



browngirl
smart, hip, beautiful.

Brown Girl Magazine, LLC

Staff Handbook

July 2016

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WHAT IS BROWN GIRL MAGAZINE

Brown Girl Magazine, founded in Texas in 2008, is an online publication tailored and targeted for the young South Asian millennial living in the Diaspora. *Brown Girl* is an outlet where South Asian women can express their ideas, learn more about their culture and build respect for themselves. At *Brown Girl*, you'll find a variety of pertinent topics covering hot topics, beauty and style, current events, gender and race/religion/culture related issues, and entertainment.

Our Mission:

Our tagline says it all: **Smart. Hip. Beautiful.** Through features, interviews, stories, reviews, and opinions, we hope to create a community that helps young women **see their strengths, develop self-confidence and learn more** about being a South Asian woman.

How we plan on doing it:

Our vision will always come back to **Smart. Hip. Beautiful.** Every post will focus on making our reader feel smart, hip and beautiful. We plan on doing it by creating content that is **important, inspirational and educational, yet provides entertainment.**

The same young women who read the magazine write all the articles featured in *Brown Girl*. Our writers know what's important to young **South Asian women**, and find **unique, exciting** ways to share the information. Our magazine is designed to be **inviting and energetic** and to encourage our readers to **express their ideas and opinions.**

A MESSAGE FROM THE BROWN GIRL PARTNERS

“Brown Girl is an endeavor that began as a way to provide a community and platform for young women of similar cultural backgrounds to voice their stories and opinions. As an avid reader, I often felt that young South Asian women were left out of important discussions or that issues that were important to them were disregarded completely. Hence, this magazine – a publication completely dedicated to and created by young women of South Asian descent.” - Aditi Mehta, Founder of Brown Girl Magazine, LLC, April 2014, The Indian Diaspora

“Brown Girl was the place I came to so I could better understand my own American-Indian-Muslim identity. My biggest lesson through the Brown Girl journey has been to not let anyone else define who I am and this is a message that, I hope, reaches everyone out there struggling with their own identities. When we can finally stop defining ourselves and each other by the expectations society places on us is when we finally shine as individuals and a community.” - Atiya Hasan, COO and Editor-at-Large

“Brown Girl is like my husband, I treat it like a full-time passion, and my goal is to make it my full-time job. For the past five years, this magazine has given so much—an amazing community of like-minded people, a place to showcase my creativity, a platform that empowers me to be better everyday, and a home where I feel safe. I wish I had Brown Girl when I was a teenager but I am happy and proud to know Brown Girl is a part of the South Asian diaspora for thousands of young girls around the world.”- Trisha Sakhuja, Editor-in-Chief

BROWN GIRL STATS + REVENUE

More than 63 percent of our traffic is from the United States, and the best states are New York, California, Texas and New Jersey.

The countries with the highest traffic is the U.S., India, Canada, and the UK, however, we are read in more than 169 countries.

More than 60 percent of our readership is between the ages of 18 and 34.

Brown Girl consists of an all-volunteer staff—more than 100 contributors across the country and world.

From January 2016 to date, we've seen 450,000 unique visitors to the website and more than 750,000 page views.

Our weekly reach on Facebook is more than 170,000 and our weekly impressions on Twitter are more than 100K.

We've seen press and mentions from websites like the Huffington Post, New York Times, NPR, BuzzFeed and LA Times.

Our highest traffic comes from search engines like Google, Yahoo, Bing, and social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, and external blogs.

In comparison to previous stats:

- *In 2015, Brown Girl saw 600,000 unique visitors and 900,000 page views in total.*
- *For the first seven months in 2014, Brown Girl saw 230,000 unique visitors and 342,000 page views.*
- *In 2013, Brown Girl saw 125,540 unique visitors in total.*

BG Business Model:

Advertising with Brown Girl is a great way to reach South Asian millennials with your products and services. We are one of the few online communities with direct access to hundreds of thousands of young readers living in the South Asian Diaspora.

Our niche and devoted readership visit Brown Girl Magazine on a regular basis from more than 100 countries around the world to read about personal stories, fashion, entertainment, culture and current event news.

We offer many unique opportunities to engage with our active readership, including

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banner ads, native advertising, social media promotions, giveaways, YouTube videos, profile stories and more.

To see examples of our past promotions, visit our [Sponsored](#) page. Ask to see our media kit!

