

The Writers Network News: December 2023

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The Writers Network News

No Rules; Just Write!

Editor: Bobbie Christmas

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Notes

Some links in this newsletter are created through TinyUrl.com, which converts long links into shorter ones.

Our format doesn't support italics, so italics are indicated with underlines _before_ and _after_ words.

Writer's Quote of the Month

"I discovered that rejections are not altogether a bad thing. They teach a writer to rely on his own judgment and to say in his heart of hearts, 'To hell with you.'" -Saul Bellow

Saul Bellow was a Canadian-American writer of plays and novels. Bellow was awarded the Pulitzer Prize, the 1976 Nobel Prize in Literature, and the National Medal of Arts.

How to Change Your Email Address

We cannot add you or change your address, because of our double-opt-in, no-spam policy. If our email to you bounces, our system automatically unsubscribes you. To ensure you never miss an issue of "The Writers Network News," you must resubscribe with your new address. Please go to <https://www.zebraeditor.com/> and sign up with your new address, and be sure to do it before you stop using your old address.

One: From the Editor's Desk: In Memory of Kaye Coppersmith

Dear Fellow Writers:

Kaye Coppersmith, an enthusiastic volunteer of the Florida Writers Association and a woman I considered a good friend, recently came to mind. To everyone's shock she died suddenly about eight or ten years ago. The then-president of FWA asked me to step into one of Kaye's many roles—coordinator of the FWA editing service. I updated, renamed, and oversaw the service until last year, when FWA stopped offering the service to members.

After Kaye's sudden death, her husband sent me her editing files because he didn't know what else to do with them. I took over where needed. Like me she was a longtime editor, but unlike me, she stuck to the old method of editing on printed copies only. She refused to edit electronic files. As a result her husband sent me several boxes of printed manuscripts with her handwriting and notes all over them. It broke my heart to know she was gone, but I felt close to her whenever I examined her clear handwriting on her skillfully edited manuscripts.

Nowadays most clients spurn the old method of editing. With electronic editing writers don't have to print out their manuscripts, box them up, and pay for postage to and from an editor in addition to the cost of editing. Instead most clients today use email to send their manuscripts as Microsoft Word files. We editors use track changes to show our suggestions on the file, rather than using red ink on printed manuscripts. The system saves paper, time, and postage and is much easier for everyone.

I have a reason for mentioning all this information. I recently received a call from a woman seeking the older style of

editing—hard-copy editing. It seems I’m one of the few editors still willing to work on printed manuscripts. The woman and I talked more, and she revealed that her sister had been her editor in the past, and her sister used only hard-copy editing. Her sister? Yes, Kaye Coppersmith. Wow! Now I’m honored to be the editor for Kaye’s sister, and I’m enjoying happy memories of Kaye and our long and often hilarious conversations.

Life has its ups and downs, yet even the saddest times can pop up later as happy memories. Have you ever had sad events that afterwards turned into happy memories?

Yours in writing,
Bobbie Christmas Bobbie@zebraeditor.com or bzebra@aol.com
Author of two award-winning editions of *Write In Style*, owner of Zebra Communications, editor of “The Writers Network News,” and senior editor of *Enjoy Cherokee Magazine*

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Members Write

Marlene Clark sent a touching and accurate poem titled “Surviving” and said, “It’s hard to explain grief, but I tried to in this piece I wrote a few months after my life partner David died - 2/14/22. I found it easier as the months wore on, but it sneaks up on occasion.”

Yes, that’s the thing about grief. It has no timeline and shows up at times when you least expect it.

Thank everyone for writing. Your responses inspire me to keep providing this free newsletter for writers.

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Two: Ask the Book Doctor: About Numerals

By Bobbie Christmas

Q: With 9/11 and 24/7 prevalent in journalism, it seems odd not to write it with a virgule (slash) in fiction, even though Chicago Style and editors warn prose writers to avoid virgules. Won’t nine-eleven stand out as odd, if it were not in dialogue?

