

The Writers Network News, October 2014

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The Writers Network News
No Rules; Just Write!
Editor: Bobbie Christmas

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Meet Fellow Writers

Do you live in or visit metro Atlanta? Sign up for local meeting notices today! Send your name and e-mail address to [Bobbie@zebraeditor.com](mailto:Bobbie@zebraeditor.com).

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Note: I have shortened some links in this newsletter with the help of www.tinyurl.com, a free service that takes long web addresses and converts them to short ones.

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Writer's Quote of the Month

"I am neither a man nor a woman but an author." --Charlotte Bronte

According to [BrowseBiography.com](http://BrowseBiography.com), Charlotte Bronte was one of three English sisters who had books published in the mid-1800s. Her writing described, with a dramatic force that was entirely new to English fiction, the conflict between love and independence and the struggle of the individual to maintain his or her self-esteem. She wrote Jane Eyre under the pen name of Currer Bell.

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One: From the editor's desk: Lifelong Learning

Once I became a senior, I discovered endless opportunities to travel, take seminars, attend lectures, and join in mini-adventures. Woodstock has two senior centers that offer programs, and the Cherokee County Recreation and Parks Department has a group called Silver Roamers that offers day trips as well as three- and four-day trips, all of which include guides that inform participants of the history and culture of each location we visit. The community apparently wants to keep us "oldsters" entertained and educated, but I am sure that many things are also available for "spring chickens" under the age of fifty-five.

Most recently my sister and I traveled to Tallahassee, Florida, where the senior center there puts on a five-day Lifelong Learning Extravaganza each year. In partnership with a retirement community in Tallahassee, the event offered more than fifty events, lectures, tours, trips, and activities, from kayak fishing to the history of hand bells, and from a songwriting seminar to an improvised concert by a fabulous jazz musician inspired by artwork created by members of the senior center. Many events take place at the same time, which helped my sister and me whittle the list down to twelve events that did not conflict and that sounded interesting. With a dozen things to attend in four and a half days, we stayed busy from morning to night. To name a few of our adventures, we took a tour down the St. Marks River, all the way to the lighthouse in the Gulf of Mexico. Along the way we spotted a bald eagle, a manatee, a heron, and more, and on our way back, a dolphin cavorted beside our boat for a long time, as if escorting us.

Later we climbed aboard a comfortable bus and rode to Thomasville, Georgia, where we strolled for about a mile while a guide told us of the history of the area, pointed out significant buildings, and took us to some of the finest restaurants, where we had samplings of grits and shrimp, sourdough pizza, crab cakes and fried green tomatoes, fresh-roasted coffee, handmade cheeses, and more.

In other events, we took a seminar that covered harmonies from the days of Plato through the music of Elvis. We watched a terrific slide show and learned about the sight and sacredness of India while dining at an Indian restaurant. We listened to the intense adventures and watched videos and slide shows from a man who seeks and often finds the world's rarest mammals. We also attended a concert of contemporary Jewish music on the first night of Rosh Hashanah. We did much more, too. If you are my friend on Facebook, you saw some of the postings and pictures from this past week.

You don't have to be old to learn more about the world around you, though. You don't even have to be a writer to explore areas and subjects that are new to you. You simply have to want to learn, and opportunities will open to you. Here's to lifelong learning!

Yours in writing,

Bobbie Christmas (Bobbie@zebraeditor.com or bzebra@aol.com)

Author of Write In Style, owner of Zebra Communications, director of The Writers Network, and coordinator of the Florida Writers Association Editors Helping Writers service.

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Two: Ask the Book Doctor about Writing Cookbooks, Food Plans, or Other Nonfiction How-to Books

By Bobbie Christmas

Note my addendum regarding the capitalization of animal breeds, at the end of this month's column.

Q: I've written a cookbook. I do not have any pictures of my recipes, but would like to have them in the final book. Do I need to hire a photographer myself, or does the publisher provide assistance with that?

A: If a publisher buys the manuscript and wants the recipes illustrated, it will take all responsibility for finding and paying a professional who specializes in food photography, an art in itself.

Q: I'm finally starting to write my first book. It's about creating a healthy food plan for life. I have already organized my thoughts on paper, but I lack confidence in making my book interesting. This problem is mainly because I don't know what order the material should come in. Do you have any helpful ideas or general guidelines for book layouts?

A: I'd like to point out one thing before I answer, and it has to do with terminology that most people don't know until they are more involved in the book business. The word "layout" refers to how the book looks once it is printed: the visual aspects of the font type and size, choice of artwork, and location of page numbers, for example. Instead of layout, let's talk about organization--that is, how best to organize the material so that it unfolds logically and in an interesting manner.