What YOU Need to Know as a New Writer on Staff

When I first joined Brown Girl, I was also unsure of my role and expectations. But, what I have come to realize is that your experience with BGM is exactly what you make of it. The more you try to stay involved, the more rewarding the experience. You will receive more feedback from your editors and your peers, you will develop more as a writer and feel a stronger sense of community. So that's just my personal advice to all new writers!

- Ashni Mehta | Lifestyle Editor & Director of Social Media

- **Editorial Calendar:**

- **Submission Deadlines** - For the most part, you set your own submission dates with your editor. For timely posts, obviously there is less leeway in terms of time, but in general we try to be as flexible as possible. That being said, please try to submit your piece by the decided date. If you are unable to do so, make sure to talk to your editor ahead of time.
- **Timely Posts** - With social media, information hits the circuit right away. If you see that something is garnering attention in the media and you want to write a post on it, don't wait for an editor to pitch a story. Send a quick message to your editor making sure the post is not taken, and get it in as soon as possible. The sooner we publish, the more traffic we will get.
- **Publishing Dates** - The editorial team works very hard to get your posts up in a timely manner. We all try to be as transparent as possible about when your posts are going up. Just keep in mind that your editors are responsible for about 70 writers ON TOP of their full time jobs. So it may just slip their mind to tell you about a date change. If you find that your post hasn't gone up within a day or two of the scheduled date and you have not been notified, PLEASE contact your editor. It is not that we don't like your post or that there are issues with it (if that was the case someone would DEFINITELY reach out to you). There are timely posts or other posts from topics that we may not have covered as much that we give priority to at that time or it could just be that everyone's posts are being pushed back due to backlogging. Please take it upon yourself to stay in

contact with your editor, and we will be more than happy to answer ANY questions you may have.

****If you feel VERY confident in your editing skills and want to do more, reach out to your editor. We may be able to train you to be an assistant editor!****

- **Pitching ideas** - Where you pitch is TOTALLY up to you. If you think getting an opinion from the entire team or maybe fleshing out some ideas is helpful, then go for it. I personally feel that this gives BG a more collaborative feel, which is great since we don't really get to see each other often. If you feel more comfortable talking directly to your editor, then that is perfectly fine as well. It's completely up to you what you feel comfortable with. Trisha, Atiya, Kamini, Neena and I are always posting pitches in the group in case you need ideas, so be sure to be an active member of our private group!
- **Press passes** - If you want a press pass for a certain event, contact one of the editors with ample time before the event, and one of them will be happy to try to secure one for you or help you secure one yourself.
- **Article stats** - This is difficult to answer overall because your posts go up numerous times across our social media platforms. Recently, we reshared a post from this summer on our FB and it garnered significantly more attention the second time around. Therefore these stats are constantly changing. However, if you ask your editor, they will be sure to answer that question for you and give you the most current stats.
- **Social Media Stats & Expectations** - Please make sure to like all of our posts across all of our social media platforms. It would take a mere two minutes to go onto our social media pages at the end of the day and like all of our posts for the day. How does this help you? This is the absolute best way to increase our numbers organically. We as members of Brown Girl have a very vast network, and by simply liking BG posts, we are able to tap into our own networks. The more people that see our Social Media pages, the more traffic is driven to your articles. Each like/share/comment has a much bigger impact than you would think! Secondly, you should be liking/commenting/sharing all of your peers posts out of support. As someone that works primarily in social media, I can tell you without a doubt, that the more you comment on your peers' posts, the more likely they are to comment on yours. The higher engagement you have on your own posts, the higher the traffic. You should definitely be sharing posts you relate to, as well. When someone relates to your post, they are more likely to share yours.

Ask your close friends and family to share posts written by you. Now, if you are checking BG's social media daily, you'll see the statistics right there. If there are any other numbers you have questions about, feel free to contact me at any time!

My best & most important piece of advice to you all is - **stay in constant communication with your editors and peers! You will be truly surprised at what a difference it will make.**

How Can YOU Promote YOUR Work

As full-time students, career women and driven individuals, we're busy! It's hard sometimes to keep up with everything you've got going and we understand that. Still, as a part of BG, we hope that all our staffers can contribute on a regular basis and also help BG grown and reach out to our readers.