A: I must remind writers that in creative writing we have guidelines and recommendations but no absolute rules. You can write any way you want, although the books that get published do tend to stay within recommended guidelines. I don’t recommend writing nine-eleven, though. Instead write it out as month and day—September 11—and I’m sure it will have the same impact and recognition as the numerals 9/11. If you don’t like it written as a month and day despite the guidelines for Chicago style and you prefer the numbers, by all means use the slash and move on. Your eventual editor may still change it, but in my opinion using such recognizable terms such as 9/11 or 24/7 probably won’t get your work rejected.

Q: Which of the following is right? I have a bet with my coworkers.

1. John came in No. 1 in the race.
2. John came in number one in the race.
3. John came in number-one in the race.
4. John came in number 1 in the race.
5. John came in #1 in the race.

A: Chicago style, the style book publishers use, writes out the words for numbers one through one hundred. The first sentence uses the numeral incorrectly and also relies on an abbreviation. Chicago style avoids abbreviations whenever possible.

Sentence number two is correct.

Sentence number three has an incorrect hyphen.

Sentence number four handles the numeral incorrectly; it should be written out.

Sentence number five uses a symbol instead of words. Chicago style avoids symbols and abbreviations whenever possible; however, abbreviations or symbols for a unit of measure are an exception. For a unit of measure the quantity is always written as a numeral. 9 V, 10o F. Always space between the numeral and the abbreviation or symbol.

By the way, Chicago style spells out the word “percent” in running copy—charts and graphs not included—but uses the numeral before the word “percent.” Example: Only 9 percent of the voters said they preferred soup over sandwiches.

Q: I know that Chicago style spells out numerals one through one hundred, but in dialogue do I have to write something like this: “Were you nineteen in nineteen fifty-three?”

A: No. Chicago style does have exceptions to its rule on numerals. Dates are an exception. Correct: “Were you nineteen in 1953?”

Other exceptions include but aren’t limited to the following:

Numbers with decimal points can be used as numbers in narrative, but not in dialogue. The average age of dogs is 12.1 years. Tom said, “The average age of dogs is twelve point one years.”

Approximate numbers above one hundred are also written out, whereas exact ones are in numbers. We spent a thousand dollars on airfare, but only \$242.50 on food for the trip.

Send your questions to Bobbie Christmas, book editor, author of *Write In Style: Use Your Computer to Improve Your Writing*, and owner of Zebra Communications. [Bobbie@zebraeditor.com](mailto:Bobbie@zebraeditor.com) or [BZebra@aol.com](mailto:BZebra@aol.com). Read Bobbie's Zebra Communications blog at <https://www.zebraeditor.com/blog/>.

For much more information on hundreds of subjects of vital importance to writers, order *Purge Your Prose of Problems, a Book Doctor's Desk Reference Book* at <http://tinyurl.com/4ptjnr>. An excellent reference book for all writing groups.

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 at <https://tinyurl.com/y7p9xkbb>.  
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Three: Subjects of interest to writers

Be Sure to Use the Right Word

Anti-venom/Antivenin

Although popular use has made the word anti-venom acceptable in some circles, the correct term for the fluid that counteracts a snakebite is actually antivenin.

(Excerpt from *Purge Your Prose of Problems, a book doctor's desk reference*, available only at [ZebraEditor.com](http://ZebraEditor.com).)

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Bold Journey interviewed me with some specific questions about imposter syndrome. Read the interview here:
<https://boldjourney.com/news/meet-bobbie-christmas/>

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Terms Writers Should Know

Participle

A form of a verb that can function independently as an adjective. In the following example "baked" is a participle: The baked pie lay on the table. In the next example "dancing" is a participle: The dancing bear brought many children to the circus.

Excerpt from *Write In Style: How to Use Your Computer to Improve Your Writing*

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Do You Know What You Don't Know?

Which word is correct? When is it one word or two words? When should it be hyphenated? You're not the only person confused, but a professional editor knows the answer.

Where do the commas go? What is the prudent and correct use of exclamation marks? You don't know what you don't know, and you may think you're right when you're wrong. Every book deserves a professional editor.

Zebra Communications offers three levels of service, two of which include developmental editing and an extensive report filled with advice, explanations, and suggestions on how to improve the manuscript's marketability. See our services, pricing, reviews, and more at www.ZebraEditor.com. Zebra Communications: Excellent Editing for Maximum Marketability

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How to Show Rather Than Tell and a Trick for Introducing Flashbacks

When I edit manuscripts I often have to mark passages that tell, rather than show, such as this one: Harry was nervous.

