

On Writing *for Pathlight*

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About *Pathlight*

The past

Pathlight was born and raised as a volunteer endeavor. Patient Shirley Craig compiled and edited stories and passed the work onto a layout and design team, who took care of the rest. If you are interested in familiarizing yourself with *Pathlights* of the past, there is an “album” on top of the bookcase in Christine’s cubicle. You are welcome to peruse whenever you’d like. This collection can be a great resource if you have some time to look through it; it is helpful to understand how and WHY *Pathlight* was begun, and how it is evolving.

The present

In early 2007, we redesigned the newsletter – aiming for improved graphic appeal and a template that can be used to publish every issue in house. This move will save some time and allow us to have better control of how the publication looks, and also how it “reads.”

Team *Pathlight*: Getting the News

Though the editorship of *Pathlight* has moved away from volunteers, the newsletter is still intended to be a community effort. When brainstorming with your department for article ideas, you should be considering ways to involve non-staff. In addition to providing variety of perspective and style, encouraging “outside” contributions also puts less work on your desk! Below are tips and reminders when Bringing the Outside In.

1. Soliciting articles from the “Outside”

Within the office, there are expectations about *Pathlight* writing. That’s what this handbook is all about, after all. Just as there are guidelines available to staff, you should be sure to provide some for outsider contributors.

The following is a tool for you to use when soliciting articles. Please understand that it is the responsibility of your department to guide contributors in their writing. We want you to foster good relationships with the people who are writing on behalf of your department, and helping them at the start is a better way to achieve this than going back to them in the end.

- Be clear about LENGTH. Unless the piece is a feature, it should be no longer than one typed page. In most cases, special events and activities can be written up in only a few paragraphs. As a rule, shorter is better, BUT we want articles that contain all of the necessary information AND that extra human-interest. Don’t mince words when making the piece interesting.

**Full-page = 800 words, ½-page (single column) = 400 words,
¼-page = 200 words**

- Be adamant about DEADLINES. Don’t stake-out your contributors’ houses, but do be sure that you let them know their deadlines when you are requesting the article, and when you are giving them the concrete assignment. A friendly non-threatening reminder

at the start of the week before the article is due is appropriate, and usually necessary. Make sure no one leaves the table before clearing his or her *Pathlight* plate.

- Be sure to explicitly request PHOTOGRAPHS and CAPTIONS if appropriate.
- Bottom line: be descriptive. Don't just ask Betsy Loraine to write a story about her recent back sale. Try leading her along as she gets thinking about the assignment, a lá:

“Betsy Loraine, I was hoping you would consider submitting an article (just a paragraph or two) about your recent Bake-4-a-Cure to *Pathlight*. We'd like to know how turn-out was this time around — were there more folks than you expected? And how did you get your community involved? Were there any surprises? What was the best part of the event?

We'll edit the piece for grammar (etc.)*, but we'd love it if you would share your story with us. We do need this article to be ready *no later than* July 4. You can do it? Great! Please remember to send along any pictures, with captions. You're the best, Betsy Loraine.”

*Please do make sure that your contributor is comfortable with having his or her piece edited for grammar, sentence clarity, etc. It's our goal to retain the writer's voice and style, but we want every piece to be easy-to-read and grammatically correct

2. Conducting interviews with people from the “Outside”

Offer interviews if someone you're interested in can't give you a write-up. Interviews are a great way to get the story you're looking for, fast. Plus, getting an interview still catches the community voice. Don't write your interview up into a profile, but present it in an interview format — interviewee-focused, of course.

About Writing for *Pathlight* (and other PHA print publications)

Now that PHA is claiming responsibility for the editorship of *Pathlight*, it's time to lay down the law. This section of your handbook will provide tips, hints, guidelines and standards to be kept in mind when writing for the newsletter. Before we jump into these points though, please bear in mind that 'writing' is a project that demands flexibility and innovation. A 'writer' must wear different hats, depending on the weather and/or the current trends. He or she should be adventurous enough to attempt a beret or beanie as the situation demands, but should know the rules: no white after Labor Day, etc. That said, we might ask you to write in a way or by a standard that contradicts whatever you've done for other 'writing.' *Pathlight* is a newsletter. Newsletters don't wear white. Once you move on from *Pathlight*, it may not be appropriate to follow everything covered in this handbook, but while *Pathlight* is your project, consider yourself a news-reporter.