Here's some handy tips so that you can be active and successful part of the magazine:

1. Talk to your editor! They are there for a reason. It might hard to communicate virtually, but at the end of the day your editor is like your "boss" and mentor. They will help you shape what you've written into something wonderful to publish. If you ever are stuck on post ideas, email your editor! She can help you brainstorm, work on building your stories, and give you advice on producing strong posts. Also, she can work with your schedule to make sure you can produce articles consistently.

Give your editor 48-hours to respond to an email. The editing team will try their best to give you feedback and tell you when the article will be published in a timely manner.

2. Try to work out personal deadlines for each month. For example, review your schedule to see if you can submit something every 1st and 15th of the month, or both posts at the beginning, or both at the end of the month. It's up to you to track what you'd like to write and be consistent.

3. Your articles are great! Or else we wouldn't publish them. You should be proud of them! So, spread the word. Every time an article of yours goes up, tell your friends and family. If you see an interesting read from another writer, pub it!

- Email it to your friends and family
- Post the article directly to your Facebook
- Tweet it!
- Share your staff's posts weekly!

4. Help promote interaction on our site. BG is set up like a blog and readers can post up their opinions directly to your post. Encourage readers to interact with BG by replying

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back to comments people leave. Read others' articles and leave your own comments! Tell your friends to leave comments. Learn, share, spread the word!

5. We have flyers/business cards printed (electronic and hard copies). If you think you can use them to spread the BG gospel, let us know and we'll send them to you.

6. If you have ideas to help BG grow, feel free to share! We love to hear your ideas and couldn't make BG possible without your help and support. As you become more active as a staff, we are also looking for people to join our managerial staff. That includes helping with PR, marketing, ad sales, etc.

7. Communicate! Interact! We have created a BG staff page so that we can all get to know each other and share story ideas. Get to know the other women in our staff, you never know what you have in common!

Your Brown Girl Guide to Search Engine Optimization

Search engine optimization (SEO) is the process of affecting the visibility of a website or a web page in a web search engine's unpaid results — often referred to as "natural," "organic," or "earned" results.

While there is significant behind the scenes work that goes into SEO, you still need quality content for visitors to read and view. Google's newest algorithm is putting a major emphasis on useful, high-quality writing instead of heavy keyword usage. Avoid keyword stuffing and instead use calculated, well-placed keywords. It is best to target one keyword phrase per page. As for the structure, each page should have a distinct arrangement and headings. [Read more here.](#)

Great example of how SEO works: We see LOTS of monthly traffic through the keyword "Hasan Minhaj" because when you type his name into Google, we come up second, right under Wikipedia. It's our job to garner traffic from keywords just like this one.

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You can help by being mindful of using a keyword in your story that we can garner lots of evergreen traffic from.

Top BG Keywords to Use:

utkarsh ambudkar

tiya sircar

alex parrish

mickey singh

jahan yousaf

hasan minhaj

yasmine yousaf

brown girl

dawoodi bohra

holi

farahdhukai

ishqr

jus reign

manish dayal

hypermasculinity

highheelconfidential

brown girl magazine

sabrina siddiqui

shankar tucker

mehndi party

hasan minhaj wife

arvin lal wikipedia

jasmeet singh

bohra muslim

bohra community

dil mil

arvin lal net worth

jusreign

anjulie persaud

high heel confidential

gerrard lobo

kal penn wife

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american born confused desi
alex parrish quantico
kanyadaan
farah dhukai
best drugstore red lipstick
pokiri movie
quantico alex parrish
color run
diamond candles
henna party
brother sister stories
2 states book
bohra muslims
planet parle
love in india
ryan booth
micky singh
dilmil
nandita berry
high heels confidential
manish dayal wife
jerome mathew
kulsoom abduallah
utkarsh ambudkar rap
jus reign wiki
dhukai
hot brown girls
akaash singh
arvin lal jersey shore
tiya sircar hot
arvin lal bio
bajirao ballad
sabrina siddiqui bio
#leh
sanjay's super team watch online
dil mil app

HOW TO SUBMIT YOUR WORK LIKE A PRO

If you're submitting your story to Brown Girl Magazine, please consider the following do's and don'ts:

