

1. What is an article?

An article is a short, self-contained piece of writing usually published in a newspaper, magazine or, increasingly, on a web site. Articles tend to be more formal and factual than other forms of writing, such as opinion pieces or columns and weblogs, which are often written in a more informal and individual style.

2. Why do you want to write an article?

Writing an article on your business or industry sector for a newspaper, magazine or web site can be an effective way of promoting your business.

3. Who will publish an article about your business?

It is important to establish whether an editor will publish your article, as you don't want to waste all the effort you put into writing it.

Your article will be more effective in a publication read by your preferred target audience, so choose suitable titles and contact the editors to see if they are interested in your ideas. If an editor commissions you to write an article, you know it is likely to be published.

4. What should I write?

An editor could ask you to write on a specific subject and give you a detailed brief of what topics they want covered or they could ask you to write a general article about your business without giving you any guidelines. In either case, consider the readers of the publication and what is likely to interest them.

Also, if you intend to send an unsolicited article, the editor is more likely to publish it if it handles a topic relevant to the publication's readers. Remember that articles saying only who you are and what your business does are rarely interesting to anyone other than you.

5. How long should my article be?

If an editor has not told already you, ask them how long your article should be – the number of words. If you are not given a specific length (or word count), calculate the average length of articles in previous issues.

You should easily be able to write 300-500 words on your business, but longer articles can be more difficult.

It is important for the whole of an article to be interesting; if you run out of things to say and pad out the second half of an article with waffle, few editors are likely to publish it and, even if they do, readers are very unlikely to read it.

6. How do I make my article interesting?

Every successful business has something interesting to say and every start-up business has a story about why the owner started it. Remember why you are enthusiastic about your business and what is different or innovative about it.

Many people like to read about how to remedy their own problems. Can your business help make their lives easier? Can you save them money? Can you offer them a totally new service? These are all topics to consider.

If you start your article by describing a problem or issue that is relevant to your readers, they are more likely to be interested and read it.

7. How do I structure my article?

Long, rambling articles are unlikely to excite editors or readers, so plan a structure for your article before you start writing.

The headline and introductory paragraph must grip the reader immediately and compel them to read on.

If there are common problems in your industry sector, you could ask questions about their causes and how to solve them. Readers identifying with situations you describe will want to read on to discover what solutions you can suggest.

If your subject matter is complex, use sub-headings to split up the article and act as signposts for readers. If you are pursuing an argument through the article, use sub-headings for sections setting out different points of view.

Use your final section to review the preceding material and present your conclusion.

8. What tone of voice should I use?

Many business publications seek to project their authority through a professional tone of voice and the style of writing is likely to be reasonably formal. This should not prevent a lively, interesting, even friendly style – formal does not have to mean dry and boring.

Unless writing an opinion column or a personal account, it is best to write in the third person, e.g. saying “the business started in 2000” instead of “I started on my own in 2000”.

If you want to any statements to be attributed directly to you, include these as quotations.

9. What content should I include?

Include any content that is relevant to the topic and adds to the article's purpose. Don't include anything just because you find it interesting. If you think readers won't find it interesting, then leave it out.

If you want to include information that is important, but not interesting, explain why it is important. For example, few people think home insurance is an interesting topic, but most will probably take notice if they read about the impact of a fire in their home. This is an extreme example, but illustrates the idea.

Use studies and examples to demonstrate points you make. Readers are more likely to accept you as an authority on your subject if you can demonstrate relevant experience in this way.

Use bullet points where you need to list items, but do not substitute these for full sentences.

Include relevant tables, graphs, illustrations or photographs to add impact to your writing. Refer to these in your text, especially where you need to discuss data or trends.

10. What content should I avoid?

Include only information about which you are sure; do not refer to anything about which you are uncertain. Where you do quote facts and figures, include your source for these.

Don't use clichés or generalise, as you will appear vague and unoriginal. Don't quote the sayings of historical figures unless you are certain you can match their genius with words.

Use humour with care. What amuses you will not necessarily amuse your audience. When everyone tries to be a comedian, few are funny.

Avoid any content that is unnecessary, irrelevant or incorrect.

11. How can I promote my business in an article?

An article is not an advertisement or press release, but that should not prevent you from promoting your business. If your article aims to discuss remedies to a problem, few readers will take it seriously if your only solution is to use your services. You probably do want them to use your services, but you must attract them to do this indirectly by winning your readers' trust in your industry expertise. Demonstrating your knowledge and expertise on a topic can prove to them that you are an authority and that your business is reputable.

how to write a business article

If an editor has asked you to write specifically about a product or service, or if you have a genuinely unique product that people want to read about, then it is acceptable to write about this directly.

Consider whether it is best to mention products and services directly before you start writing.

Where you do not mention your products and services directly, it is acceptable to give details of your business and contact numbers and web addresses at the end of the article.

12. How can I write a series of articles?

In most industries there are many issues and problems which need solving. If you write about these and how to tackle them, you will probably have enough subject matter for a whole series of articles.

You could even write about the same topic from different points of view – e.g. manufacturer, retailer, consumer, regulator.

13. Must I stick to these rules?

The aim of this prompt is to guide you and its advice is very general for such a complex subject. The points above are not rules that must not be broken, but suggestions to help you in the process of writing an article.

As long as an article is informative, interesting and truthful, you can write however your wish. Variety and innovation are very important, otherwise all articles would be the same.

When you have developed your own style and technique for writing effective articles, you will create your own rules. Try writing and remember that you do not have to send your article for publication until you are happy with it.

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