

The Writers Network News, November 2017

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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 notices of local (but sporadic) meetings today! Send your name and e-mail address to [Bobbie@zebraeditor.com](mailto:Bobbie@zebraeditor.com).

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Some links in this newsletter are shortened with help from [www.tinyurl.com](http://www.tinyurl.com), a free service that converts long links to short ones.

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#### Writer's Quote of the Month

"Curious that we spend more time congratulating people who have succeeded than encouraging people who have not." --Neil deGrasse Tyson, astrophysicist and author (b. 5 Oct 1958)

Note from Bobbie Christmas: Many of us know Neil deGrasse Tyson from his TV appearances during which he makes science understandable to the masses. I admire him, but I would take issue with him on his statement. Almost everyone in the writing community encourages fellow writers, whether they have succeeded in getting published yet or not. We also believe that every little success is important, even if it's getting a letter to the editor published in a local paper. This newsletter is designed to encourage and help others succeed. I hope I succeed at that.

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#### One: From the editor's desk: Chicago Style Updates

Dear Fellow Writers:

I announced in last month's edition of The Writers Network News that THE CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE had released its seventeenth edition, with important changes that we manuscript editors need to know. Ever since my copy arrived, I've been having fun going through it and learning what's been changed, what's updated, and what has stayed the same. I'm learning even more than I knew before, too, by reading new sections and reviewing older ones. The book is more than 1,000 pages long, but thankfully many portions are related to publishing or indexing, rather than editing, so I can skip those sections.

One of the things I've learned is that it's acceptable now to use the Tab key to indent a paragraph. In the past we were told to use only the processor's indentation feature (it usually appears on the ruler above the document) to set indents. Now it is allowable to use the Tab key to indent a new paragraph. Still unacceptable, though, is using the space bar to indent. I can't tell you how many manuscripts I've edited that used the space bar (hitting it five times) to create a paragraph indent. No! Don't succumb to the temptation! When I edit hard copy (manuscripts that were printed out and mailed to me), however, I cannot tell if the author used the correct method to indent paragraphs, which is one of many reasons why most authors and all publishers nowadays send me electronic files to edit, rather than printed files.

While I am on the subject of indenting paragraphs, authors have asked me if they should not indent the first paragraph in a new chapter or under a new heading or subheading, because many books use this format. The answer is no. When we write our manuscripts we must follow standard manuscript format. When a designer lays out our manuscript for printing, after all the editing is complete, the designer may decide to use a block paragraph at the beginning of a chapter or scene, but the decision is a layout issue and should not be incorporated at the manuscript level. In other words, when an author types a manuscript, the author should indent the first line of every paragraph. Also

remember not to add extra space between paragraphs except to indicate a scene change or a shift in time in a novel or a change of subject in nonfiction.

One of the changes in the new edition of THE CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE makes me a little sad, because it now accepts the pronoun "their" to refer to a singular noun. As an example, CMOS now accepts a sentence such as this: Each child turned in their homework. I can see that the use of "their" is a gender-neutral way of writing, when our old gender-neutral way was this: Each child turned in his or her homework. We now recognize that that the world has more than two genders, and admittedly the use of "his or her" is cumbersome. My contention, however, is that it is often easy to avoid using "their" to refer to a singular noun by changing the noun to plural. Note how easy it is to change the sentence to avoid the awkward use of "their" to refer to a singular noun, "child." I would simply recast the sentence to this: All the children turned in their homework. Ah, but I'm an old-school editor with old-school ideas. English is a changing language, especially as our consciousness is raised. Keeping us oldies updated may be difficult, because we have hardening of the opinions (not to mention the arteries). CMOS, however, stays forever fresh.

This month's "Ask the Book Doctor" column discusses more points addressed in CMOS. In future issues of The Writers Network News I may address even more changes in Chicago style. Serious writers of books may want to remember these things, because following Chicago style makes the work of the author's professional book editor easier. In the end, though, as long as you use a professional book editor, you won't need to remember all the ins and outs of Chicago style. Your professional book editor will know them and apply them to your manuscript. If you happen to be an author who hopes to sell to a publisher or who intends to self-publish, you will want to use a professional book editor intimately familiar with Chicago style. Chances are your old English teacher or your spouse who is good at spelling and punctuation will not be familiar with the details of Chicago style. It is for that reason that I use the term "professional book editor," rather than referring to simply anyone who happens to be good in English.