You don't have to worry about layout unless you plan to self-publish the book, but all writers must concern themselves with organization, the structure of the material.

As to structure, you said you have organized your thoughts on paper, so chances are good that you organized the structure fairly well, intuitively. It's okay to trust yourself as you go along; in fact it's smart to do so. Computers make it fairly easy to move chapters around if later you realize something seems out of place, so don't worry too much about it at this point. First you must get the material down, out of your head and onto paper, because it's not a book until it is written.

As for making the material interesting, structure or organization alone won't add interest. Instead, people are interested in stories. The best way to make a nonfiction book interesting is to add real examples and anecdotes about people who have used the method you explain and how it worked for them. Get quotations from real people (change the names if they prefer) who have implemented the techniques and food plans you discuss. Find out what happened with them, their lives, their weight, their cholesterol levels, and so forth. Talk to nutritionists and use their information and stories as well.

In this way, you can make a recommendation or point and then add an anecdote or example to illustrate each one. Continue to do so throughout the book. Those little vignettes are the things that spice up a book and make it interesting and lively.

Note: In a prior column I addressed the Chicago style guideline that calls for capitalizing only the proper nouns in the names of dog breeds: German shepherd, Cairn terrier, Scottish terrier, poodle, and the like. I received an enlightening e-mail from Darlene Arden, author of *Small Dogs, Big Hearts, The Complete Cat's Meow, Rover, Get off Her Leg!*, and the coffee table book, *Beautiful Cats*. She wrote, "Several of us professional dog writers fought long and hard to have this [capitalization issue] changed. The breed name is a proper noun, and as such it needs to be written that way, Border Collie, Shetland Sheepdog, Yorkshire Terrier, etc."

She continues, "If you open any of the dog books written in the past decade, you'll see this [style] carried out. Some mainstream publishers may not have followed this [style] yet, but they will. I have also used this form in my cat books and sincerely doubt that I'm alone."

I responded, "I can certainly understand why breeders [and others in the animal and pet industry] would want the respect of capitalizing the names of breeds. Writers and publishers of books by breeders and others involved in the industry are free to create their own style guides, but book editors in general, unless instructed by a publisher to do otherwise, must follow the style set by *The Chicago Manual of Style*.

"Each publisher is welcome to have style guides separate from CMOS, but when I advise writers in general, I have to follow CMOS in my recommendations, because it is the standard in the book-publishing industry. As much as your industry would like to change the general style, I am unable to recommend that change to the general public until CMOS changes."

Yes, writers have the option to follow a style different from Chicago style, but as an editor, I follow Chicago style, unless a client tells me to do otherwise on a specific book.

Bobbie Christmas, book editor and owner of Zebra Communications, will answer your questions, too. Send them to Bobbie@zebraeditor.com. Read more "Ask the Book Doctor" questions and answers at www.zebraeditor.com.

For more questions, answers, and comments, order the book, *Ask the Book Doctor: How to Beat the Competition and Sell Your Writing*. Go to

<http://tinyurl.com/lexp7n>.

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Three: This Month's Easy Editing Tip from Bobbie Christmas: Baby Sit, Baby-sit, or Babysit?

In all likely you have seen all three versions of the same term, baby sit, baby-sit, and babysit. Which one is correct? Your spell checker accepts them all. How is a writer to know what to choose? The answer can be found in a dictionary, but pointing to the fact that your spell checker dictionary does not know, if you write books, you should be using the dictionary recommended by The Chicago Manual of Style, which is the Merriam-Webster Dictionary. If you don't have a copy handy, do not despair. I use the online version, and it's free and fast to check anything. Go to <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary>, type in the word you want to check, and it will tell you in split seconds. According to Merriam-Webster, the correct form of the verb is one word, with no hyphen: babysit.

Bobbie's Find and Refine Method: use your Find and Replace Function (Ctrl+H) to locate each use of baby sit or baby-sit to be sure you correct each to one word, babysit.

For more editing and creative writing tips, order Purge Your Prose of Problems here: <http://tinyurl.com/4ptjnr>.

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Four: Subjects of interest to writers

A colleague of mine read my letter last month regarding people who write mean or ugly things on Facebook, and he wrote to say he lives with a mild form of bipolar disorder. He explained, "[Viewing Facebook posts] when depressed makes me even more depressed. As mostly joyously positive posts (and self-promotion) predominate, it makes me feel that everyone else in the world is having the greatest time with their lives, with only ecstatic things happening all the time, and here I sit in the middle of an episodic depression which feels like the end of the world. When I feel like that, it's impossible to feel joy for others, and the main feeling is one of jealousy. I know that the mood is likely to pass, but I wanted to let you know that such a perspective might be more common than you would think."