First: *Please* bring your own unique personality to your articles. Invest something of yourself in them. Invest something more than man-hours (we'll talk more about time saving later). When the time comes to offer something up for *Pathlight*, think about what your department is working on and *why that project excites you*. Give readers all of the facts and information they need to take away, but be sure to also give them a reason to think about your article once they've put the newsletter down. No biggie, right?

Some basics...

1. Bylines:

At PHA, articles written by staff should be formatted as follows:

By Andrew Horowitz

PHA Development Associate

...articles written by board members, support group leaders, and other non-staff should be formatted to match:

By Betsy Loraine

PHA board member and PH patient

Notice that this standard is not only one of content — who wrote it and who is he/she — but of style: bold, italicized, two lines. While you should get into the habit of creating bylines for your pieces, some articles will not require them in the end. If a piece is short, like an announcement, or if it represents a very general PHA position (as opposed to a specific department program), it probably doesn't need to be attributed.

2. Leads: the good, the bad, the ugly

The "lead," or first portion of the article, is actually the most important paragraph (or two) of your story. It's these first paragraphs that must tell the reader what the article is about, and why he or she should be interested in reading it. A good lead is simple and clear. A bad lead misleads readers, beats around the bush or uses clichés.

Below are things to keep in mind when writing your lead.¹

- The **best, most interesting material should go into the lead**, provided it does not distort the story or emphasize the wrong angle.
- **Be objective!** Your opinion has no place in a news story, in the lead or anywhere else.
- **Avoid clichés.** Many readers find them annoying.
- Before starting to write the lead, first write out the answers to the five Ws and H. Then put them in order of importance. The **lead should stress the most important, usually who and what**. Make your lead introduce your angle.

¹ Borrowed from: [Inverted Pyramids and Leads](http://www.weatherfordisd.com/whsnews/IPandLeads.htm). Weatherford High School. Date unknown. <<http://www.weatherfordisd.com/whsnews/IPandLeads.htm>>.

3. Building the pyramids

Though enigmatic in Egypt, pyramids make sense on paper. Think about your article as if it were a pyramid, with the most important and specific information at the top. “Judy and Ben Love will host a pancake breakfast next Thursday, Sep. 7 at 10 am in the Lewe’s Building, Minneapolis, Minn.,” is an example of a sentence that pow-pow-pow tells readers everything they need to know.

Maybe Judy and Ben held the event *last* Thursday, though! In this case, the date, time, and location of the event may not be as important as the fact that they were 3,000 pancakes short because so many people came out to support them, or that Governor Blueberry surprised them by stopping by with a fork and a hefty check made out to the “Pancakes for PH” fund.

Either way, think about the story you’re telling, and save the “least important” information for the end. Writing this way helps readers get the point, and get it fast. It also helps editors; if your piece is too long, an editor can start chopping from the bottom without making the piece bunk.

P.S. Notice “...they were 3,000 pancakes short...” It is important to dress-up your numbers. Now, I don’t mean “dress-up” like “invent” or “exaggerate.” I mean: Don’t include a number in your article if your reader will see it and think, “What the heck is that nudie number doing there?” In this case, telling the reader that the organizers were short 3,000 pancakes implies that turn-out well-exceeded expectations. That’s great news! Had you said, on the other hand, “75 people attended,” your reader won’t know what kind of news that is — is it great turn-out or poor?

4. Using quotes

When “done right,” quotes are probably the easiest way to enliven your articles; adding an actual voice to your piece demands less creativity on the part of your own writing. That’s assuming, though, that you’ve asked the right questions to get the right statements. Quotes should never be used more than sparingly, to give the piece a personality and add unique language. Basic information should not be quoted; if Bob tells you only the following: “We went to breakfast at 6:30 a.m. and ate some spinach quiche before swimming at 10:30 a.m. and handing out 3,450 purple pins at 4:30 p.m.,” then his should not be a direct quote. If, on the other hand, he tells you that, “The highlight of our event was the scrumptious quiche. The food brought everyone together and inspired us to reach out to more people than we had ever before...” then you might consider using his language.