Ah, but I must end this missive and get back to reading my copy of the seventeenth edition of CMOS, the essential guide for writers, editors, and publishers.

Yours in writing,  
Bobbie Christmas Bobbie@zebraeditor.com or bzebra@aol.com  
Author of two editions of WRITE IN STYLE, owner of Zebra Communications, director of The Writers Network, and coordinator of the Florida Writers Association Editors Helping Writers service

If someone forwarded this newsletter to you, please sign up to get your own copy. Simply go to [www.zebraeditor.com](http://www.zebraeditor.com), click on Free Newsletter, and follow the prompts. I never share your address or send out spam.

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## Two: Ask the Book Doctor about Chicago Style and Writing Tight

By Bobbie Christmas

Q: I noticed your newsletter used to hyphenate email (as e-mail) and capitalize internet, but the latest edition doesn't do those things. What gives?

A: What gives is that THE CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE recently released its newest edition, with changes such as those you mention. Because Chicago style is the editorial style preferred by book publishers and I edit books more than anything else, my newsletter follows Chicago style as a way of imparting its style guidelines to readers. In addition to removing the hyphen from email and no longer capitalizing internet, the seventeenth edition of the book also made other changes, and I'm still learning them all. Although writers who use manuscript editors don't necessarily need to know all the nuances of Chicago style, book editors must keep up with every update, to ensure the manuscripts they edit comply with the latest edition of CMOS.

Q: I have been perusing your Purge Your Prose of Problems manual, and I see in the "To/too" section that you did not place a comma before "too" in the example: "He's coming along too." Are writers no longer required to place a comma before "too" when it implies inclusion? It is hard to keep up with all these changes, and I am extremely grateful to have your manual!

A: The Chicago Manual of Style, which sets the editorial style preferred by book publishers, recommends reducing the level of punctuation, but to use it to avoid confusion. Leaving out the comma in the example you sent does not change or confuse the meaning in any way.

Q: I had the pleasure of hearing you speak at the Harriette Austin Writers Conference years ago and bought your book Write In Style. It answered questions I've wrestled with for a long time, but confused me in one area. I thought writing tight (meaning the least number of words needed) was the best way to write. In some of your examples that doesn't seem to be the case. For example, when you were making the point about the push-pull of using some words in past-tense writing, you had the following example: They bought bagels two days ago. Your book says this rewrite is better: They had (a verb we've been told to eliminate where possible) bought bagels two days before. I know the issue is using "ago," when "before" is less conspicuous in past tense, but the rewrite makes the sentence longer. Can you enlighten me?

A: As do many other books that teach creative writing, my book, Write In Style, harps on the importance of writing concise sentences. I, however, am human and fall into the same weak writing habits I warn against. I wish my editor (yes, even good editors use editors) had caught the inconsistency in the book, though. Regardless, it's important to have a blend of sentence lengths. Not every sentence should be short. For creative purposes, choppy writing is as bad as having too many lengthy sentences.

I made clear in the book, though, that we cannot always avoid using "had." It indicates past perfect; however, one mention is enough to set the tense. That said, the better example of avoiding "ago" might have been the following: "They bought bagels two days earlier."

Creative writing does not always result in shorter sentences, but it avoids unnecessary words. It cannot always avoid the verbs "to have" and "to be," but those verbs often signal an opportunity to "write in style," which sometimes calls for deletion and often calls for replacing a weak verb with a more compelling one.

By the way, while I was writing my book, one of my former editors commented, "Isn't it odd that you are writing a book on creative writing, but it has to be technical, not creative, by its nature?" Her comment spurred me to make sure I wrote in a breezy style—not merely technical—and I added many funny examples, to keep readers smiling while they learned.

I'm glad you enjoyed my presentation and my book. I appreciate your comments and keen eye.