I appreciate the fresh perspective my colleague gave me. Although I am sorry that anyone suffers with difficult mood swings, the information gives me hope. Now I hope that all negative posts, especially those directed at me, are the result of an organic issue in the brains of others, rather than an indication that there are truly mean people in the world. I won't stop posting happy things and thoughts, but if I meet with negative reactions, I will try to understand the issues behind the words.

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Member Dan Anderson's fourth mystery, Death by Downsizing, has been published. Like his three previous mysteries--Bad Vibrations, Death Cruise, and Vietnam Vindication--it has been optioned by a Hollywood film production company. Information about Dan and his mysteries can be found at his author's page [www.dananderson-mysteryauthor.com](http://www.dananderson-mysteryauthor.com).

A desperate client begs Chauncey McFadden, Los Angeles PI, to find his gay lover who has disappeared. Although people at the LAPD believe some discovered body parts belong to the missing paramour, Chauncey nonetheless agrees to investigate. The case quickly expands in scope and complexity as the missing man's former coworkers are discovered to have met their deaths under mysterious circumstances.

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Member Cathy Giordano wrote to say I inspire her. "Not only do I learn a lot of useful stuff from your newsletter, but you have twice inspired me to write an article that I post on hub pages. Yesterday I wrote Word Play: What is a Lipogram? <http://hub.me/agU5I>. A few weeks ago I took up your rant about "awesome" and used it in the hub The Naughty Grammarian: Literally Awesome Hyperbole <http://hub.me/agJGE>. Thanks. I'm a loyal reader."

Thank you, Cathy. Readers, follow her links and read her columns. Both are literally awesome. (Read them, and you will understand what I mean.)

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If you like this newsletter, so will your friends. Tell them to subscribe to The Writers Network News by going to [www.zebraeditor.com](http://www.zebraeditor.com) and clicking on the yellow box at the top. To view back issues of this newsletter, go to <http://tinyurl.com/psnmp6p>.

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Joan Stewart, The Publicity Hound who frequently ranks number one for free publicity" on Google, invited Barbara Florio Graham to guest blog for her over the summer. The first is at <http://publicityhound.com/?p=27580>, and the second one is at <http://tinyurl.com/nwfxw9r>. Joan was so pleased with both that she asked Bobbi to become a regular contributor and introduced her in The Publicity Hound newsletter recently.

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What if your computer refused to boot? Would your data, your novels, and all your business information be lost? Not if you have Carbonite to back up your computer regularly, without any effort from you. I swear by Carbonite, or I wouldn't promote it. It saved me twice, so far, with files that corrupted or simply disappeared, but they were easily accessible again on the Carbonite website. If you follow this link and sign up for Carbonite, you and I both get a \$20 gift card, but if you don't, please, be sure your computer is always backed up to a safe place separate from your computer.

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How much money are writers making these days? See the reports at <http://authorearnings.com/report/july-2014-barnes-noble/>, <http://tinyurl.com/nskd6wx>, and the home page of AuthorEarnings.com at <http://authorearnings.com/>.

Terminology Writers Should Know: Consonance

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Consonance has several meanings, including agreement or accord, a combination of sounds pleasing to the ear, and the repetition of consonant sounds, especially at the end of stressed syllables without the similar correspondence of vowels (as in the final sounds of "stroke" and "luck").

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Why should writers know about the second and third definitions of consonance? Because when writing is pleasing to the ear, readers get pleasure from reading it. Like any tactic, though, the use of intentional sound repetition should be kept to a minimum, so that it remains subtle.

~~~~~ Make Others Ask You about Your Book

If you are too shy to mention your book to others, promote your book by wearing a pin that reads "Ask me about my book." Others will ask

you, and you can give a brief pitch and offer to sell them a copy. For pins that say "Ask me about my book" and other great gifts for writers, go to <http://tinyurl.com/nvh7dyu>.

~~~~~ Why Do Readers Stop Reading?

What makes readers stop being immersed in a story and therefore stop reading it? The same things make agents and publishers reject a manuscript. Read all the reasons according to the Creativity Hacker website at <http://tinyurl.com/l2xxhfj>. It lists things that stop reader immersion, in the order of frequency. Note the most frequent, which could be cured by using an editor. Here's the list:

Weak mechanics: simple editorial issues, such as spelling, missing words, and grammar

Implausible character choice: when a character does something contrary to his or her established traits or in violation of basic human nature

Echoing: when words or sentence structures repeat frequently in a way that calls attention to the pattern

Illogical world features: aspects of the world building that do not bear scrutiny

Conspicuous exposition: presentation of backstory in inappropriate places, in dense passages, or for insufficient story reasons

Weak language style: poor execution of linguistic styles, such as bad accents, incorrect historical language, etc.

