

# Newsletters That Work

by Christine Young

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## Special Points of Interest

- Highlight dates for a special monthly event
- Highlight an upcoming rally or retreat
- Highlight a quote from an article inside
- Highlight any item of interest to your group

## 10 Tips for Composition

### 1. Commit to consistency

Being consistent is key to the success of your newsletter. Set-up a template in advance that will be used in every issue.

Be realistic about what you can do in your newsletter in terms of size, content, color, etc. Biting off more than you can chew will only bring frustration.

### 2. Choose a distinctive; benefit-oriented title

Newsletter success begins with the nameplate, the stylized treatment of your newsletter's title that appears on the front page of each issue.

Your newsletter's title should *serve as an icon, or visual symbol*, signaling the content of your newsletter. A title consisting of a few short words is better than one containing several long words. Short titles and words permit the use of a large type size. Instead of a long title, consider breaking the title of

your newsletter into two parts; a short, key word set in a large type size supported by a longer subtitle set in a smaller type size which amplifies its meaning.

Make sure that your newsletter nameplate *emerges as a distinct visual element*, separate from the headlines and text that follows.

### 3. Capitalize with white space

White space is the least-expensive way you can make your newsletters more attractive and easier to read. White space begins with generous margins. Always provide sufficient "breathing room" at the tops and bottoms of your pages.

### 4. Make headlines easy to locate and read

Headlines are crucial to the success of your newsletter. *Edit headlines to the bone*, then edit again. Make headlines as short and "telegraphic" as possible. A two-line headline looks better and reads easier than a three-line headline.

Use **white space** to make your headlines more effective

and easier to read. White space acts like a magnet, drawing your reader's eyes to your headlines. White space above your headlines separates them from preceding text.

*Be consistent.* Choose a single typeface for all of your headlines and limit headlines to two sizes. Use one size for headlines of primary importance; another, smaller, size for headlines of lesser importance. This adds visual variety to your page and helps readers quickly identify the most important topics, yet avoids a disorganized image.

**Your newsletter's title should *serve as an icon, or visual symbol*, signaling the content of your newsletter.**

Make your headlines stand out by choosing a typeface that forms a strong visual contrast with adjacent body copy.

### 5. Use front-page articles to draw in readers



## Ten Tips for Composition *continued*



It may be true that you can't judge a book by its cover. But prospective readers do judge a newsletter by its cover. If the front page doesn't contain interesting, useful articles, most people will glance at it, classify it as junk mail and throw it away without even reading one story.

### 6. Insert frequent subheads

Subheads add visual interest to your articles and make them easier to read by breaking long expanses of text into manageable, bite-sized chunks. Each subhead provides readers with a convenient entry point into your article. Readers are likely to skim your subheads and begin reading when they encounter something that attracts their interest.

To succeed, subheads *must contrast with the text they introduce*. Often, the best result happens by setting subheads in the same typeface used in the headlines, only smaller. Using the same typeface for headlines and subheads simplifies and unifies your document. Place more space above subheads than below them. This emphasizes the break between the previous topic and the next topic.

### 7. Make body copy as easy to read as possible.

Write to express, not to impress.

The purpose of a newsletter is to communicate, not to see how many times you can send readers scrambling to find a dictionary. Don't use big words when smaller words will do. Keep your writing *casual, non-technical and conversational*.

When you use *acronyms* (CCTV, AARP, etc.), don't assume readers know what they stand for. List them out in first reference, for instance, closed-circuit television (CCTV) and the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP).

Body copy should be as transparent as possible. In most cases, this is achieved by using a typeface, one that doesn't draw undue

attention to itself. This allows the message to emerge. Whenever possible, choose a familiar serif typeface. Numerous studies have shown that *serif typefaces* (like Garamond, Palatino, Times Roman) are easier to read than sans serif typefaces (like Helvetica). This is because the serifs guide the reader's eyes along from letter to letter.

Consider setting body copy text *flush-left/ragged-right*. This newsletter is flush-left/ragged-right. Equal word spacing and lines of unequal line length characterize flush-left alignment. This creates interesting pools of white space at the end of each line, which further opens-up each line. The equal word spacing of flush-left/ragged-right type allows readers to establish a rhythm, making their job easier. Always hyphenate flush-left/ragged-right text, however, to avoid extremely short lines followed by very long lines or lines that form diagonals or other shapes along the right margin.

