

The Writers Network News, August 2018

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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 email 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, a free service that converts long links to short ones.

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Writer's Quote of the Month

"We are all apprentices in a craft where no one ever becomes a master."

—Ernest Hemingway

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EMAIL CHANGE? DON'T ACCIDENTALLY GET DELETED!

If your address changes and our email to you bounces, our system automatically unsubscribes you. If you plan to change your email address, take a moment to subscribe again with your new address. We cannot change your address for you, because of our double-opt-in, no-spam policy. Go to <https://www.zebraeditor.com/> and sign up with your new address.

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One: From the Editor's Desk: Blank

Dear Fellow Writers:

Did you ever sit at your keyboard and draw a complete blank? That happened to me as I sat down to write this letter to my subscribers. Such is the writing life. We sometimes get inspiration in the shower, but zilch when we sit down to write.

I keep a notepad handy all the time, though, with the exception of my time in the shower or the pool, and nowadays that notepad is called an iPhone. On my little companion I keep notes about movies I hear about that I want to rent, potential memories to add to my memoirs, odd names I've heard, and my favorite, stupid things I hear people say. That last item may show up in a future pet-peeve essay or even might be something that comes out of one of my characters' mouths one day.

Years before cell phones, I kept a little notebook in my purse. In that notebook I jotted the same types of things I now record on my iPhone. One day I mistakenly arrived an hour early for a movie. How could I kill an hour? I looked in that little notebook and found a note about my experience when I played a costume character for a day. At the time wearing a bear costume sounded like a great way to spend a Saturday and earn a few extra bucks. It turned out to be a nightmare. Time had passed, though, and the outlandish events of that day could be recast as humor. While I waited for the movie to start, I wrote the beginning of what turned into one my most successful stories. In various forms I sold that story to several publishers, and "Grin and Bear It" even won an award.

When would I have written that essay if I had waited to "make time" to write? I'm not sure it would have come to mind at the right time. I may never have ever gotten around to it. Once I had spent an hour writing it in my notebook, though, I was compelled to type it up once I could get to my computer.

Our cell phones are computers that are strong or stronger than the computers used to launch the first man to the moon, yet many of us barely scratch the surface of what they can do. Like many people I don't make full use of loads of apps and programs that would probably make my life easier, but as a writer, at least I have a "notebook" handy for the crazy, creative, and practical things I want to remember.

What marvelous things does your cell phone do for you, other than make phone calls? Do you have apps or other cell-phone suggestions that other writers can use? Please let me know, and I may share the information in a future newsletter.

Yours in writing,  
Bobbie Christmas [Bobbie@zebraeditor.com](mailto:Bobbie@zebraeditor.com) or [bzebra@aol.com](mailto: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

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Two: ASK THE BOOK DOCTOR

SINGLE QUOTE MARKS AND TIMES OF DAY

By Book Doctor Bobbie Christmas

Q: How do you use single quotation marks to indicate significance? Which of the following is correct?

1. He nodded 'yes.'
2. "I told him 'hello.'"
3. 'Safety' is the operative word.

A: A trick question, this one is, but you can't fool me. The only correct sentence is number two, but not because the single quotation marks indicate significance.

Let's discuss single quotation marks. I don't know where anyone ever got the idea they are ever used to imply significance. In American English, single quotation marks are used only inside double quotation marks, as in sentence two, to indicate dialogue quoting other dialogue.

Double quotation marks, when used around a word or words that are not actual quotations, mean something is used in an ironic way—not exactly as stated. For an example, Mary wanted to find a "good" gift for Sara, so she went to a thrift shop.

To emphasize a word or phrase, use italics, but let me be clear. Italics for emphasis should be used only on a rare occasion. It's always better for the writing itself to add significance to a word or phrase rather than relying on italics, boldface, or all caps. Here is an example that uses writing rather than italics to add significance and make a point: Bert loved Chinese food so much that he did not merely learn to cook it himself; he even had a restaurant-style wok stove installed in his kitchen.

Here are the correct forms of the examples at the top of this question:

1. He nodded yes. (no emphasis or quotation marks or italics needed)
2. "I told him 'hello.'"
3. Safety is the operative word. [In case italics don't show up in your email, the word "safety" is written in italics in this accepted example.]

Q: When writing fiction, how do you say the time shown on a clock?

The clock showed 10:00 a.m.  
The clock said 10:00 a.m.  
The time on the clock was 10:00 a.m.

The only thing definitely wrong with any of those examples is how the time itself is handled. Chicago style says to write out the time of day in even, half, and quarter hours. Chicago style uses numerals for the time of day only when it gives an exact time, such as 10:02 a.m. For that reason the correct way to write the examples you sent would be the following:

The clock showed ten o'clock.  
The clock said ten o'clock.  
The time on the clock was ten in the morning.

As a developmental editor as well as a line editor, though, I'd be remiss if I stopped my answer there. I have more to say about the examples and about telling the time of day. Fiction should not involve a great many numbers. Numbers are more likely to show up in technical books. Creative writing dictates that writers should avoid anything that makes readers realize they are reading.