Tell mode: overlong passages of telling, rather than showing

Weak dialogue: words put into characters' mouths that are boring, inconsistent with established character, or unrealistic

Conspicuous coincidence: important plot points resolved through unlikely or convenient coincidence

Word misuse: employing a word that does not mean what the author thinks it means

Past perfect: missing or incorrectly applied use of the past perfect tense

Weak pacing: stories that go too quickly, too slowly, or with a fixed pace that does not change, to the point that it attracts readers' attention

Insufficient exposition: not enough information given to readers for them to follow the story (more extreme than simply creating mystery or intrigue)

Inconsistent time flow: events relayed unintentionally out of order, with confused tenses, or with effects happening before causes.

Inconsistent tenses: switching between past, present, and future tenses without apparent reason

Conspicuous borrowing: any story element not being used in a satirical or referential way that seems too recognizable as the intellectual property of another author

Weak proprioception: insufficient description of a scene and characters' relative movements and positions within it, which often results in "talking floating heads" syndrome

Weak logic: explanations that do not stand up to scrutiny

Ungrounded pronouns: use of pronouns for which the noun (referent) is unclear.

Pointless scene: a scene (especially a prologue) that adds nothing of substance to the story

Morning ritual: story begins with protagonist walking through the usual events of a morning, such as waking up, brushing teeth, etc.

Weak noun coinage: author created names for people, places, or things that do not seem appropriate to the story or the world

Show versus tell mismatch: author tells readers something is happening and then shows it in a way that does not agree

Inconsistent characters: characters who act or speak in contradiction to established personalities or the situation at hand

Whiny narrator: self-explanatory; happens often in memoirs

Missing explanation: something important that happens in the story that is not explained or insufficiently explained

~~~~~ Science Shows Something Surprising About People Who Love to Write

The benefits of writing go far beyond building up your vocabulary. No matter the quality of your prose, the act of writing itself leads to strong physical and mental health benefits, like long-term improvements in mood, stress levels and depressive symptoms. Read the interesting article at <http://tinyurl.com/lspau53>.

~~~~~ Purge Your Prose of Problems

A Book Doctor's Desk Reference, Fifth Edition

Save thousands of dollars and edit your own book! Order my proprietary book-doctor desk reference book online at <http://tinyurl.com/4ptjnr>.

In alphabetical order and in easy-to-understand language, Purge Your Prose of Problems covers all you need to know to revise and edit fiction and nonfiction books, including grammar, punctuation, word choices, creative writing, plot, pace, characterization, point of view, dialogue, Chicago style, format, and much more. The spiral binder lets the book lie flat in front of your computer, for easy use. Available printed or as a PDF e-book that allows you to keep all this vital information on your computer for ready reference.

The e-book is the best deal, because you get it immediately and pay no shipping, and it then resides on your computer for the speediest reference, whenever you need it.

To save thousands of dollars by editing your own book, order *Purge Your Prose of Problems* today at <http://tinyurl.com/4ptjnr>.

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Sell more books! Save on a sign-up fee, and maybe win a prize!

Booksellers who accept credit cards sell more books; it's a fact. I've been to events where other sellers accepted only cash or checks, and they asked me my secret for selling so many more books than they do. It's simple. I accept Visa, MasterCard, and Discover Cards, and although ProPay sells a device you can use on your smart phone, I don't use a special device. At events where I have to handle my own sales, I use ProPay to accept credit cards. I'm usually too busy to take time out to run credit cards, so I created a form with all the information ProPay needs. I bring forms with me, and buyers fill out them out themselves. Once I return to a phone or a computer, I use the information to put the charge through. Easy! Some buyers stand around filling out the form, while I sell to folks who pay cash. My book sales soared, once I signed up with ProPay. Now ProPay has a special promotion until November 28, 2014, and when folks I refer sign up, they get \$10.00 off their sign-up fee.

Never mind the fact that there are drawings for other prizes as well. If people sign up using my special promotion code of RAFBC099, I get a little discount on my processing fees, too, but I just want to help writers sell more books.

As one of ProPay's customers, I can offer \$10 off your sign-up fee. Just enter the following promotion code on the payment page when you sign up" RAFBC099. To sign up for a ProPay account, go to: [www.propay.com](http://www.propay.com), and don't forget to enter the following promotions code: RAFBC099.

