

The Writers Network News: December 2024

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The Writers Network News

Editor: Bobbie Christmas

Sponsor: Zebra Communications

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Excellent editing for maximum marketability

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 Quote of the Month

Augusten Burroughs, the author of the best-selling memoir Running with Scissors, said, "The secret to being a writer is that you have to write. It's not enough to think about writing or to study literature or plan a future life as an author. You really have to lock yourself away, alone, and get to work."

(What an honor it was for me about ten years ago to see and hear Augusten speak at an Atlanta Writers Club meeting.)

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: On Being a Journalist

Dear Fellow Writers:

In the 1960s advertising agencies were all the rage in America. Clever ads were winning awards and getting national attention. I was seventeen and about to enter college, and I decided I wanted to be an advertising copywriter. Alas, the university I attended didn't offer any courses in advertising, but it wouldn't have mattered. Women were not being hired as advertising copywriters in those days. The next-best thing the university offered was journalism. "Oh well, it still involves writing," I decided. I never thought I'd be a journalist, though. I considered journalism to be uncreative.

After college I held a few menial jobs that partially involved writing until I was hired as the news editor and primary reporter for a weekly publication. There I fell in love with journalism. Being a journalist gave me the right to ask anyone anything. I'm a curious person who loves to learn, so journalism fits me perfectly.

I saw a person with an easel set up in a field. I stopped my car, walked to her easel, and asked questions. She told me about the area and why she saw it as a potential painting. I learned new things about art from the artist's perspective. I also learned that the artist's husband was a doctor, and I'd been looking for one. Her husband became my family doctor.

I witnessed a man with an assortment of instruments climbing down to a creek near my property. I got out of my car and asked him what he was doing, and I learned about water testing as well as bridge building.

Yes, I could satisfy my curiosity at every opportunity.

With a press pass I was able to attend many events and performances as well, as long as I wrote articles about the events and/or took photos. No problem! I loved what I was doing.

Over the years I worked my way up until I became the manager of the Publications Department for a huge international firm. When I had enough of corporate politics, I left and started Zebra Communications, working as a freelance journalist as well as an editor. I've never stopped learning, and the perks never stopped either. I've edited books that taught me about a wide variety of subjects, from running a legal office to how to avoid getting cavities. I've edited novels of almost every possible genre. I've traveled for business with all expenses paid, and I've traveled for fun and sold articles based on my travels. I was even given a free Caribbean cruise, and all I had to do was give three short creative-writing seminars onboard. When I coauthored a book based in Bermuda, my coauthor and I were given a free weeklong publicity tour in Bermuda.

Most recently I checked off another item from my bucket list. I enjoyed a delightful one-hour hot-air balloon ride over Georgia. Even though I paid for the ride, I sold an article based on it that will cover my expense.

Journalism boring? No way! It's been rewarding, educational, and fun-filled. One more thing: because I'm now independent of the corporate world, no one can force me into retirement. Why would I stop doing what I love? I'd love to hear from subscribers about how they feel about being a journalist.

December is upon us, so regardless of what, how, or even whether you celebrate, I hope you have a happy, productive month. Keep calm and keep writing.

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: About Capital Letters

by Bobbie Christmas

Q: When I refer to a specific chapter in my book proposal or in my book, do I capitalize it? For example, when I say, "See Chapter Three for more information," should it be chapter three or Chapter Three?

A: As used, Chapter Three is the title of the chapter, so capitalize it as I would any title.

Q: Are the seasons capitalized? I've seen it both ways, "Spring" and "spring."

A: Seasons aren't capitalized unless they are the first word in a sentence. "The weather in Paris in the spring is perfect," but "Spring in Paris is perfect."

Q: When a character speaks in dialogue, are terms of endearment such as honey, love, buddy, etc., always capitalized?

A: The Chicago Manual of Style prefers to lowercase pet names and terms of endearment unless they appear at the beginning of a sentence or replace the actual name, for example, "I love you, Honey, but your feet stink." An example of when to lowercase the name would be this: "She's my honey, but her feet stink." "Susie, honey, don't go there."

Honorifics, however, are not capitalized unless at the start of a sentence. "Yes, ma'am, I can do that." "Ma'am, the store is closed." "I'm sorry, sir."