Bobbie Christmas, book editor, author of *Write In Style: Use Your Computer to Improve Your Writing*, and owner of Zebra Communications, will answer your questions, too. Send them to [Bobbie@zebraeditor.com](mailto:Bobbie@zebraeditor.com). Read more "Ask the Book Doctor" questions and answers at [www.zebraeditor.com](http://www.zebraeditor.com).

For much more information on these subjects and hundreds of others of vital importance to writers, order **PURGE YOUR PROSE OF PROBLEMS**, a Book Doctor's Desk Reference Book at <http://tinyurl.com/4ptjnr>.

Bobbie Christmas's award-winning second edition of **WRITE IN STYLE: How to Use Your Computer to Improve Your Writing** is available at <http://tinyurl.com/pnq5y5s>.

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Three: Subjects of interest to writers

#### FROM FELLOW MEMBERS

Member Connie Anderson had a question about last month's update on the newest edition of **THE CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE**. She wrote,

"In your update of Chicago style rules, I am not sure what this means:

"It's now okay to use US (for United States) as a noun, provided the meaning is clear from the context. (10.32) (Used to used only as an adjective)"

"Can you explain, clarify?"

Whoops! Sorry for the typo in my newsletter. I meant "Used to BE used only as an adjective." Anyway, I wasn't clear, so here's my full explanation: The sixteenth edition of CMOS said to use US only as an adjective modifying a noun, such as this: US Post Office, US government, US territories. The seventeenth edition allows US to stand as a noun, as long as the meaning is clear: Examples: I've been to only twenty of the fifty states in the US. Flying over the US gave me an idea of how its topography compares to Africa's.

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Member Libby Atwater wrote, "Your article on writing through grief described what I did after our younger son died suddenly only a month after my memoir **WHAT LIES WITHIN**, a tale of love, loss, and resilience, debuted. I had just returned from mailing several books when my husband shared the bad news.

"I have been writing down the names of the songs that came into my head, unusual experiences that occurred prior to and after our son's death, and thoughts, memories, relevant poems, and other items to help me work through the pain. I have everything in a large folder that I will compile into a memoir of our son one day.

"Thank you for encouraging others to write through their grief. It helps."

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Meanwhile, back at the ranch...

Member Robert Gilbert continues his success streak. He writes, "My Western short story, 'Gunslinger Clancy Hobbs,' was accepted and is in the October 2017 online issue of **Frontier Tales**. This is my seventh short story accepted and published in that online publication." He adds that he would appreciate if readers voted for his story. Here's the link: [http://frontiertales.com/2017/10Oct/gunslinger\\_clancy\\_hobbs.php](http://frontiertales.com/2017/10Oct/gunslinger_clancy_hobbs.php).

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#### MORE MANUSLIPS

In my Manuslips file I keep a list of errors I find that either tickle my fancy or prove a point about clear, correct writing. Read the example below a few times and determine if you saw any errors.

Mary watched as the curtains covered more than half the window and announced they would be just fine.

The error, if you caught it, is the missing modifier. Because "curtains" was the last stated noun, the verb "announced" appears to be what the curtains did. Yes, as written, the sentence states that the curtains announced they would be fine. To correct the sentence, I recommended the author change it to read as follows: Mary watched as the curtains covered more than half the window, and she announced they would be just fine.

Have you ever found any funny errors in your own work? If so, share them with me by e-mail. If I use them I won't use your name, should you wish to remain anonymous.

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#### WRITE A NOVEL IN THIRTY DAYS WITH NANOWRIMO

NanNoWriMo, National Novel Writing Month, begins November 1. Check out NanNoWriMo and register at <https://nanowrimo.org/>. In December let me know if you logged 50,000 words or more.