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Free Tools for Writers from Bobbie Christmas and Zebra Communications

Order PDF reports on writing-related subjects, including correct manuscript format, how to form and run a critique circle, how to identify weak writing and repair it, self-publishing versus traditional publishing, and much more. Go to http://zebraeditor.com/free_reports.shtml.

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To Publish or Pass: The Editorial Meeting & Selecting Books for Publication  
<http://tinyurl.com/lbn5nbs>.

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Ask the Book Doctor: How to Beat the Competition and Sell Your Writing answers many of the questions you wish you could ask an editing expert. Whether you write books, short stories, articles, reports, or anything else, learn more about how to write, edit, and sell your work. Paperback: \$14.95 plus \$4.99 S & H (total: \$19.94 US) E-book: \$8.95, no S & H, with almost instant delivery. You will save almost \$10 by buying the e-book. To order either, go to <http://tinyurl.com/lexp7n>.

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A prolific, hard-boiled crime novelist, Donald Westlake wrote nearly one hundred novels, many under the pseudonym Richard Stark. After Westlake died in 2008, Levi Stahl, promotions director at the University of Chicago Press, took on the mission of creating a portrait of the master storyteller. Read Levi Stahl on editing Donald Westlake at <http://tinyurl.com/k3kzxs>.

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Become my friend on Facebook and follow my adventures, opinions, and observations: <http://www.facebook.com/bobbie.christmas>
Like Zebra Communications on Facebook: <http://tinyurl.com/7vcxaxu>.

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Five: Contests, Agents, and Markets

Perpetual Motion Machine Publishing is looking for flash fiction. See details here: <http://perpetualpublishing.com/2014/08/27/call-for-submissions-flash-fiction/>.

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Call for Submissions: Haystacks and Homicide: Short Tales of Farmland Crime

Ah, the farm country. Crops grow, cows moo out in the pasture and people get whacked. OK, the last one doesn't ALWAYS happen, but we're kind of counting on the terrific mystery writers out there to make it a little more common.

Untreed Reads is pleased to announce a call for a new mystery anthology titled *Haystacks and Homicide: Short Tales of Farmland Crime*. Please read and follow submission guidelines at <http://tinyurl.com/qeapx5a>.

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Fifth Annual Global E-book Awards Now Accepting Entries

Eligibility: E-books released to the public anytime in 2013, 2014, or 2015
Application deadline: April 30, 2015 (midnight, Pacific Time).
When e-books are entered early, more judges have more time to read and evaluate them.
Winners Announcement: August 16, 2015
For more information, see <http://globalebookawards.com/>

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Do you review books? Do you want to? The 2015 Book Reviewer List is now accepting submissions for book reviewers. Each reviewer must submit a quick questionnaire. See form at <http://tinyurl.com/q3wf7jk>. For more information, see <http://www.bookrevieweryellowpages.com/>.

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Six: Got Muse? Something Old, Something New

According to [WeddingtheKnot.com](http://WeddingtheKnot.com), the tradition of a bride wearing something old, something new, something borrowed, and something blue comes from an Old English rhyme that goes a little further than we usually think, in America. Originally the rhyme went as follows: "Something olde, something new, something borrowed, something blue, and a sixpence in your shoe." The four objects that the bride adds to her wedding outfit or carries with her on the big day are good luck charms, little tokens of love the bride's mother, sister, other relatives, and attendants, often give the bride at the eleventh hour, although a bride can give the items to herself, as well. Allegedly something old represents continuity; something new offers optimism for the future; something borrowed symbolizes borrowed happiness; something blue stands for purity, love, and fidelity; and a sixpence in your shoe is a wish for good fortune and prosperity, although this fourth item remains largely a British custom.

What if those good luck charms went horribly wrong? Imagine your female character planning her wedding. Visualize one of those tokens of love having a history, quirk, or problem that in some way results in an unexpected consequence. For example, what if the item that was supposed to be new was a pair of panty hose, but what if the waist of the panty hose breaks while the bride is walking down the aisle. What might happen then? Ponder the possibilities if the thing that was supposed to be borrowed turns out to be stolen. Oh, the consequences!

It's your turn. What might you imagine, and what would be the outcome?

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Do YOU have news for The Writers Network News? Please send it in the body copy, not an attachment, to [Bobbie@zebraeditor.com](mailto:Bobbie@zebraeditor.com).

Deadline: The 15th of each month.

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Send a copy of this newsletter to all your writing friends. Tell them to join The Writers Network F-R-E-E by visiting [www.zebraeditor.com](http://www.zebraeditor.com) and clicking on Free Newsletter.

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