Q: If the wording following a colon can stand as a complete sentence, is it necessary to capitalize the first letter following the colon?

A: The newest edition of The Chicago Manual of Style changed its position on this issue. It used to say always lowercase the remaining sentence after a colon. It now says to capitalize the first word following a colon if it introduces two or more sentences, when it introduces a speech in dialogue, or when it introduces a direct question.

Example for lowercase: He gave her two choices: move to Miami or end the relationship.

Examples for uppercase after a colon: One must pack many things for a trip to Canada: Carry a sweater for the cool nights. Take comfortable walking shoes.

Q: I always capitalize God, but I've seen it in lowercase, god. Which is right?

A: As with any title, the word god is capitalized when it is not modified by an article, such as a, an, or the: I prayed to God that my sister would live. The word god is lowercased when it is plural or is preceded by an article or pronoun such as my, your, his, etc.: I pray to God every morning. The Greeks thought gods lived on mountains. My god, those are lovely flowers.

Q: When should I capitalize job titles? Is it this: My daughter Alexis is an electrical engineer at Safeco Sanitation. Or should it be this: Alexis is an Electrical Engineer at Safeco Sanitation.

A: The first example is correct: My daughter Alexis is an electrical engineer at Safeco Sanitation. The only time to capitalize a job title is when a name follows, as in this example: In charge today is Electrical Engineer Alexis Jones.

Q: Please help! I was taught in school always to capitalize the word “president” when referring to the president of the United States. Nowadays I don’t see it always capitalized. Was my English teacher wrong?

A: Your English teacher was teaching you one style of writing, possibly academic style, while if you’re writing a book today, you would follow Chicago style. Chicago style capitalizes the word “president” only if followed by a name or used at the start of a sentence. “I voted for Jones for president of the United States.” “I liked President Jones’s White House speech.”

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

Jennie Inglis wrote, “You know, I know, we know that the AI pulled from your work that is out there on the internet. Some of what it put together sounded just like you.”

I responded, “It’s true that I’ve shared my views and information on the internet for more than thirty years. Thank you for your comment.”

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Steve Abney asked if AI created the imagery in my piece on artificial intelligence. To be specific, “Writing is a journey, a dance between ideas and words, but the true magic often happens in the editing room, where raw material is sculpted into a polished masterpiece. Editing is more than just fixing typos; it’s a process of refinement, shaping thoughts and language into a coherent, engaging piece.”

Yes, artificial intelligence wrote the paragraph in a fancier way than I would have written it, but I let it stand as an example of AI writing.

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Booker Prize Announced

British author Samantha Harvey won the 2024 Booker Prize, the U.K.’s most prestigious literary award, for Orbital_ the first space novel to receive the award.

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Insight or Incite? Ensure or Insure? Pallet or Palate?

Which word is correct? A professional editor knows, 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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Funny Simile, But Seems Appropriate

Considering it’s the season, I got a chuckle at the following ill-advised simile I noted in a recent manuscript I edited:

His pain carved slices across his chest like a sharp knife embracing a Thanksgiving turkey.

Have you read any bad or funny similes you’d like to report?

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The Guardian Shares an Interview with Deborah Levy

“A writer’s career is choppy—I was fifty when I found success.”

Her “living autobiographies” and novels have earned her legions of fans, but that success was hard won. Deborah Levy talks about stamina, boldness, and finding delight in the details.

<https://tinyurl.com/4jj6fwmm>

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Creative Writing Tip

Not Only . . . But Also

The use of the term “not only” begs for its pair, “but also.” Avoid using the first without the last. Rarely acceptable: Not only did he drink, he drank excessively. Acceptable: Not only did he drink, but he also drank excessively.

In addition, the “not only” phrase is negative, while creative writing calls for positive terminology. Instead of this: Not only

did he drink, but he also drank excessively, consider this potential rewrite: He drank, and he did it excessively or even better, this: He drank to excess.

Not only is “not only” negative, but it also becomes repetitive (heh, heh). Seriously, once it is used in a manuscript, it often gets used far too many times.

Strong creative writing stays in the positive and avoids repetition.

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Edit Goof Costs Mattel Big Bucks and Major Embarrassment

Mattel has apologized for the typographical error on the packages of Wicked-movie inspired dolls. It was supposed to send young people to WickedMovie.com, the official website for the film. Instead it gave a link to a porn website unsuitable for children.

