

# WRITING A PRESS RELEASE

## Deadlines

- These are deadlines to run in the following Wednesday's issue:
  - Columns are due by noon on Tuesdays.
  - Articles for religious news, club trips, movies and food are due by noon Wednesdays.
  - Articles for health and bridge and listings for Mutual and GRF meetings are due by 3 p.m. Wednesday.
  - All other club news articles are due by 9 a.m. on Thursdays.
- Photos must be taken by Thursday before noon, except by special arrangement.
- Residents Forum Letters to the Editor are due by Thursday at noon, but the earlier the better.
- It is the responsibility of the correspondent to check the News weekly for notification of early deadlines, particularly as holidays approach. Correspondents also can request that their email address be included on email reminders sent out by the News before holiday deadlines. Please email that request to news@rossmoor.com.

## Submitting articles

The top of each article must have the following information:

- Correspondent's name (and name of writer, if different from submitter)
- Phone number
- Dates the article should run
- Suggested headline (the editor may need to change this to fit the layout)

Articles may run a maximum of three consecutive times unless it is a special event and has been OK'd by the managing editor. If an article is desired to run more than once, request a "pick-up" of the first article, listing the date(s) you would like it to run again. If small changes need to be made, turn in a copy of the original article with the changes boldfaced or highlighted. **Do not** reword an article that is already running and submit it as if it is a new article.

Articles recapping what occurred at an event/meeting are permitted only for special events and require advance notice. The editor reserves the right to refuse a request if space is not available.

## Word limits and bylines

The following are the word limits. Articles: 600 or less. Columns: 800 words or less. Club trip listings and club movies: 180 words or less. Letters to the editor:

250 words or less. Religious services listings: 120 words or less. If you are writing a special feature, requests for extensions on the word limit must be made in advance; the News cannot guarantee the request will be honored.

Any article that contains quotes or commentary must have a byline with the correspondent's name. All other articles can have a byline with just the club or organization name if preferred. Please include preferred byline (either correspondent's name and title such as club correspondent or club/organization name on top of all submitted articles). If no byline is included on a submitted article, the News will use the club/organization name for the byline.

### **Email is best**

Email is the preferred method of submitting articles -- as a Word attachment or in the body of the email. Send it to **news@rossmoor.com** or to the editor you have been corresponding with. Emailed articles always get a reply back; if you don't receive one, follow up with a call to 1-925-988-7800. No handwritten articles will be accepted.

Here are a few guidelines:

- **Do not** type articles in all capital letters or use bold, italics or underlines. Use Times New Roman or Arial fonts
- **Do not** use multiple tabs, spaces or other format alterations. Only one indent is needed to identify a paragraph.
- A flyer or an invitation for an event will not be accepted as an article. The article should contain full sentences, written just as it would appear in the newspaper. Flyers are not published in the newspaper.
- Double check dates and names for accuracy. This is the correspondent's responsibility.

### **Corrections**

- Email your article **AFTER** everyone in your group has proofread it.
- If using Track Changes, accept them before sending the article.
- If making a correction after sending the article -- **bold** or **change the font color** for the change in the article.
- Always double check that the day of the week and date match.

### **Editing**

The editor reserves the right to edit any content submitted to the Rossmoor News. Edited articles cannot be emailed back to correspondents because of time and the volume of content received. The style guidelines below can help writers to submit articles that are less likely to need extensive editing.

## Photos

If you wish to have a photo taken, contact the News at 1-925-988-7800 to set up an appointment with the photographer or email the request to news@rossmoor.com. Give plenty of lead time as the photo schedule may fill up.

You may submit a photo or photos, but they will be used at the editor's discretion. Photos must be submitted by email in a jpeg. The News cannot use photos that have been reproduced in other newspapers or magazines nor can it use copyrighted photos without permission. (Professional studio photos are copyrighted. Photos found by searching Google online are usually subject to copyright rules.)

To submit a photo, be sure it is clear and in focus and that faces are about the size of a dime. For group photos, **do not** crowd too many people in one shot; try arranging groups in layers (some seated, some standing) to make it more interesting.

When sending a photo shot with a cell phone, please be sure to send the original size so it is large enough to be published in the paper.

A maximum of three photos can be submitted per article; there are no guarantees that all photos will be published.