1. I've signed the contributor contract! (If not, ask your editor to send it ASAP.)
2. My submission is 300 words or more, ideally 500 words.
3. I've read my submission out loud at least thrice to check for run-ons and grammatical mistakes.
4. My story is written in AP Style. **(Download Grammarly (for free) to your desktop for all types of editorial help!)**
5. I've included a potential headline at the top for my editor to consider.
6. My first and last name is ALWAYS at the top of the Google or Word doc.
7. My story is compelling, unique, engaging. It includes a keyword that has potential to garner lots of traffic from Google.
8. If I have sourced other websites, magazines, research papers or newspapers, I've properly hyperlinked the sources. (Eg. According to the [Huffington Post](#), the suspect will be investigated thoroughly.)
9. My story is broken up into short paragraphs because that is the best way to keep a reader's attention.
10. If I have attached photos with my submission, I've provided the proper: source link or photo credit AND photo caption
 - Photo Source - website URL
 - Photo Credit - photographer's name
 - Photo Courtesy - name of person or organization who gave you permission to use the photo

***The photo DOES NOT have a copyright logo or name on it because that means BrownGirl cannot use it unless properly sourced or given permission.**

*** Use free stock photo accounts to send images to your editor:**

<http://deathtothestockphoto.com/>,

<http://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/75-free-stock-photos-im-ht#sm.000013kd1nwlfg9jzusgydxs9p85>

- Please always discuss photos with your editor. Try helping your editor figure out what she will use for the feature image because that image will make or break the number of hits we receive!

8. If I've added Tweets, a Facebook post, or a YouTube link, I've pasted the EMBED CODE directly into my post.

(Left to Right: Click on the astresis (the three dots), then click on embed Tweet, then copy + paste code into your document.)

9. If I've added GIFS, I've either embedded the GIF code into my post OR I've saved the GIF as a .GIF file and sent to my editor w/ the PROPER source.
10. My editor has my bio + headshot + Twitter handle from previous submissions. If not, please email her + send it via Slack. Whatever is easier for you editor, please ask.
11. I've submitted my story to my designated editor and an additional editor if need be.
12. I understand the editorial staff may take up to 3 weeks to publish my story if it is not timely. I will send my editor a follow up reminder to publish the story via Slack! (My editor will make changes to the story that I may not agree with, but they were made w. the best intent possible. If you're concerned, send an email asking your editor but please remember, she too has a full-time job and is trying her best to make BG work.)
13. Once my story is published, I will SHARE it across ALL my social media platforms and tag my friends to read!

SEND YOUR EDITOR A FREE, USABLE STOCK PHOTO

[HTTPS://PIXABAY.COM/](https://pixabay.com/)

[HTTPS://WWW.PEXELS.COM/](https://www.pexels.com/)

[HTTPS://UNSPLASH.COM/](https://unsplash.com/)

[HTTPS://MORGUEFILE.COM/](https://morguefile.com/)

GET 10 FREE ONES AT ADOBE: [HTTP://OW.LY/Vi9C302FCDu](http://ow.ly/Vi9C302FCDu)

What Topics do we Cover

Brown Girl Magazine wants to focus on topics that relate to empowerment, lifestyle, culture, beauty, and global news.

In order to ensure focus of your pieces, consider the different categories BG offers and see if your topic(s) can fit into this realm. If you are unsure about a piece you are writing, talk to you editor to see how your piece can fit into Brown Girl's world.

Core Categories:

These are our main categories that we would like to base our articles and posts on. Majority of our articles should fall into these topic areas. These will remain pretty concrete and will rarely change.

1. Beauty and Style - Related to fashion and beauty. Specifically, we want to include tips/trends/reviews on clothing, accessories, products, etc and also focus on making South Asian women feel good about themselves.

2. Community Highlight - Posts about local community efforts, service projects, and charity information.
3. Culture - Related to the South Asian culture, including attitudes, traditions, and conflicts. Cultural posts aim to highlight the beauty of South Asian culture as well as the battles it may present to young women.
4. BG Blog - The BG Blog will be a generic category to include more journal/diary type posts as well as personal stories, findings, and news that our writers would like to share.
5. Entertainment - Related to movies, TV shows, music actors/actresses/models/etc. This could include reviews as well as highlight avenues where South Asians are seen in the media.
6. Hot Topics - Related to controversies or topics typically not discussed within the South Asian or community at large.
7. Spotlight - Related to interviews and/or features of strong individuals or events that may transpire in the South Asian community.
8. Brown Boy - Posts about a Brown Boy making a difference, participating in women's issues, or is plain old hot.
9. The Parent Diaries - Posts that relate to family, dealing with the negatives/positives of having South Asian parents.