Did no one proof the copy before Mattel spent a fortune on printing, packing, and shipping?

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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

The Chicago Manual of Style Online answered many questions this month, including the following one:

Q. In text, I write: “. . . a book titled, ABC Book.” But should I use the word “titled” or “entitled” in front of the title? Also, should the title be preceded by a comma, as I’ve done here? I’ve always included the comma, but that may not be correct. Please help.

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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Changes in the 18th Edition of _The Chicago Manual of Style_

The latest edition of _The Chicago Manual of Style_ is here! Last month I revealed one change I’ve seen.

Here’s the second change I noticed: It gives new, specific guidance as to what fonts to use in manuscripts. (2.9)

It says that unless a publisher specifically requests a font, authors should stick to a standard Unicode font, such as Times New Roman. I’ve been telling writers the same thing for a long time. At last CMOS backs me up.

Essential to American book editors, the latest edition of _The Chicago Manual of Style_ costs about \$75. Authors won’t have to buy a copy if they use an editor who keeps up to date with the latest changes in 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.

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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Atlanta Writers Club Self-Publishing Conference

March 22, 2025

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

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On a personal note, I’m still having fun with Artificial Intelligence. I asked AI, “Is Bobbie Christmas a good editor?”

Here’s how AI responded: “Bobbie Christmas is a highly regarded editor with a strong reputation in the industry. Her book, “Write in Style,” is a testament to her expertise in grammar, style, and writing techniques. Many authors have praised her editing skills, highlighting her thoroughness, attention to detail, and ability to enhance the clarity and impact of their work.

“While there's no definitive 'best' editor, Bobbie Christmas's experience, reputation, and positive feedback from clients suggest that she is indeed a skilled and effective editor.”

Wow! Thank you, AI.

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#### Four: Contests, Agents, and Markets

#### EPOCH

EPOCH publishes fiction, poetry, essays, comics, and graphic art. Students and faculty of Cornell University edit the magazine.

We consider submissions via mail and Submittable; see the website for full details. For poetry submit no more than five poems in one batch. For short fiction or essay, submit a single piece or a suite of smaller pieces, i.e., flash fiction. We do not publish writing intended for children or young adults.

We are open for electronic submissions only during the months of August and January. Each submission costs \$3, and a portion of each fee is donated to the Cornell Prison Education Program, which provides courses leading to college degrees for people incarcerated in upstate New York prisons. There will also be a free-submission weekend during each submission period; follow us on Bluesky or Instagram for the dates.

See full guidelines here: <https://www.epochliterary.com/submit>

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Mythaxis

Mythaxis seeks speculative fiction (sf/f/h) of all stripes for our first three issues each year. We are also interested in submissions of crime fiction for our end-of-year “all crime” issue. All these genres are equally welcome in each submission window.

We are open to submissions within the following periods:

- January 23rd-30th
- April 23rd-30th
- July 23rd-30th
- October 23rd-30th

Submissions received outside of these dates will unfortunately be lost and therefore not responded to. When open, we seek and offer the following:

- Length: 1,000-5,000 words. These are firm limits. Shorter or longer works will be considered, but the further a story goes outside these bounds the more it will need to impress.
- Compensation: €0.01 per word, with a €20 minimum. Please be aware that payment is via PayPal only.

If you do not receive an acknowledgment within 24 hours of submission, please get in touch. We aim to accept or reject within 14 days of acknowledgment, but rl (real life) and rl (reading load) can get in the way. If you do not hear from us after 30 days, feel free to query.

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#### Consequence

<https://consequenceforum.org/submissions/>

Consequence accepts and pays for poetry, fiction, and nonfiction. Submissions are welcome during the spring (January 15 – April 15) and fall (July 15 – October 15) reading periods and will be considered for our print publication (Consequence journal), our website (Consequence online), or our blog (Consequence substack). Please note that all subs need to address in some manner the consequences of war or geopolitical violence.

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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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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.

If someone forwarded this newsletter to you, please sign up to get your own subscription. Simply go to <https://www.zebraeditor.com/> to subscribe to The Writers Network News. My promise: I will never share your address or send out spam.

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

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