On a personal note, I am not a novelist; I am a nonfiction writer. That said, I have several nonfiction books either in the works or in my head. I've decided to use NanNoWriMo as a challenge to write 50,000 words in a nonfiction book during the month of November. It won't be easy. Like most of us, I will take time off to be with family over Thanksgiving, and then there are all the chores of preparing for Christmas, too. Nevertheless, if I break down the task, 50,000 words in a thirty-one days breaks down to fewer than 1,700 words a day, if I write every single day. I know I won't write every day, so I'll have to double that number whenever I do write, to ensure I reach my goal. Now I have a goal. In November I will write 3,400 words each time I sit down to write. That's fewer than thirteen pages. If I write thirteen pages, I can miss a day and a day here and there and still meet my necessary minimum. Can you do the same with your novel or nonfiction book in November? If you register for NanNoWriMo, let me know, and then let me know how you did. I look forward to hearing from my many readers.

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#### THE KEY TO WRITING A BESTSELLER? MAYBE

You may not like the results of the test mentioned here, but it's a reality.

See <http://jacquelineweewald.blogspot.com/>

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## NEED TO FIND A QUALIFIED EDITOR? FWA CAN HELP

Are you a member of the Florida Writers Association? Did you know FWA will help you find an ethical, professional book editor? See <https://floridawriters.net/membership/editing-service/>. In the interest of full disclosure, I am the coordinator of the Editors Helping Writers service, so you will first hear from me when you contact the service, and then I choose the right editor for you. It could be me or it could be any of our other vetted and ethical professional book editors.

You do not have to live in or near Florida to be a member of FWA. You may decide it will benefit you to join, even if only for its many membership benefits. See <https://floridawriters.net/membership/join-renew/> for all the benefits you will receive.

## ~~~~~ SAVE THOUSANDS ON EDITING

Editing is costly, because editors must charge for their time and expertise. What if an editor put all her time and expertise into a book that allowed you to edit your own book? You could save thousands of dollars using such a book. PURGE YOUR PROSE OF PROBLEMS, A Book Doctor's Desk Reference, is that book. In fact it's the resource that many book editors use.

PURGE YOUR PROSE OF PROBLEMS covers all you need to know to revise and edit fiction and nonfiction. Get information on grammar, punctuation, word choices, creative writing, plot, pace, characterization, point of view, dialogue, Chicago style, format, and hundreds of other subjects.

Order PURGE YOUR PROSE OF PROBLEMS today at <http://tinyurl.com/4ptjnr>.

## ~~~~~ IS YOUR PUBLISHER LATE WITH ROYALTY CHECKS?

It might be a type of Ponzi scheme. Read more about the subject here:  
<http://writersweekly.com/angela-desk/publisher-ponzi-schemes>

## ~~~~~ BOBBIE'S BLOGS

Neurotica: Stories of Love, Lust, and Letting Go—if you like relationship stories, I've got a ton of them. Some are funny, some a little sexy, and all true. I reveal some of my stories at <https://neuroticastories.blogspot.com>.

In my Write In Style blog, you'll find more tips on creative writing and other subjects. For my latest blog on a recent mix-up with my medications, see <http://bobbiechristmas.blogspot.com/>

## ~~~~~ TERMINOLOGY WRITERS SHOULD KNOW

### Roman Type

Roman type refers to type that is not italicized. In other words, it's the normal type we see unless we are writing the title of a book, play, movie, boat, or record album.

## ~~~~~ Become my friend on Facebook

Follow my adventures, opinions, and observations: <http://www.facebook.com/bobbie.christmas>

## FOLLOW ZEBRA COMMUNICATIONS ON FACEBOOK

Get news, writing-related cartoons, immediate updates, and other good stuff for writers.  
Like and follow Zebra Communications at <http://tinyurl.com/7vcxaxu>.

## ~~~~~ CMOS ONLINE Q & A

Someone wrote to the Chicago Manual of Style Online to ask the following question:

Q. Is impactful a word and can it be used in place of influential?

The answer may surprise you, and it includes the issue of alright/all right, as well. I'm glad, too, because I see "alright" used almost everywhere, including in Closed Captioning on TV. Read the CMOS response to this question as well as many more questions and answers at <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/qanda/latest.html>

THE CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE sets the standard in book publishing for issues such as punctuation, capitalization, whether to spell out numbers or use numerals, and much more. If you write books, you will want to know more about Chicago style or be sure to use a professional book editor intimately familiar with Chicago style. The newest edition was just released, changing some old issues, so be sure your editor is familiar with the seventeenth edition of Chicago style, rather than an older version.

