

Writing the Basic Article: Getting Started

By Ed Newman

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Tech tips to help you get your point across.

Do you remember the first time a professional carpenter showed you how to hold a hammer and pound a nail? A neat trick, eh? The hammer does the work. And it makes a difference in the results you get — fewer bent nails, fewer frustrations, a generally more pleasurable experience.

So, too, with writing. Learn a few tricks, and you'll have fewer "bent nails", fewer frustrations, and a generally more pleasurable writing experience.

Organizing for the Task

Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to write another article for The Company Newsletter. But where do you begin? Obviously you start with a blank terminal (or a blank page if using pen and paper to get your initial draft into palpable form). But where do you go from here? How do you make it happen?

A writing project can be broken down into three simple steps. For best results, they should be performed in the following order:

1. Organize for the task
2. Produce a rough draft
3. Polish the product

For the next few moments we'll work on How To Get Organized.

Chocolate Chip Cookies

Compare your writing project with baking cookies. The procedure, at least at the outset, is the same.

First, you decide what kind of cookies you want to bake. Snickerdoodles? Peanut Butter Cookies? Refrigerator Cookies? Let's try Chocolate Chip Toll House Cookies.

Next, you gather the ingredients, making sure you have everything you need, including the chocolate chips. Mixing bowls, measuring cups and cookie sheets are gathered from the four corners of the kitchen. Finally, you take a brief inventory and begin.

So it is with your writing project. Before diving headlong into it, you need to get your materials together. Are there statistics you need? What are the main points you should make? Have you

heard any good stories that go along with these points? Do you need to do preliminary research?

Now that your materials are organized, you may begin.

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Ed Newman has been writing professionally since 1983.

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