Sub Categories:

These are smaller, niche categories that are usually more specific in topic. Sub Categories can be added depending on how often we receive posts under these categories.

- Food - Posts that feature recipes, diversity of foods and/or restaurants.
- Love + Dating - Everything that relates to love, marriage, self-love, dating and divorce.
- TravelTuesday- Posts that feature travel diaries, travel advice, or experiences abroad.
- Career - Related to how to grow/establish your career, find alternative career paths, or featuring career paths taken by strong BGs. This could also include information on educational routes.
- Health- Related to improving or maintaining physical and mental health. These articles can also highlight health/mental health issues that South Asian women may face.
- Good Reads - Book/film/play reviews, as well as short stories written by our writers.

- Wise Brown Girl - Posts that provide some introspection from our writers as well as provide advice on loftier topics, such as expressing yourself, feeling strong and positive.

AP Style Basics:

Common Words/Phrases for BG

- **Brown Girl can be abbreviated to BG** when referring to the magazine once it's already been written out the first time.
- Use 'brown girl' (lower case) only to describe a person. For example, "Fellow brown girl, Mathai, was seen on television recently."
- Words, phrases and terms in another language should be italicized. For example, "I ate a large *dosa* for lunch."
- The word *desi* should be not be caps but italicized.

Referencing Individuals

- For interviews / more news like stories - write the first and last name of the individual at first, then proceed to use their last name only through the remainder of the story.
- For more blog-like posts or reader generated content using the first name throughout is fine.

Letters/Numbers in AP Style

- **Spell out numbers under 10.** Avoid wording two numbers back-to-back. If this is necessary, spell one number out and use a numeral for the other. Spell out numbers if they begin a sentence unless the number is a year. Exceptions to these rules include the following in which numerals should always be used:
 - Ages
 - Days of the month
 - Degrees of temperature
 - Dimensions
 - House numerals
 - Percentages
 - Proportions
 - Scores
 - Serial Numbers
 - Speeds
 - Sums of money
 - Time of day
 - Time of races
 - Votes
 - Years
- **For days of the month, use only numerals, not nd, rd or th.**
Yes: Aug. 2, Sept 3, Oct. 4.

No: Aug. 2nd, Sept. 3rd, Oct. 4th.

- For decades of history, use numerals and use apostrophes to show numbers omitted.
- *Don't forget the 1950s. They rocked around the clock in '57.*
- Lowercase *century* and spell out numbers less than 10.
He couldn't remember the second century because he was born in the 21st century.
- In figures of more than 999, use commas to set off each group of three numerals (except for years).
- For sums in the million and billion range, consider using decimals (you may not do this for some annual and quarterly report uses). *1.2 million, not 1,200,000.*
- Spell out numbers at the beginning of a sentence. One exception -- years: 1942 was the year the Europeans discovered the Americas. The only number you can use at the start of a sentence is a year. Spell out any other number, but don't crowd the beginning of a sentence with a long, big number. No: *Three million, four hundred thousand people live in Dallas County.* Yes: *More than 3.4 million people live in Dallas County.*
- Plural forms: When you make a number plural, it gets an s but no apostrophe. Yes: *The 1920s.* No: *The 1920's.*
- Single letters like *K's* get the s and an apostrophe.
- Multiple letters like *ABCs* get the s but no apostrophe.

PREFERRED AP SPELLINGS:

The following spellings are preferred (note one-word, two-word and hyphenated entries):

- **Afterward (not afterwards).**
- African-American
- Asian-American
- A lot
- **Ax (not axe).**
- **All right (not alright).**
- **Backyard**
- **Backward (not backwards).**
- Best-seller
- Coed
- Courseload, coursework
- Co-worker
- **Doughnut (not donut).**
- **Email**
- **Forward (not forwards).**

- **Gray**
- **Goodbye.**
- Health care
- Homecoming
- Home page
- **All right (not alright).**
- **Likable (not likeable).**
- Middle East
- Percent
- Spokesman, spokeswoman (*never* spokesperson)
- **South Asia / South Asian**
- **T-shirt**
- Touch-screen
- **Theater (unless part of the proper name is *Theatre*).**
- Policymaker
- Midwest (region)
- Web site
- **Well-informed**
- **Vice president (no hyphen).**
- ZIP code (ZIP stands for zone improvement program)
- **Kitty Litter, Kleenex, Bubble Wrap and Dumpster (all are trademarked).**

Use Capitalization Sparingly

Unlike other types of writing, Associated Press style uses the least amount of punctuation and capitalization necessary to convey the intended message. AP style's goal is clear, concise writing, and punctuation's goal is to guide readers, not confuse readers.

