

The Writers Network News: September 2024

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The Writers Network News

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Sponsor: Zebra Communications

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Founded in 1992

<https://www.zebraeditor.com/>

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 Quotes of the Month

"A sentence should contain no unnecessary words, a paragraph no unnecessary sentences, for the same reason that a drawing should have no unnecessary lines and a machine no unnecessary parts." -William Strunk, Jr., coauthor of The Elements of Style, a book often called Strunk and White, which has become a sort of bible for writers

"If you have any young friends who aspire to become writers, the second-greatest favor you can do them is to present them with copies of The Elements of Style. The first-greatest, of course, is to shoot them now, while they're happy." - American author Dorothy Parker

Plan to Change Your Email Address?

You must resubscribe with your new address before your old address expires. Our double-opt-in, no-spam policy does not allow me to change your address. 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. Go to <https://www.zebraeditor.com/> and sign up with your new address, and do it before you stop using your old address.

One: From the Editor's Desk: Introversion vs. Extroversion

Dear Fellow Writers:

Introversion: a personality trait or style characterized by a preference for or orientation to one's own thoughts and feelings (Merriam-Webster)

Extroversion: a personality trait or style characterized by a preference for or orientation to engaging socially with others (Merriam-Webster)

When I was a youngster I hid behind my older sister if a stranger asked me a question. People called me shy. Over the years several people have told me I'm a good listener, probably because I let others talk more than I talk.

I left the corporate world in 1992 to form Zebra Communications and work at home. I knew others who tried to work from home, but they missed the camaraderie of coworkers. I, however, have always felt content to work alone.

Despite my introversion, I liked helping others, so I adored giving seminars, workshops, and keynote speeches at conferences for writers. I always needed a place, though—often my hotel room at a conference—where I could spend time in solitude to reenergize.

On a basic level extroverts get energy from other people, while being around others drains introverts; They need solitude to recuperate. How is this trait related to writing? Read on.

Many people have asked me how to find time to write. My simple answer used to be that you can't just "find" time; you have to "make" time to write. I've told folks to schedule a time to write and stick to it. I now realize introverts make time to be alone, so perhaps introverts are the most productive at writing. It's a revolution of thought, that instead of "finding time to write," introverts naturally spend time alone and therefore have more time to write.

I don't know if my theory is correct, but I'm curious. Do you have tendencies toward introversion and therefore have time to write, or are you an extrovert who prefers to be around people and must therefore schedule a specific time to write?

Yours in writing,
Bobbie Christmas Bobbie@zebraeditor.com or bzebra@aol.com
Book doctor, author of award-winning *Write In Style*, owner of Zebra Communications, editor of "The Writers Network News," and senior editor of *Enjoy Cherokee Magazine*

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Two: Ask the Book Doctor: How to Handle Numbers

By Bobbie Christmas

Q: When am I supposed to write out numbers or use the numeral? Do I use the actual number, for example, 5, or do I write five? Are there certain times when I should write it out and other times when I use the numeral? Does it even matter?

A: It matters if you hope to get your writing published. It doesn't matter if you're just writing an email to a friend.

I understand your confusion with numbers because you've seen them handled in differing ways, depending on what country you're in and what you're reading—a newspaper or a novel, for example.

The first thing you need to know is that professional writers follow specific style guides—a list of rules to follow depending on the intended country, industry, project, or periodical. In America most periodicals follow AP style, most scholarly publishers follow MLA style, and most fiction and nonfiction publishers follow Chicago style, and the styles differ in how to handle numbers.

Back in the 1970s when I was a journalist writing for newspapers and magazines, I had to follow AP style. Its style guide had about six hundred pages. When I became a book editor in 1990, I had to unlearn AP style and adhere to Chicago style. The Chicago Manual of Style had more than a thousand pages. To make matters more complicated, Chicago style changes a little every few years, and editors must keep up with all the changes.

In Chicago style the format for numbers also depends on what the numbers refer to, for example sports scores, dates, or times of day. It also depends on whether the numerals appear in the narrative or dialogue. No wonder writers are confused!

If you hope to write an article for a periodical, ask the editor of that periodical what style guide to follow.

Because I'm an American book editor, I'll explain how numbers should be handled in fiction and nonfiction books for American audiences.

Spell out whole numbers one through one hundred. Also spell them out when followed by hundred, thousand, or hundred thousand. Examples: Only four people applied for work, when I expected at least fourteen. I'll never forget the three thousand customers who frequented my store. Some 2,500 more came in only once or twice.

Always spell out numbers at the beginning of a sentence. Example: Forty-seven people fell ill.

Dates are always in numerals. Example: We wanted to find an area still living in the 1960s, so we left town on October 16, 2006, to begin our search.

Numerals in dialogue, with the exception of dates and uneven numbers, are usually spelled out. Examples: "I'll meet you at six o'clock." "I'll be there at one-thirty." "I live at three oh one North Elm Street." "I won 5,241 dollars." "She hasn't visited since 1999."

Avoid informal use of dates in narrative. Instead of William King was born in '02, write out the whole year. William King was born in 1902.

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

Centuries are spelled out and lowercased. Example: The artist copied works from the sixteenth century.

Depending on the publication, sports scores may be used as numerals. Example: The final score was 7-0.

Always spell out numbers at the beginning of a sentence. Example: Seven people fell ill.