### 8. Use at least one graphic per page

Graphics include photos, artwork, charts, pull quotes or even a colored or shaded box

Write to express,  
not to impress.



behind an article.

Graphics are *important for two reasons*.

First of all, studies have shown that people are *more likely to read* an article if it contains a graphic such as a photo. That's because graphics, along with headlines, are the first things that readers' eyes are drawn to when they turn to a new page.

Delight yourself  
in the Lord  
and he will give  
you the desires  
of your heart.  
  
Psalm 37:4



*Ten Tips for Composition* continued



Secondly, graphics within a story are important because they provide much-needed *visual breaks* from solid blocks of text. A page containing nothing but row after row of endless text does not look inviting to read. However, a story that contains strategically placed graphics that break up the text into smaller, less-imposing portions looks more visually pleasing and will attract more readers.

Avoid using a different color for each issue. This often confuses readers, (destroying issue-to-issue unity and familiarity). *Stick to the same color families.*

Avoid photographs that straddle two columns or extend into adjacent columns. This creates text wraps, narrow columns characterized by awkward word spacing and excessive hyphenation. *Aligning photographs with column boundaries* emphasizes the structure of your newsletter and makes it easier to read.

**9. Proofread, proofread, proofread**  
Detail your newsletter by going through it, **line by line**, making sure that simple errors haven't crept in. Although today's word processing and page layout programs offer many advanced capabilities, programs differ in their ability to handle problems.

You probably wouldn't dream of sending out a resume to prospective employers that looks unprofessional, is full of typos and contains grammatical errors. That's because your resume directly represents your professionalism to prospective employers.

In that same way, a newsletter represents the professionalism of your organization to its members. You'll want to make sure it looks impressive, has polished writing and is free of typos and grammatical errors. Proofreading, revising and rewriting are the most tedious, mundane parts of putting together a newsletter — but they are **absolutely necessary**.

Pay attention to copyright law. (See handout).

**10. Simplify your design**  
Strive for simplicity. Eliminate unnecessary boxes, borders and rules. Use a single headline typeface and type size throughout your headline and avoid

the temptation to use too much bold or italics within your body copy.

Clutter detracts from your message. Every change in typography, color or layout detracts from your reader's ability to concentrate on your message.

**Music that Delights the Lord**

**Theme Hymn: Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee**

**Theme Chorus: Lord, I Give You My Heart**

My Delight-Twila Paris  
 I Delight in You- Mark Miller  
 River of Delight-Vineyard Music  
 We Delight-Caedmon's Call  
 Rejoice the Lord is King (hymn)  
 Rejoice in the Lord Always (round)  
 Celebrate Jesus Celebrate  
 Celebrate the Lord of Love  
 I Will Celebrate Sing Unto the Lord  
 Jesus Put the Song into My Heart

# Makin' It Work

## Four Steps To Success



### Research—What do we build?

#### The 1st Step

This first step will enable you to both lay the foundation for your newsletter and also create an effective one. Be sure to take this time and be clear on what it is you are doing. The research step will most likely need to be done in conjunction with your President to make sure you are meeting her standards and goals for the coming year.

When you answer the following questions up front it saves time in the long run and the task of producing a newsletter is so much easier. Define the answers in as much detail as you can:

- **Who** will be receiving your newsletter? Who has received it in the past? Are there others that should be receiving the newsletter? If your newsletter is being disseminated to several people or locations collect contact information to simplify distribution. Build a database with all of the names and addresses. Consider an e-mail database where paper copies are eliminated. This will save you time and your chapel money.
- **What** has been the format in the past? Are their old copies available for you to review?
- **Where** does it need to go? To whom do I send it and how many places will it be available?
- **When** does it need to be distributed? How often was it sent out in the past? Be sure to back out your actual production from the date your President wants it done.
- **How** many copies do you need to print? If this is going to various chapels, are you going to print a master copy or send several? **How** accessible has the newsletter been in the past?

