

HELPFUL HINTS TO THE EDITOR



The purpose of this *Helpful Hints* list is to maximize the probability that your newsletter will receive the Distinctive Communicator Award given by the National Communications Committee each year. The process is not complicated. We believe that if you will accept the suggestions below, you will be the editor of an outstanding newsletter.

An editor's job is to edit, not just accept written material and figure some way to format it into an even number of pages. That implies the editor will read articles submitted, and where necessary or desirable, rewrite articles to make them editorially or factually correct or to make the meaning clearer. Officers and other squadron leaders are selected for their leadership qualities, not necessarily for their journalistic abilities. Sometimes they need your help. The editor is responsible for the interest generated by the newsletter, interest that promotes member involvement.

WHAT TO REPORT

1. Messages from the Commander and

reports from bridge officers are important to let members know what is happening in the squadron (or district or national) and also to let members know who their leaders are and what responsibilities they assume in administrating scheduled activities.

Because these messages and reports are often written at the last minute, they are frequently redundant, with several officers covering the same event. One plan you may wish to offer to your bridge officers is for the commander to keep his message to motivation and inspiration while other bridge officers report on activities within their departments. This plan helps the

editor keep the material interesting as duplicate coverage of events bores readers.

2. **Education** is the major purpose of our organization. As such, it deserves inclusion in each of your issues. It may take the form of a report from the educational officer, congratulations to graduates, pictures and/or stories about ongoing classes, descriptions of upcoming courses, the development of new teaching aids, etc. There is always something to report in the educational department. Give educational information a prominent place in each issue.
3. **Civic service** is a major USPS® goal. At least half of your issues should contain **articles about our boating courses for the public and cooperative charting and other civic efforts.** Articles about the boating course may be about public relations efforts to reach potential students, dates and locations of upcoming classes, requests to members to teach or proctor the classes. Articles about cooperative charting might describe why USPS helps NOAA. Follow the explanation with what is involved in obtaining and reporting chart updates or what is involved in the search for geodetic markers. Report on actual squadron cooperative charting outings with photos if possible.

4. **Boating Safety** is a major focus of USPS.

For that reason we should publish an article on boating safety in most issues. The National Safety Committee mails the *SAFETY BULLETIN* newsletter to your commander and your safety officer. In

most cases the information in that publication is never shared with the squadron or district. Ask that the safety newsletters be passed on to you, the editor, as the publication is a good resource for articles for your newsletter. The Safety and Radio Tech Officers should contribute articles. Other sources are boating magazines and other USPS newsletters. Along with safety articles, include tips on maintenance and how-to projects that relate to keeping boats in good condition.

5. There is more to our organization than classes and meetings. We have many **social and boating events**. No social occasion or boating event should happen without some one being assigned by you to cover the event with a story and, if possible, photos. Publicity before and after these social events encourages members to participate. Photos are especially effective in promoting esprit de corps and member involvement.
6. A typical **USPS district organization** has both a Spring and Fall Conference and Council Meetings. Reporting to your members what happened at these district events is your responsibility. There may be awards issued and district business meeting decisions to report to members. Pictures of members in seminars, receiving awards, or enjoying themselves at the social functions, etc. tell the story better than words. Make sure someone attending district functions writes a story and takes pictures for your newsletter. It is important to make squadron members aware of the role of the district organization of USPS.
7. Our **USPS national organization** has an Annual Meeting in January and Spring and Fall Governing Board meetings. Your commander is a member of the Governing Board, and as such, is a part of the policy

making organization of USPS. If the commander or any other members of your squadron attend these meetings, one of them should give you a report for the newsletter to keep members informed about the governing process and the events related to national meetings. Again, photos of these events enhance the story.

8. **Newletters must be interesting to read** if you want readers to read the whole issue. Grab readers' attention with **creative headers**. Use **members' names** when possible. Members should be recognized publicly for their achievements and contributions to the organization. Use **photos and clip art** to make your newsletter more interesting. Clip art, both as hard copy and as computer art, are available from Headquarters. Members like to see photos of themselves and other members that evoke memories of events. **Readers like to be entertained**. They are particularly interested in personal accounts of boating experiences. **Humor** in any form attracts readership. Readers like to expect they will find **information that is meaningful** to them. Ideas for input of this nature range from practical how-to, or welcome advice type articles to entertaining personal stories, jokes, thought-provoking sayings, or word and trivia games. Adding these *extras* results in members looking forward to receiving the issues and to reading them from beginning to end.

STYLE AND FORMAT

9. In composing your newsletter, follow the guidelines set forth in the *Style Sheet* that can be found in Chapter 14 of the 2012 USPS Operations Manual. The Operations Manual can be found on the [USPS website](#).