Here’s a handy guide on using quotes, borrowed from *The Little, Brown, Compact Handbook*.

Use a direct quotation **if the [source] satisfies one of these requirements:**

- The language is unusually vivid, bold, or inventive.
- The quotation cannot be paraphrased without distortion or loss of meaning.
- The quotation represents and emphasizes a body of opinion / the view of an important expert.
- The quotation emphatically reinforces your own idea.
- The quotation is a graph, diagram, or table.

Be sure that **the quotation is as short as possible:**

- It includes only material relevant to your point.
- It is edited to eliminate examples and other unneeded material. Use brackets to add words for clarity or change the capitalization of letters. Use ellipsis marks (...) to omit irrelevant material.

Once you know you're right to use a direct quote, it's important to integrate the original language into your own sentences so that the paragraph you are creating reads smoothly. You don't want your reader to trip over the words of your brilliant interviewee, and you do want them to understand why he or she is being quoted. To that end, be sure that you create ample context for the quote, and explain it if you have to.

P.S. A quote should look something "like this," she said. "...With the comma before the end-quote," she continued, "and/or before the front-quote." "Periods," she noted, "should also go inside the end-quote." This is very important. When punctuation is misused, readers (and writers!) often get lost. When punctuation is misused AND you are using someone else's words along with your own, no one knows what's what.

5. Call it like you see it

A rose by any other name might be mistaken for a daisy or a dandelion on paper. **TITLE** your article so that readers know a.) What your story is about and b.) Why they should read it. Believe it or not, it's easier for you as the writer to give your article a title than it is for the editor to slap one on at the last minute. (It's also the new rule.) *You* know better than anyone what you were trying to convey by your article, so *you* should be the one to deliver the first clue. **Remember:** Your title should spark some curiosity AND should accurately reflect the content of the article – the one you've *actually* written, not the one you *planned* on writing.

For example: You want to write about the latest development in medication, HealFast. You talked to a doctor or researcher about the development of the drug and how it was discovered, and for good measure, you talked to Madge and Steve, who are already on the medication. If you let it, this article could go in one of two directions. Let's say Dr. Fixems was not very engaging. Madge and Steve were thrilled, though. They spoke with you for hours about all of the things they could do on this drug that they couldn't on another, or about how wonderful they felt doing the same-old-things. You probably should *not* title this article "The Development of HealFast, a Triple-suppressant Anti-inflammatory Medicinoid," even if that's what you were aiming for at first. Perhaps "HealFast: New Drug Gives Patients a New Lease on Life," is closer to what

you are actually saying. It's also more likely to excite a reader and pull him or her in — “How can I get a new lease on life?!”

Right. Write!

The following is MUY IMPORTANTE. This is a list of style notes. It reflects the style we've been using for *Pathlight*. Even though our articles come from a variety of places, *Pathlight* should look and feel like one cohesive body of work. To achieve this in the past, someone has had to go through every item to make sure that articles are consistent with each other. Now the power is in *your* hands. You'll find an AP Style Guide in Christine's cubicle for your [frequent] perusal. Follow these standards in your *Pathlight* writing. That way, no one has to invest too much time later to make the issue consistent.

1. Numbers

- Numbers 1 through 9 should be spelled out (one, two, etc.). Ages and percentages should never be spelled out, even if the number is less than 10 (*i.e.*, “At 3 years old, Rino bought a bike at an 8 percent discount.”) Always spell “percent” out in full; never use %.
- If a number begins a sentence, spell it out (*i.e.*, Three-year-old Rino really knew a deal when he saw one.) If the number that begins your sentence is a year, don't spell it out.
- Numbers over 999 should have a comma (1,000).
- Money figures should not include information after the decimal unless there *is* information after the decimal. In other words, they should appear as follows: \$134.**57** OR \$3,500, but NOT \$24.**00**.