### Planning—How do we build?

#### The 2nd Step

This is another section that may require some interaction with your President or you may work it on your own and consult her after for approval, whichever you are most comfortable with.

This section takes the responses from the questions in the research phase and develops that information.

- Why are we sending out this newsletter?
- What makes it valuable?
- What are we trying to communicate?
- What are the goals of the newsletter?  
Let me suggest they are to:
  - unite the area
  - increase participation
  - circulate information
  - others?
- How can we accomplish those goals through this newsletter?
- What do I want to include in the newsletter? Why do I want to include that? What are some inclusions that we can have in every newsletter? Who can we ask to write articles?
- What materials are available to me in terms of desk-top publishing, printing or copying, artwork?
- What can I use for my nameplate (the name and graphic)? What PWOC artwork do I have access to?
- How can we personalize this newsletter? Should we feature people in our area or include current events or prayer requests?
- How can we include the theme for the year? What types of articles would help us do that?



# Makin' It Work



## Four Steps To Success Continued

### Implementation-Let's build!

#### The 3rd Step

This step is the actual composition of your newsletter. If you have taken the time to do your research and planning this step will be a joyful and speedy one.

Effective newsletters are those that appear on time, are attractive and easy to read.

Set up a template that can be utilized every time. Strive for the same number of pages, the same nameplate, departments, colors, etc.

Below are the actual components of a newsletter:

**Nameplate:** The name and graphic for your newsletter. This is the single most important mark or graphic as it will signal your newsletter and be a reminder to them the next time they see it again. Be consistent with the mark.

**Masthead:** This is the information about your newsletter and who wrote it. Your masthead should include your information as creator of the newsletter and ideally would include information on how to contact you. Encourage people to send you tidbits for the newsletter.

**By-line:** This is the author credit. Decide a consistent way to note authorship. Always give credit where it is due.

**Departments:** These are story categories that will be repeated in each issue of your newsletter. For example: President's Letter, Letter from the Editor, Chaplain's Corner, Prayer Corner, Artist Spotlight.

**Headers, footers, borders:** These are the text and graphic accents that occur *on every page*. For single page newsletters, the nameplate can be in header and the masthead information can be in footer.

Please note the "10 Tips for Construction" article on pages 1-3. All of those tips will ensure success in your newsletter composition.

### Evaluation-How does the newsletter measure up?

#### The 4th and Final Step

This is a very important step and often the most forgotten. Normally we sit there and heave a sigh of relief once we've mailed off the newsletters.

BUT it is so important to ask for feedback from those that actually received the newsletter. What did they like? Is there something they would like to see included in the future? Was it circulated as planned? Is there something that needs improvement or could be simplified for the next issue?

Be receptive to the responses and pray about how you can improve what you do next time.



### Conclusion

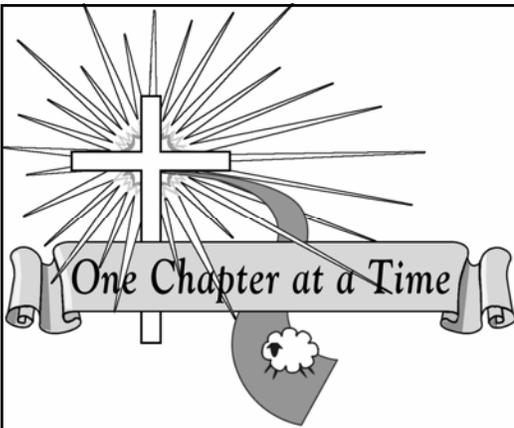
You can improve your newsletter by establishing realistic goals and working as efficiently as possible. Choose the least number of pages that offers you the space necessary to accomplish your goals. Commit to simplicity and efficiency. Invest time up front creating a newsletter template containing a distinctive nameplate and a column arrangement that builds white space into each page. Create styles for headlines, subheads and body copy so you can work as efficiently as possible preparing each issue.

WE'RE ON THE WEB  
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Protestant Women  
of the Chapel



## *Delight Yourself in the Lord*

2004-2005 Theme

Use this space as you discover ideas for  
this year's theme.

♥ This resource was prepared by Chris Young,  
currently serving as the worship leader for  
the PWOC at Whiteman Air Force Base.