Since editors are responsible for not infringing on USPS policy in print in their newsletters, it is a good idea for them to have a copy of the *Operations Manual*.

10. **Use a consistent format** for standard input in each issue so readers know where to look for items such as the list of bridge members' names and phone numbers.
11. Make certain that **each issue is clearly dated**, preferably on the cover. Ideally the cover should contain the name of the newsletter, the squadron name, the district number, and preferably in smaller font, *A Unit of United States Power Squadrons®* and in even smaller font, *Sail and Power Boating* as well as the date.
12. **Give credit when you reprint articles** from other USPS newsletters. Newsletters on district or squadron websites and the Parade of Publications table at National's Annual Meeting and Fall Governing Board are good sources for articles. Districts and squadrons recognized for the Distinctive Communicator Award can bring up to 25 copies of their publication to the Parade of Publications to share with others. **Observe copyright laws.** If you want to reprint articles (including cartoons) from commercial publications, inquire whether they are copyrighted and if so, get permission from the publisher.
13. We are required to **observe USPS trademarks** in our newsletters. Trademark use is described in the *Operations Manual*, Chapter 14.
14. **Include rank and grade with members' names.** If the member's name is mentioned several times in an article, use the rank and grade with the first mention and use last, full name, or first name on subsequent references.
15. **Avoid typographical and grammatical errors.** We strongly suggest you ask a friend who has some language skills, to proofread your publications prior to printing. Editors who proofread their own work tend to see what they thought they wrote.
16. If you include **advertising, be certain it does not overshadow the squadron news**, or the creative writing portion of your publication. Having to wade through pages of ads to find little bits of squadron news interspersed is discouraging to readers. Relegate the ads to the back of the issue. Information for members should appear as the paramount reason for the publication, not the ads.
17. Include the **addresses and phone numbers of key people**. If a reader wishes to write or call about a story, for clarification about an upcoming party, or to offer to help on an event, make it easy for them do so. Most squadrons include the names and addresses and phone numbers of all bridge officers. This is not considered an invasion of their privacy. Also, **editors should include their names, addresses and phone numbers** so that they may be contacted for newsletter-related business. Consider formatting a masthead listing those associated with the newsletter production and information on the frequency of publication. Study mastheads of prominent publications for examples to follow.

18. Your newsletter should be attractive, but not necessarily expensive. It **should be easy to read and easy to handle**. The print should be clear, the font size not too small or too dark or too ornate, and pages of text should contain enough white space or graphics to avoid an all gray page of print. Font size is particularly important. A minimum size of 11 or 12 is recommended for the average reader. Standard margins should be used throughout.

THE DISTINCTIVE COMMUNICATOR AWARD

19. To be considered for the Distinctive Communicator Award, the first requirement is that your newsletters be submitted to your assigned evaluator. You must send at least four different squadron newsletter issues (or two district issues) to your evaluator. Those issues must be dated between 1 November and 31 October the following year. The name and address of the Communications Committee member assigned to evaluate your newsletter can be found on the [Communications Committee website](#). If you have questions, please contact your evaluator or the Communications Committee Chairman who is listed on the same website.

20. The Squadron Newsletter Evaluation Form can be found on the [Communications Committee website](#) under the drop down menu for Evaluation Forms. It can be used as a guide while composing your newsletter; the form lists 1) what to publish and 2) considerations that should be given to style and layout. Point values indicate relative importance of the input. The form suggests content to include in the issues to produce an outstanding newsletter. Editors can rate their own newsletters before going to print. The same criteria are used by the Communications Committee to judge the

newsletters for the award. The award is not a contest. Every newsletter editor may earn the award and thereby produce an outstanding newsletter for his squadron.

THE NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE

- 21. The editor's job is a most important one.** The editor must be in touch with all departments in order to report news of their current activities. The newsletter is the only piece of communication that goes to every member regularly and thus plays a large part in keeping members bonded to the organization. The newsletter should, therefore, reflect positive attitudes and promote activities in a way that will attract member participation.
- 22. To accomplish these goals, the editor needs help.** The editor is usually chair of the Newsletter Committee, but he or she should not be expected to do everything connected with the newsletter. Members should be recruited to help with assembling, reproducing, and distributing, etc. Members should be asked to contribute articles and reports, photos, and to monitor boating publications for interesting articles. Finally, an editor should have an assistant who can occasionally take over the editor's job.
- 23. The National Communications Committee** hopes you will find being newsletter editor an exciting challenge and a rewarding experience.