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

In ratios it is better to spell out the numerals instead of using a colon. He has a ten-to-one chance of winning. In technical text, however, it is okay to use numerals and a colon with no space between the numbers and the colon: a 10:1 ratio.

Use the number in percentages followed by the word, not the symbol. Example: Only 40 percent of the people voted.

The details about numerals can be too much to digest. You can see why many writers are confused about how to handle numbers. When in doubt check the appropriate style guide or use a professional editor familiar with the style guide your piece should follow.

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 five-time award-winning *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

Subscribers Write

Mark Diamond, daddy to a handsome talking parakeet, knows I also have a parakeet, although a nonverbal one. When he read my statement, "I am a human being, and I love other human beings," he wrote to ask, "But what about cute little birdies?"

I joked back, "Cute little birdies are human too."

Mark also sent a link to a great article about words that often get confused. I highly recommend reading it. I'd like to add the phrase "I have a pit in my stomach," which should be "I have a feeling in the pit in my stomach." Oh, and "He's protective over me," which should be "He's protective of me." Here's the link to the article: <https://tinyurl.com/mtadays4>  
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Finalists for Booker Prize Includes Americans

Judges for the Booker Prize, given each year to a book of fiction published in the United Kingdom and Ireland, have announced the 13 finalists for 2024.

In a development that might raise the hackles of those who criticized the now decade-old rule change that broadened eligibility for the prize, six are Americans. Tommy Orange, nominated for his novel "Wandering Stars," is the first Native American writer to be named to the longlist. Read full article with nominees and books here: <https://wapo.st/3WMDc50>
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Free Downloads for Writers

Here you'll find a wide variety of articles of interest to writers, from crafting articles to submitting to agents and more.

<https://www.writersdigest.com/resources/free-downloads-for-writers>  
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Decent or Descent? Decimate or Destroy? Penultimate or Ultimate?

Which word choice is correct based on how or where it's used? A professional editor knows the answer, but do you?

Bobbie Christmas, owner of Zebra Communications, offers three levels of editing service. See our services, pricing, reviews, and more at <https://www.zebraeditor.com/>

Zebra Communications: Excellent Editing for Maximum Marketability
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Clever Insults By and About Writers

"Thank you for sending me a copy of your book; I'll waste no time reading it."  
-Moses Hadas

"He has never been known to use a word that might send a reader to the dictionary."  
-William Faulkner (about Ernest Hemingway).

"He had delusions of adequacy." -Walter Kerr

"Bring a friend, if you have one."  
-George Bernard Shaw to Winston Churchill.  
In response: "Cannot possibly attend first night, I will attend the second...if there is one."  
-Winston Churchill  
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Do You Collect Old Books? Are They Poisonous?

The University of Delaware's Poison Book Project identifies old books still in circulation that were produced using toxic

pigments such as lead, chromium, mercury, and even arsenic, which created the bright green covers often used in Victorian bookbinding.

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Manuslips and Missed Opportunities for Improvement

I pulled the following sentence from a manuscript I recently edited:

Can you see what's wrong with the sentence? How would you have written it?

An unidentified underground space that seemed to be entirely shut off from the world peeked the scientists' interest.

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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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Books Banned in Utah

Utah has ordered books by Margaret Atwood, Judy Blume, Rupi Kaur and Sarah J Maas and others to be removed from public schools and libraries. Read the article here: <https://tinyurl.com/544wnhme>

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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 a question to The Chicago Manual of Style Online that the magazine I edit also grappled with, until we settled on a specific style for consistency. Here's the question:

Q. Which is the most correct phone number formatting—(xxx) xxx-xxxx, xxx-xxx-xxxx, or xxx.xxx.xxxx? Which is the most accessible?

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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Hyphen, En Dash, or Em Dash? What Goes Where?

What's the difference, and how do you use these punctuation marks correctly? Read the full article here: <https://tinyurl.com/9ynacnnd>

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Words Writers Should Know

bowdlerize, bowdlerized, bowdlerizing

To bowdlerize is to purge, modify, simplify, or distort parts of a book that an editor or other person considers vulgar.

Example: Original Shakespeare: "Out, damn spot!"

Bowdlerized version: "Out, crimson spot!"

What is your opinion about bowdlerizing? Would you want your own writing to be bowdlerized?

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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.

To order: <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: Agents and Markets

Slate

The online general-interest magazine Slate offers analysis and commentary on news, politics, business, culture, and technology. Rates begin at \$350.

“So you’d like to write for Slate—that’s great! If you haven’t worked with us before, here are a few pointers on how to craft a pitch and capture our attention.” <https://slate.com/pitch>

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BlazeVOX [books]
<https://www.blazevox.org/>

BlazeVOX [books] presents innovative fiction and wide-ranging fields of contemporary poetry. Our books push at the frontiers of what is possible with our innovative poetry, fiction and select nonfiction and literary criticism. Our fundamental mission is to disseminate poetry through print and digital media, both within academic spheres and to society at large. Submission information here: <https://www.blazevox.org/faqs-4>

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Hannah Sheppard Literary Agency

Our Submissions window is from the first to the seventh monthly. When we are open, please use the form [link below ] to submit your work. In the meantime, please read through our guidelines and wish lists so that you can prepare your submission. You might also find this information on preparing for submission in our resources section useful. <https://hs-la.com/submissions/>

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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](mailto:Bobbie@zebraeditor.com) or [bzebra@aol.com](mailto:bzebra@aol.com). Deadline: 18th of each month.

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