## ~~~~~ WRITE IN STYLE: How to Use Your Computer to Improve Your Writing

My book on creative writing titled WRITE IN STYLE has won seven big awards. Copies are selling fast on Amazon, but please order it here, directly from the publisher: <http://tinyurl.com/zeq6z5g>. WRITE IN STYLE is not about grammar. It teaches writers how to find their fresh voice. If you want a book on grammar, order PURGE YOUR PROSE OF PROBLEMS, mentioned elsewhere in this newsletter.

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## Four: Contests, Agents, and Markets

## DAN POYNTER'S GLOBAL EBOOK AWARDS

Dan Poynter was a pioneer in the self-publishing arena and a fine man I am proud to have known. He almost singlehandedly legitimized self-publishing and removed the stigma once attached to it. I'm glad to see that his Global Ebook Awards continue after his death. To enter your

ebook in the competition, read the instructions here: <http://globalebookawards.com/instructions-for-entering/>.

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#### SIMON & SCHUSTER EBOOK IMPRINT SEEKS ROMANCE novels

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Full submission guidelines: <http://www.crimsonromance.com/submissions/>

Crimson Romance, our digital-first romance line, is open to submissions featuring strong characters, smart stories, and satisfying romance in five popular subgenres: contemporary, historical, paranormal, romantic suspense, and spicy. We're looking for previously unpublished novellas (between 20,000 – 50,000 words) and full-length novels (between 50,000 – 90,000 words). All authors—agented or unagented, beginner or veteran writers—are welcome to submit any works that have not been previously published in whole or in part in any media, including self-publishing (Kindle, CreateSpace, etc.). While your work can include other genre elements, Crimson Romances must focus first and foremost on a couple's emotional journey together toward love. Romances, by nature, must be between consenting adults of any gender, race, creed, etc., and have a happily-ever-after or at least happy-for-now ending. We are strictly a romance publisher and will not look at manuscripts for memoirs or other nonfiction, women's fiction or chick lit, young adult, mysteries and thrillers, horror, or general fiction. We're specifically seeking diverse romances. And most importantly, we're seeking authors with fresh, vibrant, unique voices.

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#### AFAR MAGAZINE SEEKS UNIQUE TRAVEL ARTICLES

AFAR magazine's mission is to inspire and guide travelers who seek to connect with people, experience their cultures, and understand their perspectives. AFAR knows that the best travel adventures often happen when you step off the beaten track or open yourself to the unexpected. So while other travel magazines tell their stories through itineraries, AFAR tells its stories through people, allowing readers to explore authentic local cultures from the inside out. Pay varies depending upon the department you write for. For complete guidelines, see <http://about.afar.com/about/guidelines-and-terms/writers-guidelines/>.

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#### AGELESS AUTHORS 2017 CONTEST

Everyone who places in the contest will have their entries printed in the 2018 Ageless Authors Anthology available through Amazon. Before submitting, be sure to read all the information on the website at <http://www.agelessauthors.com/current-contests/>.

This competition is the only national writing competition exclusively for authors age 65+. From September 15 thru December 15, we ask you to write and submit short stories, essays and poetry in specific categories listed on the website. We are looking for humorous, moving, or compassionate submissions, not just a set of facts. Cash prizes will be awarded to the top three winners in each category.

1st place wins \$100, a certificate and one copy of the anthology of the best work.

2nd place wins \$75, a certificate and one copy.

3rd place wins \$50, a certificate and one copy.

Winners will be announced by the end of January, 2018,

Entry fee \$20 per submission. A submission is one piece of work. If you have a short story and an essay, that is two entries. If you have three poems, that is three entries.

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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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With the exception of Zebra Communications, information in this newsletter is not to be construed as an endorsement. Be sure to research all information and study every stipulation before you enter a competition, pitch or accept an assignment, spend money, or sell your work.

To access past issues of The Writers Network News, click here: [http://live.ezine.com/feeds/ezine/886\\_2](http://live.ezine.com/feeds/ezine/886_2).

The Writers Network News: a newsletter for writers everywhere. No Rules; Just Write!

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