I tell writers instead to describe what Harry is doing that makes him look nervous, such as being short of breath, sweating, running his hands through his hair, and such. Now I've found a website that provides emotions and then lists behaviors that depict that emotion in a way that shows, rather than tells. Check it out! <https://onestopforwriters.com/emotions>

For example, here are the potential ways listed to show nostalgia, which can certainly be beneficial when introducing a flashback:

- An unfocused gaze
- A slight smile
- Slowly flipping through old pictures, stroking the pages
- A relaxed posture
- Eyes that fill with tears
- Using a quiet voice
- Cocking one's head to the side
- Subdued laughter
- A shallow sigh
- An unhurried walk
- Rubbing a hand against the heart
- Slouching on a sofa, watching old movies

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Bobbie's Blogs

Read about my Christmas in 2015. Although many things have changed, the sentiment is the same.
<https://www.zebraeditor.com/blog/twas-the-day-after-christmas/>

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Manuslips and Missed Opportunities for Improvement

You knew what you meant when you wrote it, but only a good editor can spot sentences that don't say what an author intended.

Can you tell what can be improved with the following sentences? [See answers below.]

1. "Damn," he mumbled with watery eyes.
2. They exited under overcast skies that hindered the rising sun and walked through the parking lot.

Answers

1. As written he used watery eyes to do his mumbling for him. Better: His eyes watered. "Damn, he mumbled.
2. As written the skies hindered the sun and walked through the parking lot. Better: They exited and walked through the parking lot under overcast skies that hindered the rising sun.

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Manuslip: a slip in grammar, punctuation, or other error in a manuscript that often results in humor; a manuscript blooper

Etymology  
Coined by Bobbie Christmas (1944 -) in Write In Style: How to Use Your Computer to Improve Your Writing (2004, 2015).

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Be My Friend on Facebook

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

Follow Zebra Communications on Facebook for news for writers, writing-related cartoons, immediate updates, and other good stuff. <https://tinyurl.com/ydyn3pcu>.

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CMOS Online Q&A

This month someone posed the following question to The Chicago Manual of Style Online, and it's one that I often have to address in the magazines I edit:

Q. When is it proper to use an ampersand?

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, and much more. If you write fiction or nonfiction books, you will want to know about Chicago style or be sure to use a professional book editor intimately familiar with Chicago style.

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Write Tight: Learn What To Look For, How to Look for It, and What to Delete

In five-time award-winning Write In Style you'll learn how to find and delete or rewrite words, sentences, and phrases that weaken your writing.

Write In Style uses humor and expertise to show writers how to tighten and strengthen their writing and create a fresh voice.

Write In Style is also available as an e-book or printed through the following source, although you may pay for shipping for the printed book: <https://tinyurl.com/y8fp5nym>.

Want to buy the book in Kobo through Rakuten? Easy. Go to <https://www.kobo.com/us/en/ebook/write-in-style-3>

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Four: Contests, Agents, and Markets

The Book Group, literary agency

When you're ready to send us your submission, please email a query letter and 10 sample pages to [submissions@thebookgroup.com](mailto:submissions@thebookgroup.com). You will receive a bounce back to your query, which you should consider receipt of your work. Please include all materials in the body of the email, as we can't open attachments. We only accept electronic queries sent to [submissions@thebookgroup.com](mailto:submissions@thebookgroup.com), and do not accept paper queries or queries by phone.

Please include the name of the agent to whom you are submitting in the subject line of your query email.

To learn more about what each agent at The Book Group is looking for, please visit the Staff section of our website at

<https://www.thebookgroup.com/new-folder>

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The Reedsy Prompts Contest

Reedsy

Every Friday, Reedsy sends out five writing prompts. Enter your response within a week for a chance at \$250. Winners may also be included in a future issue of Reedsy's literary magazine, Prompted.

Top prize

\$250

Additional prizes

\$25 credit toward Reedsy editorial services

Entry requirements

[EZezine Company Terms of Service Privacy Policy](#)