CML

carolina mountain life

WRITERS' GUIDELINES

Format for story submissions:

Font: Times New Roman, 9.5pt. Black text only.
Do not bold headline. Headline and byline flush left.
Put your byline on the story. Byline starts with a capital B. ("By...")

Single spaced.
0.175 indent first lines of paragraphs.
No extra space between paragraphs.

For bulleted lists, use a dash for the bullet, then add one space, then begin the text.
When the text ends, hit return, then repeat (dash, space, text, return).
Do NOT indent bulleted lists.

No page numbers.

No lines, borders, boxes or graphs.

Hyperlinks:
Do not add color to hyperlinks.
Do not underline hyperlinks.
Verify all hyperlinks are working prior to submitting your story.

Spellcheck and grammar check to the extent your word processor permits before you submit story.

If you think of a good headline, put it on the story. (Newland to Host Democratic National Convention). If you don't, just put a label on it. (Newland Convention).

The filename should end with a hyphen and your initials. (tomdooley-aw) If the story is sent back to you for changes, leave the name as is but add 2 when you resubmit. (tomdooley-aw2)

Submit as email attachment.

For Style Consistency:

Names of books, movies and plays should be in italics.
Names of stories, songs, articles, should be in quotation marks.

Single-digit numbers (one through nine) should be spelled out.
From 10 on, use numerals, except when the number is the first thing in the sentence. In that case it should be spelled out.

Spell out the name of something before you start abbreviating or using initials or acronyms.
If you plan to use initials or acronyms on subsequent references, put the initials or acronym in parentheses after the first reference. (Appalachian State University (ASU)).

Military titles should be abbreviated. (Gen. William Westmoreland. Sgt. Alvin York).
Same for MDs and PHDs. (Dr. Janet Speer). Political and administrative titles attached to a person's name should be capitalized and spelled out. (Senator Richard Burr. Commissioner Joe Avery. Congresswoman Virginia Foxx. President Barry Buxton, Coach Jerry Moore.) Such titles not attached to a person's name should not be capitalized. (Barry Buxton, president of Lees-McRae College. Jerry Moore, coach of the Appalachian State football team.)

Generally, we don't use courtesy titles (Mr., Mrs., Ms.) First reference should be first and last name, with middle initial or middle name if the person uses it. Subsequent references should be just the last name. One exception is when you are writing about a married couple and need to show which spouse it is. In that case you can use first name again, or Mr. or Mrs. or Ms. Another exception is when the person is so venerable that it just feels wrong not to put a Mr. or Ms. or Mrs. in front of the last name on subsequent references (if you're writing about a 100-year-old woman, for example), or when the person is so widely and affectionately known by his or her first name or by a nickname that it feels wrong to call him or her anything else. (Elvis Presley is often just Elvis after the first reference, and Dolly Parton just Dolly.)

These guidelines are largely arbitrary. The point is not that it would be wrong to do it another way, but to be consistent throughout the magazine. If you take exception to any of the above, make the case, and let's talk about it. Also, if you think of other style questions not covered above, let us know.

CML Style Consistency Continued…

Use of EM and EN dashes

In typesetting there are em and en dashes. em=width of m, en=width of n—both relative to the font set they are part of (so an em dash in Helvetica Condensed with be shorter than one in Helvetica Regular)

The em (the long dash) is—among other things—used to indicate a break in a sentence.

An en dash (the short dash, longer than a hyphen) usually represents a span. "2001–2017"

Whether there are spaces on either side of the dash depends on who is setting the style guidelines. There is no right or wrong. The point is being consistent.

It used to be that the U.S. pretty much used no spaces, while many other countries used spaces. But as the world becomes more global and interconnected, styles have become more fluid.

CML will adhere to the format noted in both *Strunk & White: The Elements of Style*, and *The Chicago Manual of Style*, as follows:

EM DASH *(In WORD, simply put two hyphens immediately following the last character prior to the em dash—no spaces—and WORD will automatically create the em dash for you)*

> *His first thought on getting out of bed—if he had any thought at all—was to get back in again.*

> *The rear axle began to make a noise—a grinding, chattering, teeth-gritting rasp.*

EN DASH (In WORD, you can find the en dash under "Insert" – "Symbols" – "Special Characters" or use the shortcut Ctrl+Num-)

> *1968–1972*

> *10 a.m.–5 p.m.*

Use of a.m. and p.m.

In the past, some style guides have recommended using SMALL CAPS with a space between the numeral and letter, and with periods between the a and m and p and m (3:30 A.M.). Another recommends the use of REGULAR CAPS with no periods between the a and m and p and m (3:30 AM). And yet another recommends lower case letters with periods (3:30 a.m.). Many different formats are in use today, and no single way is considered the only way.

CML has not been consistent in how we've listed time in past issues of the magazine. Going forward, we will follow the *AP Style Guide* and list all times as follows:

> *11 a.m., 1 p.m., 3:30 p.m., etc.   Zone abbreviations: EST, PST, etc.*

Use of dates

You may spell out the month or abbreviate certain months. When listing dates, please use just the numeral without "th" or "st" following it.