2. Phone Numbers & Contact Information

- The “proper” way to include your contact information in a *Pathlight* article is to
 - Provide first name of contact only
 - Provide e-mail address of contact or of department alias
 - Provide phone number with extension
 - *i.e.*, “For more information about PHA Bagel Club, contact Rachel at 301-565-3004 x104, or e-mail bagels@PHAssociation.org.”
- E-mail addresses of staff should appear as follows: Christine@PHAssociation.org.
- E-mail addresses of aliases should appear as follows: print@PHAssociation.org.
 - Remember to add a period if your address is the end of your sentence!
- All phone numbers should appear as formatted: 301-565-3004 x114. Whenever you provide a phone number, be sure to include an extension!
 - Area code should be shown (555-555-5555).
 - Phone numbers should have non-breaking hyphens.
 - A small x should appear before extension number with NO space and NO comma.

3. Dates

- Abbreviate only Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., and Dec.
- Do not use ordinals (1st, 2nd, 3rd of March). Show as follows: Aug. 20, 2005, was a great day.

4. Internet Issues

- Any reference to typing should be in quotation marks. For example: "By typing 'Florida' you can access..."
- Search for @, http, www, to make sure correct URL style is used.
- Leave OFF the `http://` . Since it is always implied, this makes addresses longer and is unnecessary.

5. Don't Forget

- *Pathlight* and *Persistent Voices* should be italicized, as should other book and journal titles, including *Advances in Pulmonary Hypertension*.
- Watch for correct use of dashes and hyphens (see more in "Nitty Gritty," at the end of this document).
- Do NOT use serial commas (i.e., "Patients, physicians and other caregivers..." no comma before "and"). This is a change from past *Pathlight* writing, because AP style does not use serial commas.
- Check captions. If they are sentences, end them with a period.
- Using two spaces after a period is sooo passé. (The practice is in fact a holdover from manual type-writer days.) Use only ONE space between a period and the first letter of the next sentence (i.e. "Debbie is great. She even smells nice.") This is very important. Please practice to get into the habit.

6. Style Matters

- Plural acronyms do not need apostrophes (i.e., "CMEs are helpful.")
- "Caregiver" is one word.
- "Co-sponsor" is hyphenated.
- When writing about drugs, the chemical name is not capitalized and the trade name is: "Becky is on sildenafil (Revatio™)."
- D period C period, as in Washington, D.C.
- Decades are not possessive (i.e., '50s, not 50's).
- "e.g.," is always italicized and followed by a comma.
- "E-mail" is hyphenated (i.e., not email).
- *Ex officio* and Latin/foreign references should be italicized.
- "For-profit," "nonprofit," the first is hyphenated, the second is not.

- “Fundraiser” is one word.
- “H.R. 1316” for bills
- “Healthcare” is one word.
- “i.e.,” is always italicized and followed by a comma.
- “Internet” is capitalized.
- “listserv,” in lowercase
- M.D., as in doctor, with periods
- National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (with comma after “Lung”)
- “Online” is one word.
- PHAssociation.org, with “PHA” capitalized
- Ph.D., Ph.D.s, with periods
- PHers
- *Pulmonary Hypertension: A Patient’s Survival Guide*, in later references can be shortened to *Patient’s Survival Guide*).
- T-shirt, with “T” capitalized
- U.S., with periods
- “Website” is one word.

The “Where”

Rather than using state POSTAL CODES, please use standard state ABBREVIATIONS (unless, of course, you are giving a mailing address). For example, “The Florida Support Group partied in Cayo Costa, Fla.” is the correct way to describe an event. “For more information, write to the Florida Support Group: FSG P.O.Box 130, Cayo Costa, FL., 90210” is the correct way to use postal codes.

Place one comma between the city and the state name, and another after the state name, unless at the end of a sentence or in a dateline (*e.g.*, She traveled from San Diego, Calif., to go to school in Kansas City, Mo. Now, she’s thinking of moving to Santa Fe, N.M.)²

Use the table on pages 9-10 as a reference in all of your writing for PHA.

