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# newsletter design

## How to design a newsletter for your voluntary group

Newsletters can be a great way to attract new members to your group and to keep existing members up to date with news and events. Most groups can't afford to print glossy, colour newsletters, so these tips will help you design a low-cost, black and white newsletter that can easily be photocopied and will look professional and attractive.

## Start at the top

The secret to a great looking newsletter is to make the title big and bold. This will give you a well balanced page which looks attractive to the eye. To make your title even bigger use a 'condensed' type that produces tall, bold letters that take up more vertical space. You could try

using bold, white text on a black box for an even bolder title. Whichever font you choose, opt for a bold style that will catch the readers attention. Make sure you keep the title box 10mm away from the edge of the paper so that the newsletter can be printed and photocopied easily.



### Editorial

Editorials give a personal touch to a newsletter.

Place a narrow box on one side of the newsletter, under the title, for your editorial. Leave a good-sized gap between the text and the edge of the box. A small photo of yourself looks good here. You could shade the box in a percentage of black. If you are going to do this make sure it is a fairly light shade - between 10 and 25% black.

## A word on typography

With such a wide range of fonts available it is tempting to go over-the-top. *Don't!* Choose *one* font for your main text, *one* font for your headlines and use them throughout your newsletter. Stick to well known, easy to read fonts such as Times, Garamond, Arial or Helvetica.

Your main text font size should be between 9 and 11 points. Before you go too far with the design, print it out to see how the text looks. Compare the font size to other newsletters or publications to see if you are on the right track. Keep the font *exactly* the same size throughout *all* the issues.

The headline font can be a bold version

of your main text font or a completely different one. Just keep it simple and don't be tempted to use fashionable, flowery, space-age or retro fonts. You can vary the size of the font for headlines but whatever you do, don't alter the width of the actual letters as this will look amateurish.

Don't underline text as it distracts the reader. There are *much better* ways to highlight text; use an italic font instead.

Don't use hyphens to join words that stretch from one line to the next as they make the page look messy. Turn hyphenations off completely.

Try not to leave a word in a line by itself on the end of a paragraph. These are called 'orphans' and can be avoided, either by changing the gap between the letters in the paragraph to stretch or shrink it's width, or simply by nudging a word from the previous line on to the last line by pressing 'return' before it.



Avoid stylised fonts that will soon look dated

# Layout

Your newsletter should be visually appealing, but this doesn't mean you have to go over-the-top. Keep it clear and simple. Remember: the aim of a newsletter is to get over news, it is not a chance to show off your latest graphics software! Collect other newsletters and work out why you like or dislike them. Don't copy them, just use them as a reference and an idea source.

To make your newsletter more

readable, break the text up by using columns. Because your newsletter will be on an A4 piece of paper, split the page into two or three columns otherwise it will be difficult to read from one side of the page to the other.

When using columns, make it obvious where the reader should read next when they finish a column. Separate stories with lines, headlines or photos and don't leave any room for confusion.



Use photos like this that have dark blacks, strong whites and detailed mid-tones

## What a picture!

Keep pictures to a minimum but try to use at least one relevant picture, particularly on the front page, if possible. Any photos used in a photocopied newsletter should be clear and contrasty (dark blacks and strong whites with detailed mid-tones). Clip-art can look crass so avoid it if possible. If you are lucky enough to know, or be, someone with drawing skills, black and white line illustrations lend themselves nicely for use in a newsletter.

Place picture captions last when you have more or less finished laying out your newsletter. Captions should be in a small, bold, preferably italic version of your main text font and can be placed just below the picture. If a photograph or illustration needs crediting use a very small, bold, italic font, turn it 90° anti-clockwise and place on the photograph in the top-right corner. If the photo is black where the text is, use white text and vice-versa.

# Features

Use feature boxes to break up the page. These can be small snippets of information such as competitions, events listings or announcements. Place the feature in a small, eye-catching box which will make the page look more interesting. If you use white text on a black box, use a bold font so that the text is clear when printed and photocopied. Don't over-use white text on black boxes because it is difficult to read and, sometimes, large areas of black cause problems with printers and photocopiers.

## Any ideas?

Here are some ideas that you might like to include regularly in your newsletter:

- Diary of events
- Letters to the editor
- Glossary of terms
- Competition
- Notices
- Classifieds
- News in brief
- Cartoons
- Short biography of a group member
- Top ten list
- Questions answered
- Reviews
- Hints and tips
- Puzzles

Look through a magazine stand to get more ideas like these. Just make sure you will be able to repeat the features in every newsletter.

## Until next time...

When you come to write your next newsletter, use the template of your first newsletter. Delete the old paragraphs keeping the text boxes in the same place and it should be fairly easy to paste your new text in.