- **Capitalize proper nouns and other nouns occasionally when they are used with a proper noun.**
- **Capitalize proper nouns and common nouns such as party, river and street when they are part of a full name for place, person or thing.**
Examples: Democratic Party or Mississippi River.
- **Within the same story, lower case these common nouns when they stand alone in subsequent references.**
Yes: the party leaders met.
No: the Party leaders met.
- **In all plural uses, lower case the common noun elements.**
Yes: The Democratic and Republican parties.
No: The Democratic and Republican Parties.

- Lowercase spring, summer, fall and winter unless the season is used in a formal name: *Winter Olympics*.
- Capitalize the word room when used with the number of the room: *Room 200, Burdine Hall*. Capitalize the proper names of buildings, including the word building if it's part of the proper name: *the Empire State Building*.
- Capitalize specific geographic regions and popularized names for those regions: *Midwest, the South Side of Chicago, the Panhandle, West Texas (not Western Texas), South Texas, Eastern New Mexico (not East New Mexico), Southern California (not South California)*. Uncertain? LOOK IT UP.
- The same rule applies for some geological regions. Check to be certain. *For instance: Permian Basin, the Hill Country*.
- Lower case academic departments except for words that are proper nouns or adjectives: *the English department, the history department*.
- Capitalize: *U.S. Capitol* and the *Capitol* when referring to the buildings in Washington D.C., or to state capitols. *U.S. Congress* and *Congress* when referring to the U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives. *U.S. Constitution* (with or without U.S.), *Bill of Rights, First Amendment*.
- Capitalize *city, county, state, federal, city hall, courthouse, legislature, assembly, etc.*, when part of a formal name. *Austin City Hall, but city hall when used alone*.
- Nationalities and Race: Capitalize proper names of races, tribes, nationalities, etc.
Arab, Caucasian, Eskimo, Hispanic
Lowercase: *black, white, mulatto*.
- Do NOT capitalize: *first lady, administration, presidential, first family, seasons of the year or years in school (freshman, sophomore, etc.)*

Punctuation

- Don't use a comma before a conjunction in a series. Check the comma section in the "A Guide to Punctuation" in *The Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual*.

The national flag is red, white and blue.

- **Set off a person's age with commas.**

Gabe McCarthy, 15, and Grace McCarthy, 10, are (sometimes) great children.

- **Commas/Quotations: Always place commas and periods inside quotation marks. Use a comma to introduce a complete, one-sentence quote within a paragraph, but don't use one to introduce an indirect or partial quote.**

Dave Garlock said, "You must learn Associated Press style to make it in journalism." He said otherwise you would be "doomed to fail."

- **Use a semicolon to set off a series within a series. In this case, use the semicolon before the conjunction.**

I have lived in Tulsa, Okla.; Daytona Beach, Fla.; Gainesville, Fla.; Houston, Texas; and Austin, Texas.

- **When two or more adjectives express a single concept, use hyphens to link all the words in the compound:**

Four-year study. 12-member council. 28-year-old woman.

- **Do not link the words with hyphens when the adverb very is part of the group:**

Not: a very-good time.

- **Do not link the words with hyphens when you have adverbs ending in -ly as part of the phrase.**

Not: An essentially-remembered rule.

Avoid Alphabet Soup

- **While acronyms and abbreviations are preferred after first reference for some words and organizations, readers should immediately understand the acronym or abbreviation. Do not use multiple acronyms or abbreviations in a sentence unless their meaning is transparent. Don't make readers spoon through alphabet soup to understand your intention.**
- **Do not use periods for most acronyms, but do use periods for two-letter acronyms: FDA for Food and Drug Administration or U.S. for United States. If the acronym spells an unrelated word, use periods between letters to avoid confusion.**

Referencing Written Works (same for Movies/Films/Songs)

- **Newspapers:** Capitalize the publication's proper name, including the word the if that's part of it.