All photos where faces are recognizable must include the full names of the people photographed. Posed group photos should include no more than 12 people. (For group shots of 12 or more people that are not posed, a generic caption is OK.) List the names of people from left to right, top row to bottom.

Any photo including a child who is 12 years or younger must include the full name of the child in the caption. This signifies approval by the child's parent to have the photo published. This is California law, so no exceptions.

## **GENERAL EDITORIAL GUIDELINES**

- Do not use personal pronouns like "I," "we," "you," "our" or "us" in articles. For example: "The club will hold ..." not "We will hold ..."
- The first paragraph should begin with the most important facts: who, what, when, where and how. Paragraphs should be short – 2 to 4 sentences.
- The News follows the rules of the Associated Press Stylebook and will edit accordingly for space. As a general rule, shorter is better. Be clear and concise.
- **Do not** give a full introduction of speakers. Supply a teaser instead -- something that will draw people to the meeting and information about the speaker's background and qualifications (1 to 2 paragraphs).
- Every article must have a contact person and phone number or email address at the bottom. (This is in addition to the correspondent's or club byline information that should already be at the top of the article.) Phone numbers must include area codes, including 1-925.

## **FACT CHECK**

It is the responsibility of the correspondent to fact check all dates, names, phone numbers and email addresses. Be sure names are spelled correctly in the captions. These are the most common mistakes we see.

## **AP STYLE GUIDE RULES**

Here are some rules per AP Stylebook and some that are specific to the Rossmoor News.

### **DATE, TIME, PLACE:**

The order is day of the week, date, time and place (i.e. Monday, April 3, at 3 p.m. in Multipurpose Room 1 at Gateway)

### **DATES:**

The name of a month is written out unless it includes a date. When including a date, the following are the months with abbreviations: Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov. and Dec.

Do not include the year in any date unless it was last year or a date next year.

#### **Correct**

April 1 or Sept. 5  
It was hot in August.  
Tuesday, Dec. 12,

#### **Incorrect**

April 1st or Sept. 5th  
It was hot in Aug.  
December 12

### **TIME:**

Times should include a.m. or p.m. If the top of the hour, double zeros are not needed.

#### **Correct**

a.m. and p.m.  
2 p.m.  
noon or midnight

#### **Incorrect**

morning, afternoon, evening  
2 o'clock, 2:00 p.m.  
12 noon or 12:00

### **NUMBERS:**

In general (except in dates, times, addresses), spell out numbers one to nine and use figures for 10 and above.

The rule is the same for first to ninth, 10th and above in figures. However, scores such as in tennis may be in numerals (6-1, 6-2, etc.).

Regarding money, use the dollar sign "\$" and the dollar amount with cents if there are any, but no zeros.

Use "cents" with a numeral when the amount is less than \$1.

**Correct**

One, third place, 20  
 35 cents  
 \$4  
 \$1 million  
 \$1.45 million  
 \$4,225.44

**Incorrect**

1, 3rd place, twenty  
 thirty-five cents, \$.35  
 \$4.00  
 one million dollars  
 \$1,450,000  
 \$4,225.44 cents

**ADDRESSES:**

Capitalize and abbreviate “street,” “avenue” and “boulevard” only when used with an actual address. For example: 485 South Main St., 2020 San Pablo Ave., 1820 Tice Valley Blvd.

For Rossmoor addresses, write the manor number as “No.” not as “#.” There is no need to include the city and zip code. Entry is capitalized. For example: 425 Singingwood Court No. 2, Entry 8.

**PHONE NUMBERS:**

All phone numbers dialed from Contra Costa require 10-digits. Landlines require the 1- before the number. Therefore, all phone numbers should be written as 1-925-555-5555.

**CLUBHOUSE:**

Clubhouse is one word. Only capitalize it when referring to a specific clubhouse or room in a clubhouse. Don’t use “the” before the name of a clubhouse.

**Correct**

Hillside Clubhouse  
 the Diablo Room  
 Dollar Clubhouse  
 Multipurpose Room 3

**Incorrect**

The Hillside Club House  
 Diablo room  
 Stanley Dollar Clubhouse  
 Multi-purpose room 3

**FORMAL TITLES AND NAMES:**

- On first reference, use a person’s full name. On second reference, use last name only.
- Do not use courtesy titles such as Mr., Mrs., Miss and Ms. After the first mention, refer to people by last name only unless it is necessary to distinguish two people with the same last name.
- Only use Dr. before a name when referring to a medical doctor, dentist or veterinarian.
- Titles and degrees (i.e. Ph.D.) are not used in bylines or captions. They can be used in taglines.

