

Nexus Quick Reference Guide

This reference guide has been assembled to ensure your stories meet *Nexus* guidelines. Follow these instructions and you'll not only save us a lot of time and frustration, but you will also add to your training towards becoming a professional journalist. If you don't follow these guidelines, expect to receive a request for revision or a refusal to publish.

Submissions

- All stories must be emailed to editor@nexusnewspaper.com before the deadline. All emailed stories need to be sent as **attachments** in Word document format with a .doc extension (please, no .docx files!). Select the “save as” option and select file type Word Document (.doc).
- Files should be saved with the title in the following format: issue number, story topic, and your name. All words should be capitalized and spaced appropriately. For example, Melanie Roberts' story for issue six on harm reduction should be saved as “6 Harm Reduction Melanie Roberts”.
- As soon as we receive your story via email, we'll send you an email confirmation of receipt. If, by the end of the working day that you sent your article, you do not receive this confirmation, please email us a note to see if we received it.
- After we edit your stories and send you the edited version, please read them carefully. If we have asked for revisions or have unanswered questions, please take action **immediately**. Failing to do so may result in cutting your story from the newspaper. If you have questions or concerns about the edit or have late-breaking or additional info to add, please contact us **immediately**. Failure to do so may result in the changes not making the final newspaper layout.

Nexus style

- Stories must be single-spaced, with no tabs or indentation. One space, not two, is used after all punctuation marks including periods and colons.
- Periods and commas always go inside quotations marks. Semi-colons and question marks go outside the quotations, but only when it changes the meaning inside the quotes. For example: Have you ever heard the song “The Safety Dance”?
- Numbers one through nine are written out (one, two, three, etc.). All numbers 10 and over are written as numerals. Exceptions to this rule include times, dates, official titles, addresses, and years. In the rare occasion that a sentence begins with a number, the number must be spelled out.
- Spelling mistakes are a waste of time and avoidable. **Please run a Microsoft Word spell check before submitting your story.** Sorry, that was **Please run a Microsoft Word spell check before submitting your story.** Note that *Nexus* uses Canadian spelling, as opposed to the what is commonly installed on computers, American spelling. It is your responsibility to check the spelling of names. If you are not totally confident on the spelling of someone's name, then it isn't ready for submission. Do not assume you know how to spell someone's name—always ask your subject, and read it back to them to double check. If you have a name that you can't check with an individual, check online, or a phone book. Do what you have to do to get it right. Nothing undercuts your credibility quicker than a misspelled name. The same applies to position titles.
- **Word counts are crucial.** Word counts exist for a very good reason, so everything can fit in the paper. When you take an assignment, find out how many words your editor requires. Perform a word count on your story prior to submission. We know it's hard to cut your story to the required size, but

that's part of the job. If you submit a story that ignores the word count, you will be asked to fix it. Segue to the next point...

- Learn to self-edit. **Read your stories again before submitting them.** Once you have completed your story, leave it for a night, afternoon, hour, or minute, and re-read it with fresh eyes. You'll be amazed at how many small errors you'll catch on your second run-through. Reading it out loud is another great way to catch glaring errors that slip past. If time is of the essence and your deadline looms, have someone read it for you.
- Do not capitalize articles or conjunctions in the middle of names or titles. For example: That new band Lily of the Valley should do a cover of the Rolling Stone's "Undercover of the Night." Also, only capitalize proper names and places. If in doubt, leave it lower case.
- How to write computer-related words and terms: internet, email, the web, website, PC, mp3, CD-R, iPod, eBay, YouTube, MySpace. Do not use http:// or www in websites, just the website name is fine. For example, yahoo.com.
- Use hyphens for long-term, short-term, full-length, one-and-a-half years, a five-piece band, a 10-song album, all-ages show, self-released, self-titled, world-class athlete, up-to-the-minute fashion, hand-picked, know-how, etc.
- Ellipses (ahem, "dot dot dot") are to be three periods, only three, with no spaces before, or in between, but one after... get it? Use ellipses sparingly.
- Quotation marks—use regular ("double") quotation marks around quotes and titles. Use single ('like this') quotation marks only for a quote within a quote. Ex., "She always told me, 'Run a spell check,' and I always did," says Murphy.
- As general rule, put attributions after the quote, not before. "This is very important," he says. NOT: He says, "This is very important."
- Apostrophes
 - When referring to a decade, there is no apostrophe before the "s." Write 1980s or '80s, not 1980's).
 - Never use apostrophes for plurals. The correct way is CDs, straight As, mp3s, etc.
 - Always use apostrophes for possessives. Exceptions include its, whose, yours, ours, theirs, hers. Always use apostrophes for contractions: "it is" should be "it's" and "who is" would be "who's." Use contractions whenever you can to make stories read more conversational.
- For Arts writers: Reviews for movies, books, CDs, theatre, video games, and anything else you are reviewing should be written in PRESENT tense. Past-tense reviews suggest the material is *passé*, so don't do it.
- Don't use words that you don't know. Don't overuse words that you really do know. Don't overwrite; let it come naturally. When possible, avoid using non-English words, like, ahem, *passé*. It sticks out, looks kind of awkward and generally reads awkward.
- Avoid starting sentences with "There is, there are, etc." Find another way to write this sentence... it usually isn't too hard and will make your statements stronger. If you read a sentence without "there is" or "the" and it still makes sense, eliminate the extra words.
- Em dashes (i.e., long dashes) should fit tight to the words before and after them. If your word-processing program doesn't appear to do long dashes, use two short dashes--it usually automatically turns into an em dash as you continue typing or our layout program will change them to an em dash. For example: these writers' guidelines—which I diligently compiled—absolutely need to be

followed. To use the em dash on a PC, hold down the Alt key, and type 0151, or if that's too confusing (which it is), just use the two short dashes side by side.

QUICK *NEXUS* WRITING TIPS

Spell Like a Pro:

- **Lansdowne, Interurban, Saanich**
- **it's** = it is
- **its** = possessive
- **affect** = “the pollen affects my sinuses”
- **effect** = “the lights had a nice effect”
- **judgment**
- **centre**, NOT center
- **defence**, NOT defense; **but defensive**
- **accommodation**
- **weird**; but **wiener**
- Spell out numbers **one to nine**, for **10** and over use figures
- **percent**, NOT % or per cent
- **“says”** for direct and indirect quote, NOT “said”
- “Commas go **INSIDE** the quotation marks,” says Jane

Tips for Writers:

- Try not to use qualifiers like “of course,” “in fact,” “for example,” etc. to start your sentences. **Just say it! Write strong!**
- Don't use “there is,” “there are,” or “it is” to start a sentence.
- The word “both” is rarely needed, “~~both~~ Lansdowne and Interurban ...”
- Don't use “that” unless it has to be there. Say the phrase out loud and determine if it, logically, needs to be there or not.
- Never use the words “I” or “you” in your story unless you have a very good reason to. Ask your editor for more info on this.
- Use one space at the end of every sentence. Like this.
- **DO NOT** indent your paragraphs or put spaces between them. Just hit enter and continue writing.
- When writing out dates, write **September 22**, not September 22nd