Austin American-Statesman, The New York Times, Los Angeles Times, The Daily Texan.

- **Magazines:** Lowercase the word magazine if it is not part of the formal title. Capitalize titles but don't put in quotes, only italicize.

Did you read *Time* magazine this week?

- **Compositions:** Capitalize the principal words and put quote marks around the titles of movies, books, operas, plays, poems, songs, television programs, works of art, lectures and speeches. Do not underline or italicize titles.

She read "Water for Elephants," by Sara Gruen.

- **Reference materials:** Capitalize, but don't put quote marks around or italicize books that serve primarily as reference. These include almanacs, dictionaries, handbooks, holy scriptures, and encyclopedias.

How to Cover an Event or Conduct an Event:

1. Profiles:

- Before you start your interview, ask them if you can record their conversation, so that it's easier for you to transcribe the quotes later.
- When transcribing quotes, type the most important ones, before writing the story. Fit the quotes into your story as if it were a supplement to the story. Write the quotes in full sentences – add or delete words when needed. Use the [insert word] to add words and use [...] to delete words within a sentence. Paraphrase quotes by saying Sakhujia said she loves to sing and dance, but not for an audience.
- Explain them the goal of this interview, what you want to accomplish from speaking to them.
- When interviewing, ask their full name, age, hometown, occupation, title, organization/company, all social media links, a short bio, head shots and pictures with captions.
- When writing, do not write “BG (insert name here) caught up with, spoke to, interviewed, etc., because it is implied you conducted the interview.”
- Please do not hand in only questions and answers. If you want to submit a Q+A, please write at least three-four paragraphs beforehand – summarizing

main facts about the person, which includes everything from bullet 3, minus pictures.

- **Most interviews should be written in story format, with a proper lede, up to 8 quotes and lots of paraphrasing**
- **Some interviews can be written in list format – example: Ten Things You Did Not Know About The Singh Project**
- **ALL PERIODS AND END MARKS GO INSIDE QUOTES!**

- **REMEMBER WHO YOU'RE SERVING**

Two words: Your Audience.

Your number one priority should be to enlighten your audience – to get answers that are meaningful from the person you're interviewing that can better serve those who will eventually consume that content.

- **PRE-INTERVIEW HOMEWORK**

There are few things that you should do before the interview actually happens:

1. **Understand a little bit about who you're interviewing first.** Sure, you're conducting an interview to learn more about a person and what they do, but as the interviewer you should know a little bit more than your audience so that you can properly introduce the person and ask the right questions. If you can find an existing interview with the person on another website, that will be helpful too so you can gauge their style and tone, and create questions for that person accordingly.
2. **Confirm the details of the interview with the person you're interviewing.**
Some things to confirm are:
 - Date and time (keep in mind of the time zone).
 - Method of communication. (Skype, Google Hangout, phone call, smoke signals).
 - Approximate length of interview.
3. **Test your recording equipment!**
4. **PREPARE A LIST OF FLEXIBLE, OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS AND POSSIBLE FOLLOWUP QUESTIONS**
 - You should prepare a list of questions that will act as sort of a **template** for the interview – a guide for the path that you want to take from start to finish. It should not be a shopping list that you should stick to 100%.
 - For each question you should come up with 2 or 3 possible follow-up questions that might be suitable to ask, depending on the answer.

As far as the questions themselves, here are a few basic rules:

- Don't ever ask YES or NO questions.
- Don't ask more than one question at a time.
- Keep them relevant, but be creative.

- Phrase the questions in a way that will allow the person being interviewed to expand.
- Offer to show the questions to the person you're interviewing to make sure they're comfortable with them.

5. PROVIDE A WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT

In order to get the best answers from the people you interview, you've got to create a welcoming environment for them. A comfortable person, one who feels as if they are just having a conversation with a friend, will be more likely to give beefier information in a more enthusiastic and friendly tone, which benefits everyone.

Here are some ways to create a comfortable environment for the person you're interviewing:

- Make sure they know all of the details about the interview beforehand.
- Ask them if they'd like to see the questions first.
- Thank them for the interview before you even start and welcome them to your audience.
- Have them listen to a kind pre-written or rehearsed introduction before getting to the questions.
- Be enthusiastic and actually want to conduct the interview!

