

AWIS Newsletter Committee Policies and Guidelines

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Philosophy: In order to preserve the author's style and voice, we will make minimal changes to an article. Most changes will be grammatical corrections. We will generally avoid making changes for stylistic reasons. If the way that the author has written an article is grammatically correct, we will leave it alone. If we feel it is necessary to make major changes, we will inform the author.

Group Editing Process: We will use the following process to edit the Newsletter.

Step 1: Small-group Editing

The Committee will be split into two editing groups for each Newsletter. Half of the articles that have been submitted will go to each editing group. Hima and Jan will lead the editing groups, and they will consult with the author if anyone in their groups suggests major changes to an article. The members of each editing group will typically have just under a week to send edits to their group leaders. Hima and Jan will compile edits from their groups and send one edited version of each article back to the person in charge of the first draft.

Step 2: Global Editing

The articles that have been edited by the small groups will be used to create the first draft of the Newsletter. The person who compiles the first draft will typically have a few days to do so. This draft will be sent out to the entire Committee several days before the editing meeting. The Committee will e-mail Hima and Jan with any suggestions that may involve major rewriting of articles. If necessary, Hima and Jan will consult with the original authors regarding these changes.

Step 3: Fine Tuning

Each Committee member will peruse the first draft and bring suggestions for minor changes (involving grammar and typos) to the editing meeting. The final version of the Newsletter will be generated at this meeting.

Definition of Active Committee Member: Every Committee member is expected to respond to e-mails sent by the co-chairs and other Committee members. Committee members will also participate in editing teams for every issue, write an average of three articles per year, and volunteer for tasks for at least three meetings per year. Examples of tasks include getting food for the Committee meeting, booking the meeting room, and compiling the first draft of the Newsletter. All Committee members are expected to keep their AWIS memberships active.

Article Length: We have established word limits for articles. They are as follows:

News: 250 words or fewer

Reports: 500 words or fewer

Movie/Book reviews: 400 to 500 words

Features (special-interest stories and profiles): 1000 words or fewer

Editing Tips: When editing articles, look for errors that have to do with the following.

1. **Agreement of pronouns.** This often becomes an issue when making an attempt to use gender-neutral language. Here's an example of a common mistake.

One should be very careful when choosing their job. (Incorrect)

We say this in conversation everyday, but it is incorrect. *One* is singular, and *their* is plural. There are two ways to fix this...

One should be very careful when choosing his or her job. (Correct)

If you find the *his or her* awkward, make the whole thing plural...

People should be very careful when choosing their jobs. (Correct)

2. **References to people.** The first time you introduce someone in an article, use the person's full name. In the rest of the article, refer to the person by last name. Here is an example.

Barbara Armstrong, the chair of the AWIS Newsletter Committee, will be buying drinks for all AWIS members at El Torito on Friday. Armstrong's decision to spread her wealth was the result of winning the lottery.

3. **Use of commas.** There is no way to include all of the different uses of commas in this handout. The most common use of commas occurs before conjunctions (e.g. *and*, *but*). Here is an example.

The AWIS Newsletter is the best, and everyone reads it. (Correct)

The rule is that if the text following the conjunction could be a sentence by itself, you include the comma. *Everyone reads it* could be a sentence all by itself. So, we include the comma. The following sentence does not need a comma because the text that follows the conjunction (*are lots of fun*) could not be a stand-alone sentence.

The members of the AWIS Newsletter Committee work hard and are lots of fun. (Correct)

4. **Capitalization.** It is sometimes a challenge to figure out when to capitalize things. It is best to just look up your particular issue in the AP Stylebook.

5. **Numbers.** Spell out numbers below 10. Use numerals for 10 and above. Use numerals for a person's age. Use a hyphen to connect a word ending in y to another word (e.g. twenty-five). Spell out any number that is at the beginning of a sentence (even if it is above 10 or someone's age). But, if the number is a calendar year, NEVER spell it out (even if it is at the beginning of a sentence).

6. **E-mail.** All future references to the word "e-mail" will be spelled with the hyphen included. "E-mail" is the correct spelling of the word according to the AP Stylebook.

7. **Acronyms and abbreviations.** These need to be spelled out when first used in an article.

8. **Agreement between subject and verb.** The number of the subject dictates the number of the verb. Here is an example from Strunk and White.

The bittersweet flavor of youth – its trials, its joys, its adventures, its challenges – are not soon forgotten.
(Incorrect)

The bittersweet flavor of youth – its trials, its joys, its adventures, its challenges – is not soon forgotten.
(Correct)

In this example, the subject is *flavor*, a singular noun. So, the verb (*is*) should be singular, too. Any words that come between the subject and the verb do not affect their agreement. A good technique is to eliminate all of the words except for the subject and the verb. (*The flavor is not forgotten.*)

9. **Punctuation and quotations.** Any punctuation that accompanies a quote should go inside the quotation marks. A quote within a quote should be set off by single quotation marks. Take a look at the following example.

“My mom used to tell me to “play hard”. She was so great”! exclaims Smith. (Incorrect)

“My mom used to tell me to ‘play hard.’ She was so great!” exclaims Smith. (Correct)

10. **That, which, who.** *That* is the defining or restrictive pronoun. *Which* is the nondefining or nonrestrictive pronoun. Here are some examples from Strunk and White.

The lawn mower that is broken is in the garage. (If you have several lawn mowers, and you are trying to tell someone where the broken one is, you would say this.)

The lawn mower, which is broken, is in the garage. (In this case, you have only one lawn mower, and you are telling someone where it is. The fact that it is broken is just additional information.)

In cases where you are referring to a person or an animal with a name, use *who* instead of *that* or *which*. Here is an example.

Fluffy, who is sick, is sleeping on her favorite pillow. (Correct)

11. **Who vs. whom.** *Who* is used when the person being referred to is the subject of a sentence, clause or phrase. *Whom* is used when the person is the object of a verb or preposition. In the example above (the Fluffy example), *who* is the subject of a clause. In the following example, *who* is the subject of the verb.

Who should present the award? (Correct)

In general, you use *who* where you would use *he* or *she*. If you try replacing *who* with *he* or *she* in the example shown above, the sentence still works. You wouldn't say *Him should present the award* or *Her should present the award*, so you can't use *whom*. *Whom* replaces *him* or *her*. In the following sentence, *whom* is an object.

To whom shall we present the award? (Correct)

Again, you would say *to him* or *to her*, but you would not say *to he* or *to she*.

12. **Book and Movie Titles.** The AP Stylebook suggests putting quotes around book and movie titles unless they are reference works (e.g. the Bible, almanacs, dictionaries, encyclopedias, directories, etc.) For reference works, such as the AP Stylebook, use capitals at the beginnings of words, but don't use quotes.

13. **Other Editing Issues.** For all other issues, consult The Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law (the AP Stylebook.) It will be our primary resource. (So, if the AP Stylebook says one thing regarding a particular editing issue, and the Chicago Manual of Style says something else, go with the AP Stylebook.)