

WHY WRITE RIGHT?



“The dog ran down the rode.” “We drove to school in there car.”

You are reading what seems like an interesting article or a newsletter and, suddenly, there it is. Right in front of your face. An obvious grammatical error. Or the misspelling of a common word. Or worse...both! The article’s content becomes unimportant, the words blur as you focus on the misspelled words, the grammatical inconsistencies, the use of inappropriate past tense in an article full of present, etc.

People’s first impression of your personal writing, in your PTA newsletter or your article in the school paper, can be positive or negative. You never get a second chance to make a first impression. Here are suggestions that can help you ensure that the first impression is positive:

- **PROOFREAD EVERYTHING.** Your editor is one of the most important people to your newsletter. Make sure the editor is someone who knows what she is doing. She should know more than just **basic** grammar and tense use, proper spelling (and how to use spell check), sentence structure and type, your “organizational” writing style, and, most importantly, have the complete authority to correct these errors as necessary. Let your contributors know their writing may be edited.
- **DRAW ATTENTION CORRECTLY.** You do not need to capitalize indiscriminately to draw attention to your message. “Convention” is not always capitalized. Neither is “council.” Explore the use of other formatting options to draw the eye. Vary your style, use different fonts and sizes, hold your paper at the end of your hands and determine what draws your attention first. Bullets, numbering of key points, or adding symbols will all draw attention. **Use exclamation points wisely.**
- **CONTENT.** Do not publish articles just to fill up space. Content is key to building regular readership. If your publication is worth reading, people will read it eventually.
- **WHITE SPACE.** The eye can only handle so many letters on a page. White space is restful, calms the page and assures the reader his eyes can handle reading the entire message. Continuous pages with no white space turn most readers off. Do not utilize every single fraction of an inch of your page space with text. Add the occasional photo, boxed quote, or letter art into your usual text space.
- **SMALL DETAILS.** Make sure your article or publication has a header or footer with the correct date and/or issue. California State PTA found this one out the hard way. The sad truth is things that are incorrect will always stand out to savvy readers. It’s in their blood. We can’t help it.

Newsletters and other article writing are an excellent way to entice people to read and learn more about your organization, goals and policy. Let’s make that first impression a lasting one.