

PSC Magazine Writing Tips

Read back issues of the magazine to learn our style. Research back issues to ensure we haven't covered your topic within the past three years. Follow the instructions here as well as in our [PSC Submission Information](#).

Who's your target audience? Who are the readers? Write to your audience; don't talk down to them.

- Telecommunicators
- Comm center directors and/or supervisors
- IT personnel
- Radio technicians and/or engineers
- Frequency coordinators
- Some combination

What's the purpose/objective of the piece?

- Informational: Alert readers to the existence of a new standard, process or technology
- Educational: Not just alerting readers to something's existence, but an explanation for why it exists, its purpose, problem it solves, investment needed, etc.
- How-to: A solutions-oriented story about a particular process

What's the message you want the reader to get?

- You should be able to articulate the bottom line you want readers to take away from the story in one or two sentences. If you can't, you may not know yet what your message is. Go back to the beginning.
- The message should be stated in the introduction, expanded on in the body of the article and reinforced in the conclusion.

What are the items of information that support the message?

- List 3 to 5 bullet points that you'll be expanding on in the article. This is the basis of your story and where the writing actually starts. You can use these bullet points as the subheads of your article.
- Offer realistic, practical examples. People like to read about what other people are doing.

If you are talking about a specific technology, the article should answer the following questions:

- What are the system requirements?
- What is its intended market, and is it appropriate for it?
- How well does it perform its claimed capabilities?
- How easy or difficult is it to implement/learn?
- How does it compare to similar products?
- How much does it cost?
- How much training is suggested? What types of training (web, tutorial, video, etc.) are available?
- What suggestions would you make to the vendor to enhance the product?

Don't be afraid to mention specific product or company names where necessary, but don't go overboard; the mention must be integral to the message. You (or we) can always add a sidebar listing other companies and products to add balance.

References

Factual information and statistics must be supported by references, attributed to the source, footnoted in the text and fully referenced at the end of the article. (See below for more information on footnotes, citations and fair use.)

DO NOT copy text from any source (printed or online, private or government) without providing appropriate attribution. Direct quotes must be put inside quotation marks. Lifting text without attribution is plagiarism.

It's okay to quote from other people's work, including web sources, as long as you don't quote too much of a single source, you properly cite the source material and you footnote it within your article. Below are some resources and tips on how to appropriately use and cite source material.

Fair Use

You can cite and reference any type of publication, including textbooks, websites, conference sessions, course material, television shows, movies, songs, poems and interviews. Any place where you get information is fair game for citation and for quoting. The rule is generally that small sections may be quoted directly with attribution. Paraphrasing small sections is also acceptable. How much can be quoted and paraphrased differs by use and source. The basic rule is whether it infringes on the copyright holder's commercial rights to the material. A good resource can be found here: [http://fairuse.stanford.edu/Copyright and Fair Use Overview/chapter9/9-b.html](http://fairuse.stanford.edu/Copyright%20and%20Fair%20Use%20Overview/chapter9/9-b.html)

Footnotes

Insert footnotes manually. Please don't use the embedded footnote function capability in most word-processing programs because the footnotes won't transfer to our layout program. Don't get hung up on making sure the reference matches our style perfectly. If you get the footnotes in there and identify the source, we can help with the formatting.

Use superscript footnotes at the end of the sentence, not within the sentence. If fewer than three sequential footnotes are listed, run them together with no spaces, separated by a comma. For three or more sequential footnotes, use a hyphen.

Example: There were 6,987 SIDS deaths in the United States in 1993.^{1,2} There were 6,987 SIDS deaths in England in 1993.¹⁻³

Number footnotes consecutively within the text. It's only necessary to spell out a full reference once. When referring to the work later, number the footnote consecutively and, in the full list of references at the end of the article, use "[first author's last name], *ibid.*"

Don't abbreviate page numbers. *Wrong:* 342-8. *Right:* 342-348

List all authors of a single publication up to three. After the third author is listed, use "et al."

Citation Examples

Journal Articles

One to three authors—Last name First initial, Last name First initial. Article title in lower case except for the first word. *Full Journal Title in Italics*. Month Year; Vol(issue number):pages.

Example: Dunbar G, Frankie B. "Isn't this easy?" *Consistent References Journal*. May 1996; 5(10):342-398.

More than three authors—Last name First initial, Last name First initial, Last name First initial, et al.: "Article title in lower case except for the first word." *Journal title in italics*. Vol(issue number):pages, year.

Example: Dunbar G, Smitty T, Gardner J, et al. Now I get it! *Consistent References Journal*. May 1996; 5(10):342-398.

Books

Last name First initial, Last name First initial. *Book Title in Italics*. City, State: Publisher name, year.

Exception: Dictionaries, white papers, handbooks and guidebooks do not get put in italics.

Example: Goldstein N, editor. *The Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual*. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1998.

Internet References

Include the name of the site and the full URL. Remember to not hyperlink the text – this will get stripped out in our layout.

Example: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. www.cdc.gov.