds of Images

It can also be useful to know some typical genres of images. Be aware of their conventions. Then you can choose to follow a genre's norms or decide to challenge them! Keep in mind that artworks don't always fit in a single box; sometimes one can fit into many genres!



*Saint George, by Wassily Kandinsky (Wikimedia)*



*Bumble Bee, by John Mackley*

- **Abstract**

When the artwork doesn't represent reality/something concrete in a realistic manner. This painting by Wassily Kandinsky (Russia, 1866-1944) could be called semi-abstract. You can discern the figure of Saint George on his horse. The overall painting uses elements of good composition, value, and other aspects of visual communication, although the objects are painted in a quite abstract way.

- **Realism**

When the artwork presents subjects in a naturalistic or realistic, almost photographic, way. (Although some photos are deliberately abstract!)

- **Architecture**

When the main subject is a human-made building.

- **Landscape**

When the main subject is nature.

- **Portrait**

When the main subject is a person.

- **Macro**

When the artwork or photo zooms into something tiny to enlarge it or make it abstract. Macro photos are extreme close-up photos of very small subjects, maybe insects, where the subject is larger than life size.

- **Experimental**

When the artwork blends genres or mediums together, or strikes out into new territory. Experimental art is also often called innovative or avant-garde.

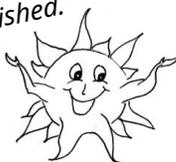
"The experimental artist wants her artwork to be different from all the other artworks around her. She desires that her results be unusual, unfamiliar to the point of looking peculiar, perplexing" ([Big Other](#)).

## What Makes a Powerful Image?

The first thing that magazine editors will look for in art and photography will usually be originality: they love to see something unique that showcases your personal style and offers a new way to look at the world.

Your image can communicate whatever you want. As long as you make it evocative, interesting and fresh, it will grab the viewer's attention and make it a powerful image.

Want to see your images published in the **Townships Sun**? Check out the next section, "Getting Published."



## 8. Getting Published

by R.A. Garber

### ***Working with a Magazine Editor***

You stand on a shoulder of the Coaticook Gorge, your creative work in hand. Your audience stands across the gorge. How do you get your writing or image into their hands?

A magazine editor is your bridge. A good editor will help strengthen your voice, and ensure that readers see or read it. You know your subject best. The editor knows their magazine readers best. You can work together to get your message across.

It's a matter of connecting the magazine's style and basic structure with your own unique voice. It's a balancing act between your personal story, the community's story, and the larger picture.

### ***Be Yourself***

Most of all, editors are looking for something fresh that will interest their readers. They want to be surprised! Originality begins with following your own interests, being yourself.

Your personality and personal story have a lot of scope in magazines, whether in fiction or non-fiction, whether in poetry, art, or photography. This is especially true in a general-interest community magazine such as the *Townships Sun*. Your perspective matters.

### ***Think Ahead***

Because the *Townships Sun* publishes only nine issues a year, the deadline for submissions is far in advance of the publication date. For example, December 30 is the deadline for a submission to the the February 1<sup>st</sup> issue.

But that's just to receive your final submission. In fact, the previous issue was sent to the printer on November 17. That means that, as of November 18, or even earlier, the editor is already looking for content for the February issue. The earlier you query or make your submission, the better your chances.

Consult the coming year's themes and deadlines at: [townshipssun.ca/Submit](http://townshipssun.ca/Submit).

### ***What Does the Townships Sun Want?***

The Townships Sun looking for all the things this e-Guide is about: Short stories, memoir, poems. Articles, essays, reviews. Maybe a personal essay, with your own experience braided into research or history. Artwork, photos. Visual artists and photographers: The *Townships Sun* is always seeking a striking image in colour for the front cover! Also, sometimes we need images to accompany articles or stories. Send the editor samples of your work, and you could be asked to submit an image that fits with a particular article, as the occasion arises. Contributions Guidelines are at [townshipssun.ca/Submit](http://townshipssun.ca/Submit).

## ***What's the Editing Process Like?***

Editors look at the big picture first. Is the submission a good fit for their magazine? Does it offer a fresh, impactful point of view? Does it give information or analysis that is relevant to their readers? Does it relate to the season or the theme of an upcoming issue?

***Fire, Not Smoke.*** Then the editor looks at how the article or story is written, or the technical aspects of an image. Will the writer's voice and message come through for the readers, or does it need clarifying?

Famous editor Arthur Plotnik advised, "Edit to let the fire show through the smoke" (Elements of Editing, 1986. p. 31). That is, strengthen the writer's voice by taking away the inessential, so the central message—the fire of the writer's voice—is easy to hear.

Plotnik also wrote that "an editor's job is to shape the expression of an author's thoughts, not the thoughts themselves" (p. 32). But an editor has to understand the writer's thoughts in order to enhance their expression. Clear writing leads to more constructive editing.

***Original Work.*** It shouldn't need saying... but... the *Townships Sun* wants original content. We want to hear YOUR voice. Don't plagiarize; don't copy from anyone on or off the internet without crediting the source, or without permission.

Acknowledge the source of any quotations. Give a link, or author, title, date of publication. Check the copyright requirements for any written work or image, and get permission to use a quote or image, if necessary.

***Fact-checking.*** Editors spend a lot of time fact-checking! Please give us links to your sources of information or images. The editor may verify quotes or facts, if in doubt. Be ready to give evidence of your accuracy.

The final fact-checkers are our readers! If an error is flagged, it reflects on both the magazine and the contributor. We're in this together; let's work together to get things straight.

***Three Basic Levels of Editing.*** First, the editor will look at what's working, and what's not working. This includes the theme, structure, character, plot, or dialogue. The big picture.

Next, the editor will do what is called "line editing." They will consider the creative content, writing style, and language use. Is the piece clear and enjoyable to read? In other words, the writer's voice.

The final steps are copy editing and proofreading. This is a line-by-line edit for clarity, syntax, and flow, and then an even closer check for spelling, punctuation, and other little bugs.

***All Good Things Come to an End.*** Editing is collaborative, but is finite—the editor has the last word. For example, the [FONT Magazine](#) contract says:

"The contributor agrees to an editing process with the Font team. There will be one opportunity for review and approval of any edits before publication."

This is common at the *Townships Sun*, although the collaboration can several exchanges. But sometimes a space problem comes up during layout, and a phrase or two has to be cut from an article. This is the editor's decision.

***The Writer Proposes; the Editor Disposes.*** The title, teasers, decks, and liftout quotes all aim to attract a reader’s interest. (See pages 11 and 12 for definitions of these terms.) The writer’s suggestions are welcome, but the editor has the final say, always with the magazine’s readers in mind, and wanting to make the article more accessible to them.

## ***Contribution Guidelines***

Interested in writing for the *Townships Sun*? Please check out our contribution guidelines at [townshipssun.ca/Submit](http://townshipssun.ca/Submit). Then if you have any questions, don’t hesitate to contact the editor at [editor@townshipssun.ca](mailto:editor@townshipssun.ca).

*Welcome to the  
Townships Sun!*