- Capitalize titles such as president, reverend and chairman only when used before a person's name. If used as an identifying term or in a general way, do not capitalize it.

**For example:**

President Ray Carter is going to...

Ray Carter, the president, is going to...

Ray Carter, president, is going to...

**Correct**

chairwoman or chairman

Mary Rodriguez

**Incorrect**

chairperson

Mrs. Mary Rodriguez

## COMMON AREAS OF STYLE MISUSE

The following are areas in which editing is most often needed:

- Don't use please; thank you can be used only with bylined stories and must be written in third-person (i.e. The club thanks its volunteers NOT We thank the volunteers)
- Capitalize only proper nouns when listing menu items (i.e. house salad, Caesar salad, mozzarella cheese, Parmesan cheese, etc.)
- "underway" is one word in all instances.
- "cutoff" as a noun and adjective is one word; as a verb, two words.
- When referring to a decade, the 1930s, 1990s, etc., is the correct usage (without the apostrophe). For example: "A group of women in their 90s" and "He was a mechanic back in the '20s."
- Periods and commas are inside quotation marks; semicolons are outside.
- "brown-bag" lunch has a hyphen.
- "car pool" is two words as a noun and an adjective; one word as a verb.
- Use "its" when referring to a group. For example: "The Community Club will hold its meeting..."
- Seasons (winter, summer, etc.) are not capitalized.
- Academic degrees should appear as: bachelor's degree, a master's degree, doctoral program, a doctorate degree (preferred form for Ph.D.).
- Most acronyms do not have periods: UC Berkeley, DVC, SIR.
- Mutual when referring to a Rossmoor Mutual is capitalized.
- Board is only capitalized when referring to the GRF Board. Mutual and organization boards are not capitalized.

- “sign-ups” (the noun, not the verb) and “long-term” has a hyphen; “nonprofit” and “longtime” do not.
- Use hyphens, not periods or parentheses, for phone numbers (i.e. 1-925-988-7800).
- Don’t abbreviate the days of the weeks. It’s Sunday, not Sun.
- Avoid the overused phrases “Mark your calendar” and “And a good time was had by all.”
- Use women, not ladies.
- Avoid overusing exclamation points. We will delete these.
- Movie, play, song and book titles should be in quotes.

## **WRITING TIPS**

- Limit use of adjectives and adverbs: In general, they should not be used except when there’s a bylined article. Never use “very.”
- Use the fewest words possible. (i.e. It’s not “will be creating” but “will create”)
- Don’t describe the weather for a past event, unless it was significant. For example, “The heavy rain resulted in low attendance.”
- Remember to write for all Rossmoor residents, not just members of the club or organization.
- Remove redundancy in phrases, words, and whole sentences, e.g., “the fact that” or “in order to.”
- Keep it simple: Long sentences often contain more than one idea. Cut longer sentences in two.
- All the sentences in a paragraph should relate to the point of that paragraph.
- Keep verb tense consistent all the way through, don’t switch from past to present.
- Remove jargon and references that others outside the club might not understand and avoid exclamatory phrases, e.g. “We’ll see you there!”
- Try to use the active rather than the passive voice, e.g. “The goals were accomplished by the club in 2020,” rather “The club accomplished its goals in 2020.”

### **SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE**

Submitted by: Joe Smith, 1-925555-5555

Dates to run: April 24 and May 1

Suggested headline: Golden State Club hosts Valentine dinner

Dinner and entertainment are planned for the Golden State Club on Saturday, Feb. 9, at 6 p.m. in the Diablo Room at Hillside Clubhouse. The event will have a Valentine's Day theme, with hearts and red flowers at every table.

Entertainment will be by the country western group Hard Travelin'. The four members of this band offer a variety of bluegrass and country songs.

The dinner will be catered by Food with Love and will feature Cornish game hens, mashed potatoes, green beans, spinach salad and strawberry shortcake.

The cost is \$15 per person. Tickets must be purchased by Monday, Feb. 6. Drop off checks in the club mailbox at Gateway Clubhouse or mail it to Joe Smith, 2525 Saklan Indian Drive No. 1.

For information about the party, call Smith at 1-925-555-5555.