The “Where”

State	Abbrev.	PC	State	Abbrev.	PC
Alabama	Ala.	AL	Montana	Mont.	MT
Alaska	Alaska	AK	Nebraska	Nebr.	NE
Arizona	Ariz.	AZ	Nevada	Nev.	NV
Arkansas	Ark.	AR	New Hampshire	N.H.	NH
California	Calif.	CA	New Jersey	N.J.	NJ
Colorado	Colo.	CO	New Mexico	N.M.	NM

² Borrowed from: Quick Reference Associated Press Style. <www.bu.edu/com/writingprgm/ap_styleguide1.pdf>

Connecticut	Conn.	CT	New York	N.Y.	NY
Delaware	Del.	DE	North Carolina	N.C.	NC
District of Columbia	D.D.	DC	North Dakota	N.D.	ND
Florida	Fla.	FL	Ohio	Ohio	OH
Georgia	Ga.	GA	Oklahoma	Okla.	OK
Hawaii	Hawaii	HI	Oregon	Ore.	OR
Idaho	Idaho	ID	Pennsylvania	Penn.	PA
Illinois	Ill.	IL	Rhode Island	R.I.	RI
Indiana	Ind.	IN	South Carolina	S.C.	SC
Iowa	Iowa	IA	South Dakota	S.D.	SD
Kansas	Kans.	KS	Tennessee	Tenn.	TN
Kentucky	Ky.	KY	Texas	Texas	TX
Louisiana	La.	LA	Utah	Utah	UT
Maine	Maine	ME	Vermont	Vt.	VT
Maryland	Md.	MD	Virginia	Va.	VA
Massachusetts	Mass.	MA	Washington	Wash.	WA
Michigan	Mich.	MI	West Virginia	W.Va.	WV
Minnesota	Minn.	MN	Wisconsin	Wis.	WI
Mississippi	Miss.	MS	Wyoming	Wyo.	WY
Missouri	Mo.	MO			

The Nitty-Gritty

I've done some research on the Nitty-Gritty and this is what I've learned. Please familiarize yourself with the material in this section, but don't lose sleep.

Dashes and Hyphens³

Little lines are useful punctuation, but there are rules for them as well.

1. The Hyphen (-)

The hyphen is the littlest line. Use a hyphen to:

- Avoid ambiguity (*i.e.* “small-business men,” rather than “small businessmen,” which could be confused with little CEOs.)
- Compound modifiers (*i.e.* “full-time job,” “face-to-face meeting,” “well-known doctor.”)
- Avoid duplicated vowels or tripled consonants (*i.e.* “anti-intellectual,” “shell-like.”)
- Separate non-inclusive numbers, such as phone numbers.
- We also use hyphens in “e-mail,” “for-profit,” “T-shirt,” and “co-sponsor.”

2. The Dash (--)

There are two types of dashes, in fact — the “em dash” and the “en dash.” Fortunately, AP Style recognizes only “the dash.” Dashes are properly used with a space on either side. To achieve

³ From *The Associated Press Stylebook*, 39th Edition, Basic Books, 2004.

this, type the word before the dash, two hyphens (between the “0” and the “=” keys) and the word that follows the dash — without spaces. Then go back and insert spaces. Use a dash to:

- Mark an abrupt change or emphatic pause
- Offset a series within a phrase (*i.e.* “He listed the qualities — intelligence, humor, independence — that he liked in an executive.”) Notice how dashes can be used like parentheses, in pairs. Where a sentence is already full of commas, dashes can break it up to read more clearly.
- Communicate dates and other inclusive numbers (*i.e.* Sep. 3 – Oct. 4). To create this dash, type “3” space “hyphen hyphen” space “Oct.”

For more information about dashes, or to take a quiz, visit the “Tip Archive” at Get it Write Online.

<<http://www.getitwriteonline.com/archive/091502.htm>>.

All done?

If you’re ready to get your piece off your desk, please do the following:

1. Double check to make sure each individual piece has
 - a. A title, **Bold**.
 - b. A byline, **Bold** and *italicized*. Bylines should include the name of the writer or contributor as well as any relevant title.
 - c. A picture or graphic with caption.
2. E-mail the editor:
 - a. Your articles as word attachments (.doc)
 - b. A copy of any photographs you are going to use. Please do this even if the photo is in Public, or include in your e-mail the full address at which the photo can be found. Be specific! For example... *P:\PHA Photos Library\board, Photo: Jack Stibbs.jpg*

P.S. Print quality photos have a dpi of 300. Many digital photos have a resolution of only 72. If you have a choice between which photos to include, DO NOT choose those with lower resolution.