Strong creative writing relies on powerful verbs that show, rather than tell. Although all the verbs in the examples above are acceptable, the sentences could be handled more creatively while still following Chicago style.

Here are some suggestions:

He glanced at the clock and saw that he had only ten minutes to get ready for his ten o'clock meeting.  
When she arrived for the party at ten, she found only a few people milling around.  
When the alarm shook him out of bed, it read ten o'clock.

To complete this treatise on times of day, let me add the following examples to see how to use other times of day correctly:

The train pulled into the station at 10:07 p.m.  
Who sleeps until ten thirty in the morning?

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 <https://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 from Amazon at <https://tinyurl.com/y7ppcdkd> or buy it directly from me at <https://tinyurl.com/y7p9xkbb>.  
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Three: Subjects of interest to writers

MEMBERS WRITE...

Earlier this month Frances Hight wrote, "My novel DEATH OF A TOMATO made semi-finalist in the Royal Palm Literary Awards! Couldn't have done it without you. I'm excited and hopeful." I just received another note from her that says her novel is now a finalist in that prestigious competition. Frances Hight is also published under the pen name of Frances Philpott Palmigiano.

I'm excited for Frances. I edited DEATH OF A TOMATO, and it had all the right elements: conflict, tension, suspense, and even redemption. When I edit manuscripts I can fix punctuation and other errors, but I can't write the story for an author. Frances did all the hard work.

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FREE SEMINAR IN ATLANTA AREA

Saturday, September 22
11:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon

I'll be giving a free one-hour seminar called

DON'T LET THIS HAPPEN TO YOU!

During this side-splitting seminar, Book Doctor Bobbie Christmas reveals hilarious examples of flawed writing drawn directly from manuscripts she has seen during her forty-plus years of editing. Be entertained while you learn how to avoid the same errors in your own work. Once you hear examples of what she calls "manuslips," you will never make the same slips yourself. Laugh and learn your way to better, stronger, more marketable writing.

You'll learn about the following:

- Dangling participles and missing modifiers
- Word choice
- Juxtaposition
- Purple prose
- Pronoun confusion
- Huh? (things that defy description)
- Eyes (Her favorite; wait until you hear this one!)

Save your place today! Go to <http://www.booklogix.com>. If the information is not yet up on that website, send an email with your reservation to Angela@booklogix.com.

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MISSING MALCOLM X CHAPTERS SOON TO BE PUBLISHED

If you think you finished reading Malcom X's book, think again. Read what The New York Times has to say. <https://tinyurl.com/ybyn8vg>

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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 writing. I use quite a few manuslips in WRITE IN STYLE too.

Here's a very contemporary manuslip that Cynthia ("Cyn") MacGregor sent in. She spotted it on CNN on her phone: Despite spending almost two weeks underground, Chiang Rai governor Narongsak Osottanakorn said Thursday the boys were in good spirits.

[Did you spot the misplaced modifier? As written the governor was underground for two weeks, whereas the sentence meant to say that the boys from the soccer team were trapped underground that long.]

Cyn also sent this pronoun error from Palm Beach Post: The passenger was fined, and the snake was taken into custody by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services. His name was not released.

[I wonder why the paper wouldn't release the name of the snake. What would you name it? Slim?]

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GRAMMAR CHECK

Are you making a common error in grammar when you speak? Check it out. See <https://www.zebraeditor.com/grammar/no-more-me-and/>.

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FREE BOOK: GUIDE TO MANUSCRIPT SUBMISSION

The Authors Publish Guide to Manuscript Submission is a detailed guide to the submission process. This book covers everything from writing query letters to researching agents and publishers and includes a list of 30 publishers that welcome submissions from new authors. Download the book free here: <http://authorspublish.com/manuscript-submission/>

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SAVE \$\$\$ ON EDITING

The sixth edition of PURGE YOUR PROSE OF PROBLEMS is selling quickly. It includes the latest, most important changes in Chicago style that writers and editors should know. It answers vital questions while you write or edit your manuscript. Order here: <https://tinyurl.com/y8rpo3jp>.

Here are some of the issues PURGE YOUR PROSE OF PROBLEMS puts to rest:

- Where do the commas belong? Where do they not belong? (page 59)
- What's the difference between "which" and "that?" (page 174)
- What is a dangling modifier? How can you repair it? (page 66)
- What is right, "towards" or "toward?" (page 180)
- Which is right, "assure," "insure," or "ensure?" (page 40)
- When should you write out a number? When should you use the numeral? (page 128)
- Which is correct, T-shirt, tee shirt, or t-shirt? (page 171)

PURGE YOUR PROSE OF PROBLEMS answers these and more than 700 other questions vital to writers and editors.

Order a printed or PDF copy here: <https://tinyurl.com/y8rpo3jp>.

PURGE YOUR PROSE OF PROBLEMS: A Book Doctor's Desk Reference is the same resource that many book editors use.