6. ALLOW THE PERSON YOU'RE INTERVIEWING TO TALK

- It's important to engage in conversation – yes – but there's a line you can cross where it starts to become rude and/or just not valuable to your audience.

5. LISTEN! As an interviewer myself, it's extremely easy to “drift off” while the other person is talking. It's not that you become bored and uninterested (I hope), but you might “tune out” while you wait for him or her to finish so you can move on to your next question. Not good, especially because important followup questions are usually lost in **6. NEVER...**

- Ask a Yes or No question.
- Ask more than one question at a time.
- Say “...and my next question is...”
- Allow for an awkward pause or dull moment.
- Be disrespectful to your audience and the person you're interviewing.
- Keep your mouth on your microphone (or breath into the mic) while the other person is talking.
- Forget who you're serving.

2. How to cover events:

• **Do plenty of reporting and take lots of pictures (but always jot down who is in the picture and a short caption).** This is a must for any story, but especially for these. [Good quotes](#) are vital for stories like these, and you won't get quotes without [doing lots of interviews](#). So talk to everyone you can - the event organizers, participants and the people attending.

- **Get lots of description, pictures and quotes.** Events like fireworks displays or tree-lighting ceremonies are inherently visual. So take down lots of description. You probably won't use all of it in your story, but you need some description if you're going to do justice to the event.

- **Find the human angle.** Real people are what make or break stories like these. Let's say you're covering a Memorial Day event honoring veterans. No doubt there will be plenty of speeches from the podium by local officials and politicians. But it would probably be a lot more interesting to talk to some veterans themselves about their wartime experiences. What does the holiday mean to them? What memories does it bring back? Likewise, if you're covering a fireworks display, interview some young kids (with their parents' permission, of course) to get their unjaded reactions to the lights and sounds. They're likely to have the most colorful responses.

- **Find an angle.** As I said earlier, events like these often lack a specific theme. That means you have to supply one in your story, because your editor won't accept a piece that's nothing more than a loose collection of quotes. So how do you find an [angle](#)? From your reporting. Let's say you're covering an outdoor farmer's market and on that particular day the weather is cold, windy and rainy. Yet the customers you interview say they've come despite the weather because they love the fresh produce sold there. So your story might be about the almost zealous desire some people have for fresh veggies. Or let's say you're covering a July 4th parade and you learn that there are fewer floats this year due to budget cuts and the sluggish economy. You won't discover any angles without doing plenty of interviews.

- **Develop the structure.** Once you've decided on an angle, you assemble your story so that it reflects that idea or theme. This is important because it helps you decide what to use and what to leave out from your note-taking. If you decide to focus your parade story on the budget cuts, naturally you use the quotes and material you've gathered that relate to that angle. You may have some other quotes on how hot it was during the parade, but leave that out. A 500- to 700-word news story of this sort only needs one angle. If you start throwing other stuff in the story loses its focus. Likewise, if you're covering the Memorial Day event and get an especially compelling interview with a veteran of the war in Iraq, focus on that.

- **Write an awesome lede.** This sounds obvious, but there's a reason you need a [great lede](#) for a story like this - it's not a huge news event. Chances are there won't be any earthshaking revelations or developments to come out of a story about a parade or a farmer's market, so as a writer you have to work twice as hard to craft a lede that will pull readers into the story. More often than not, a well-written [feature lede](#) is the best approach to stories like these.

3. Opinion Pieces:

- Focus tightly on one issue or idea — in your first paragraph. Be brief.

- Express your opinion, and then base it on factual, researched or first-hand information.
- Be timely, controversial, but not outrageous. Be the voice of reason.
- Be personal and conversational; it can help you make your point. No one likes a stuffed shirt.
- Be humorous, provided that your topic lends itself to humor. Irony can also be effective.
- Have a clear editorial viewpoint – come down hard on one side of the issue. Don't equivocate.
- Provide insight, understanding: educate your reader without being preachy.
- Near the end, clearly re-state your position and issue a call to action. Don't philosophize.
- Have verve, and “fire in the gut” indignation to accompany your logical analysis.
- Don't ramble or let your op-ed unfold slowly, as in an essay.
- Use clear, powerful, direct language.
- Emphasize active verbs, forget adjectives and adverbs, which only weaken writing.
- Avoid clichés and jargon.
- Appeal to the average reader. Clarity is paramount.