> *January 1972 was a cold month. Jan. 2 was the coldest day of the month. His birthday is May 8. Feb. 14, 1987 was the target date.*

Use of punctuation with quotation marks

This is one of those style issues that varies based on where you live (or write) in the world. The general use here in the U.S. is to put commas and periods inside the quotation marks. For example:

> *"We're smaller and more flexible now," said Art.*

> *Each of the following was listed on the menu: "Cheetos," "Doritos," "Sun Chips," and "Funyuns."*

Question marks and exclamation points stay inside quotation marks if used in dialogue.

> *"Why?" he asked.*

> *"No way!" he exclaimed.*

Otherwise, they will stay outside the quotation marks (as do semicolons):

> *Why was Smith trembling when he said, "I'm here to open an inquiry"?*

> *John assumed that everyone had read "Mr. Prokharchin"; he alluded to it several times during the discussion.*

Grammar, Syntax, Length and Other Issues

Singular nouns take singular verbs. (Appalachian State University is seeking its fourth national football championship in six years.) Plural nouns take plural verbs. (The Appalachian State Mountaineers are seeking their fourth national football championship in six years.)

A modifying phrase must modify the first noun that follows it. For example, it is wrong to say, "Having had winning records at five other schools, the ASU athletic director thinks Buzz Peterson is the right person for the job." Or, "After giving birth to three sets of twins, Bill decided his wife needed to get some birth control pills."

Closing quotation marks almost always belong after any other punctuation. If you're continuing a quotation into another paragraph, keep it open (no mark) at the end of the paragraph and start the next paragraph with quotation marks.

When adding an "s" to make a noun plural, don't use an apostrophe. To make a singular noun possessive, use an apostrophe before the "s." For a plural noun possessive, it's "s" followed by an apostrophe. "It's" means "it is." The possessive of "it" is "its," with no apostrophe.

If there's only one of something following a possessive noun, set it off with a comma. (Smith's wife, Marie, gave him a ride to work.) Otherwise, don't. (Smith's friend Joe gave him a ride to work.)

The above is pretty basic stuff, but those errors turn up a lot in stories submitted to CML.

Says, or said? Depends on the setting and context within the story:
If the quote is set in a specific moment and place, it's "said."
(Sipping a beer at Nick's on a fine spring morning, Tom McAuliffe revealed his secret to a happy life: "Let Babette sell the ads and collect the money while I hang out at the golf course," he said.) Otherwise, you can use "says." (Tom McAuliffe is a happy man, and he doesn't mind telling anyone his secret: "Let Babette sell the ads and collect the money while I hang out at the golf course," he says.)

Where to put the attribution with a quote? Rarely first, and only if it just feels like that's where it needs to be. If the quote is one short or medium sentence, or two very short sentences, after the quote. If it's two medium sentences or more, after the first sentence. If it's one very long sentence, maybe break into the quote and insert the attribution after a comma.

Must quotes in quotation marks be exact? Generally, yes, or very close. And it absolutely must reflect accurately what the person quoted intended to say. When in doubt, paraphrase and don't put it in quotation marks.

Long sentences are fine if they are well crafted and easy to follow. Otherwise, readers can get lost in them. When in doubt, break it up into two or more sentences. Sentence fragments, while technically ungrammatical, are fine, if they suit the style and rhythm of the story.

The Elements of Style, by Strunk and White, is a good reference book to have handy when you're uncertain about punctuation or a grammatical issue. It's also a good guide for writing generally.

If you read good writing, you're more likely to be a good writer. Where to find good writing? Atlantic Monthly, Harpers, the New Yorker, Rolling Stone, Sports Illustrated, the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, Esquire, Vanity Fair….. to name a few.

Good advice for writing newspaper and magazine stories: Pretend you're writing a letter to an intelligent friend. That will tend to screen out pretentious writing and keep everything natural and down-to-earth.

None of the above is intended to inhibit you from developing and writing in your own style, or in a style you believe is appropriate for the story. It is intended to help you avoid ambiguity and syntactic confusion and sentences that readers stumble over.

Finally:

Stories you submit to CML will be edited for grammar, syntax, clarity, and sometimes for length. The more proficient you are in crafting your story, and the degree to which you adhere to CML's writers guidelines, will help in limiting the degree to which editing comes into play. In editing your stories, we want to respect and preserve your voice and style, but some changes will be subjective and at the discretion of the publisher and perhaps not what you would prefer. That is an issue for all writers who write for publications that strive for consistency and quality. If there is a noticeable amount of editing, and if time permits, we will try to return the edited version to you for review before publication. The earlier you submit the story, the better the chance for getting the edited version back to you.

If you're given a length limit when the story is assigned, and you exceed the limit, it is likely to be cut. If you don't want someone else chopping sentences and paragraphs out of your story, stay within the limit.

If you're being paid by the word, you will be paid for the number of words published, even if that is less than the number of words you wrote. Exceptions to this will be handled on an individual basis, depending on circumstances.