3. Hand the editor:
 - ~~a. A print out of your article. If you are contributing multiple pieces, please submit them one per page (you can e-mail them as one document if they are all going into the same section).~~
 - b. Any original photographs you are using or that you have collected. There is a photo archive for hardcopy photographs on the bookshelf in Christine’s cubicle.

Additional Resources

If you're ready to get serious about *Pathlight* (and really, who isn't?), there's more! A great way to improve your writing is to read as if you were teaching Comp 101. Once you've gleaned the latest news from the *Washington Post*, go back and look at the stories that really grabbed you. Is it just the content that held your interest? If so, remember to be honest with yourself about your writing projects; if you are asked to write an article about a project that you secretly *dread* working on, see if another member in your department can coverage it instead. Even better, find an angle that *does* excite you — maybe by talking to someone who is not in your department but who has some familiarity with the project. Coming to a topic with new eyes can be the best way to get to its heart.

More likely, your favorite *WP* article was one that had a certain *Je ne sais quoi* about its style. Did it use dialogue effectively? Did it create real characters? Did it use analogies to help you relate personally? Did it leave you feeling satisfied that the job was done, or is being done, or will be done successfully at some point? Were the sentences varied? Did it have the right pace and rhythm? We see more than words when we read, and picking up on those other things in “professional” sources – whether it's because we recognize a success or a failure – makes it that much easier to put more than words to paper when we write.

...or try the web.

1. <http://www.journalism.org/resources/tools/writing/lessons/print.asp>
2. <http://www.courses.vcu.edu/ENG-jeh/BeginningReporting/Writing/writing.htm>
3. http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/resources/special_initiatives/toolkit_resources/tipsheets/writing_news_story.cfm
4. <http://www.weatherfordisd.com/whsnews/IPandLeads.htm>
5. http://www.ohlone.edu/people/bparks/basic_news_writing.html
6. <http://www.smcm.edu/writingcenter/Resources/index.htm>

This document is saved to **P:\Print Services\Pathlight**. There is another guide saved there, “PHA Style,” which was created by a former staff member. There is a lot of valuable information in that guide, but where there are contradictions, the new guide trumps.

Amendments: January 26, 2007

1. Stories should be approved during planning process, written by assigned staff member or solicited from a member of the community and edited by assigned staff member.
2. All articles (internally- and externally-written) will be reviewed, edited and approved by department head of assigned staff member.
3. At the same time the compiled stories are submitted, all images (photos with their captions and other graphics) should be sent to Publications Manager. The assigned staff person should **select** the images he or she wants to have included. Please do not send Publications Manager a selection of photos and ask her to pick.
5. Except for “breaking news,” no additional stories will be accepted after deadline.
6. Publications Manager will edit, assemble and design the issue. During the week that it is being reviewed by Rino and medical editors, the staff will have the opportunity to review, primarily to make sure that editing hasn’t changed meaning and that none of the facts have changed since the story was first written. This window is NOT the time to make substantive edits to the stories.
7. When writing, staff should remember to keep audience in mind. Readers are engaged and well informed, and they know us, so we don’t need to be overly formal.
 - Staff should think about why they want readers to read their articles, what would motivate their audience, and why readers should be interested.
8. In discussion with Print Services, staff should decide whether assigned article is a feature story or a news story before writing begins. When writing, staff should:
 - Use short paragraphs (2-3 sentences).
 - Use active language, with strong action verbs.
 - Remember pyramid structure: include the most important details at the beginning of the story, and the less important details towards the end.
9. Staff should **use the website as a companion** to articles in *Pathlight*. If a staff writer can’t fit everything he or she wanted in *Pathlight*, more information can be included on the web.
10. Staff should **send an image (300 dpi) and caption with every article** written. If a staff writer has decided not to include an image, he or she should write “no image” at the bottom of the article so the Publications Manager knows it’s a conscious decision.