Order here: <https://www.zebraeditor.com/book/purge-your-prose-of-problems-a-book-doctors-desk-reference/>

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TIPS ON PITCHING YOUR BOOK TO AN AGENT

If you have signed up to pitch your book to an agent in person, perhaps at an upcoming writers conference, Publisher's Weekly has a helpful article from Jane Friedman, the former publisher of Writer's Digest. See <https://tinyurl.com/y7uxvog7>.

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NEW, EASY ACCESS TO BOBBIE'S BLOG

On my new website anyone can access my blog without signing in or committing to anything. Read creative writing tips as well as some of my personal experiences. Access the Write In Style blog here: <https://www.zebraeditor.com/blog/>

On the other hand:

For my non-writing-related blog, see my blog titled "Neurotica: Crazy 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, some are sad, and all true. <https://neuroticastories.blogspot.com>.

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TRADITIONAL PUBLISHING VERSUS SELF-PUBLISHING

Which path is the best for you and your book? This comprehensive article from The Writer may help you decide, prepare, and plan. <https://www.writermag.com/2018/07/24/self-publishing/>

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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>.

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CMOS ONLINE Q & A

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

Q. I am working with an author who insists on referring to a photo that was taken in a certain decade as "this 1950's photo." Is the apostrophe needed, and is it in the correct place?

To get the answer to this question and many more based on Chicago style, go to <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.

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

Now in paperback or ebook!

My book on creative writing titled WRITE IN STYLE has won seven big awards. It helps writers in all stages of their writing careers learn what to look for in their manuscripts that they can improve. It helps writers find their fresh voice.

Order your copy today at <https://tinyurl.com/y8fp5nym>.

Warning: WRITE IN STYLE is not about grammar. It teaches writers how to strengthen their writing style. If you want a book on grammar, punctuation, and rules of Chicago style, order PURGE YOUR PROSE OF PROBLEMS at <https://tinyurl.com/y8rpo3jp>.

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FLORIDA WRITERS ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE

The FWA puts on one of the best and biggest conferences in the Southeast, and you can get a discount if you sign up early for the October conference near Orlando, Florida. I'll be one of many people giving helpful seminars. My subjects are as follows:

What is a Fresh Voice & How Can You Find Yours?

Travel Writing for Fun and (a Little) Profit
Chicago Style: What is It? Does Your Book Comply?

I hope to see you there. Sign up here:
<https://floridawriters.net/conferences/florida-writers-conference-2018/>
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Four: Contests, Agents, and Markets

#### OZY OPEN TO FREELANCE WRITERS

When we launched OZY, we had a big idea. Instead of bringing you yet another news site pulling together the latest stories from across the Web, we wanted to give you something better. We wanted to give you a news site you actually loved. From the start, we promised only original content, focused not simply on where the world is but, more importantly, where the world is going. And every morning, we set out to profile the people, places, trends and technology that are ahead of their time and worthy of yours.

Do you have a story or idea for OZY? We'd love to hear your story. If you have a great idea for an article or video send it to [freelancers@ozy.com](mailto:freelancers@ozy.com)

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If you're a prospective author, we don't represent outside ideas, but we work to develop careers for our authors. In fact some of our authors are on their third and fourth books with us.

We do books across a wide range of categories, from humor to health to cookbooks, and we sell books to both major trade houses and smaller indie publishers.

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You may send query and cover letter by mail with a SASE or send a query by email.

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CRASH CODE SHORT STORY ANTHOLOGY

Blood Bound Books seeks short stories for its latest anthology.

The future is now. At least that's what we're told, but the more advanced technology gets, the more ways people find to hurt each other. Many say that technology changes the way we define "human." In this anthology we'll erase the definition entirely.

In Crash Code, we want to see the pinnacle of our technology meeting the depths of our depravity. Let's talk voluntary amputations so we can wear cybernetic limbs as fashion statements. Tell us how commercial interplanetary flight changes human tracking. Show the world what the criminal underworld can do in an age of quantum computers. This anthology is going to focus on just how far human kind is willing to fall in pursuit of the next innovation, whether it's paying for bionic sex in bitcoins, five-year-olds browsing the Dark Web, bar code tattoos, mainstream holographic snuff films, or corrupted neural implants driving their users mad.

Think Neuromancer with even more drugs and crime. Imagine Blade Runner meets Saw. Picture Wrath James White's version of Brave New World. Imagine a test-tube baby made from George Orwell and Jack Ketchum. If your story makes people think American Mary merged with Altered Carbon, we want it.

These are just some ideas. Pick one if you like or come up with your own sick, twisted future. Just make sure it answers one question: In a world where everything demands a dollar sign and subscription fees, is humanity something we can afford to lose?

Stories must be previously unpublished in any form

Length: 1,500 words up to 7K

Deadline: October 1, 2018

Send to bbbcrashcode@gmail.com

No multiple submissions or simultaneous submissions, please.

Payment: 3 cents/word

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Do YOU have news for The Writers Network News? Send it in the body of an email to Bobbie@zebraeditor.com or bzebra@aol.com.

Deadline: 18th 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

<https://www.zebraeditor.com/> and signing up for The Writers Network News.

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

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