

# GFWC Virginia Newsletter Tips



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## Part 1: How to put together a newsletter

### *Purpose of a newsletter*

Reporting to members – projects, officers' reports, chairman's reports, etc.

Saving time at meetings by giving details in advance

Archiving records, recording motions and board actions

Posting the Club calendar

Recognizing members' achievements, birthdays, loss of family members, etc.

Keeping members informed of District and State meetings, special events, and socials.

### *Planning your newsletter*

*Talk with your President and Board*

Decide on the purpose of your newsletter.

Determine who will contribute articles (officers, chairman, ...)

What is your budget (copying, mailing, postage, etc.)?

Who is your audience?

Members, District president or junior director, honorary members, sponsors, prospects, etc.?

*Survey the Club members*

What do they think the purpose should be?

What do they want to see in the newsletter?

Do they want to contribute articles? What kind?

*Editor's decisions with Club input*

How much time do I have to produce this newsletter?

What equipment is available to me? Computer, graphics, special paper?

What type of help will I be getting?

May I edit articles?

May I decide whether an article is relevant, and omit it or save it for a future issue?

*Action*

How many printed copies do you need?

What are the deadlines and how are they announced?

Will the newsletter have a name and/or logo (nameplate)?

What will its format be?

### *Newsletter Format*

*Nameplate*

The nameplate is your badge. It should project your image or Club theme – informal, friendly, energetic -- whatever you want to convey. The nameplate should include the newsletter title, your Club name, and District and State affiliation.

Nameplates usually include a dateline, in the design or on a line underneath it. A volume number in addition to the date is not necessary unless you have a reason, such as carrying on numbered series.

You may include the editor's name and the Club president's name here also, as long as it does not make the nameplate too busy. Their names may be better saved for the section of the newsletter that gives contact information.

*Table of Contents*

This is useful for along newsletter, as it helps readers locate items. You can place this in the "scholar's margin," which is a narrow left-hand column without regular text in it. (This is also a good place for State and District seals, if you are using them.)

*Headings*

Use consistent headings to draw attention to topics that appear in every issue, such as department names.

Contrast headings from the regular text by using larger or bolder type. You can also use word art (distorted letters) as long as it remains legible and doesn't look gimmicky.

*Headlines*

Make headlines of featured articles bigger than those for less important articles. Create a hierarchy according to importance and stick with it.

*White space*

Deliberately designed white space improves the readability by uncluttering pages, framing copy (that is, by leaving adequate margins around the page and enough space between columns so that text blocks do not run together), and balancing pictures. Related objects (photos and their captions or articles and their headlines) should be close together, while unrelated objects should be separated by white space.

*Unified design*

To achieve unity, repeat design elements used on the front page throughout the following pages, as long as they are relevant. Keep typeface, type size, and grid and colors consistent throughout. Consistency enhances readability because readers follow visual cues. Use "pull quotes" (blurbs) taken from the surrounding text to draw attention to priority information and vary the texture of the page. You may justify your margins, so your copy will be "squared," but most people find it easier to read left-justified type, since it does not have the blank spaces that are used to justify type. Either way, do it consistently

throughout your newsletter.

#### *Boxes*

Ruled or colored boxes draw attention to important information. Use only a few, so as not to diminish their importance.

#### *Illustrations*

Artwork attracts the eye. It should be relevant to nearby content and it should look like a logical part of the page design, not a filler. Clip art should be planned to coordinate the images into each page. Just filling holes makes pages look unplanned and cluttered. Text can surround (wrap around) the illustration.

#### **Standards of good design**

A good newsletter design pulls all the information together, attracts the reader to the pages, and makes the message easily accessible and understandable. Successful editors consider readability first, beauty second (although a readable but ugly newsletter may not get read anyway). They use format and design appropriate to the newsletter's purpose and budget. They design a dynamic nameplate and front page. They use headlines and body type well-blended and suited to their format. Creative photos, illustrations, and other graphics are used. Consistency throughout a publication is foremost, keeping the newsletter clean and uncluttered.

#### **Newsletter Distribution**

*Whom do you send it to?*

**District Level:** You **may** send your club newsletters to your District President or Junior Director, depending on the

custom in your district. You **should** send it to whoever judges the newsletters in your district.

**State Level:** You **may** send your club newsletters to your State President or Junior Director, depending on the custom in your club.

**Do send it** to the Editor of the *Virginia Clubwoman* (see nameplate) because she judges them on the state level.

**Do not** send them to the state Communications and Identity Chair except when you are **Reporting**. You **do** report them under Communications and Identity.

#### *How do I send it?*

You can use snail mail. Remember that postage rates tend to increase, which may affect the length of your newsletter, so be concise.

Many -- if not most -- clubs are sending their newsletter by e-mail. A Word document attached to your e-mail is the best way to send your newsletters, because nearly everyone can open it. Doing the newsletter in Publisher is fine, but many people can't open it because they don't have Publisher or the right version of it. Creating a PDF file can solve this problem. All your readers need then is Adobe Reader, which is available free on the Internet at [www.pdf995.com](http://www.pdf995.com).

When you are sending your newsletter by e-mail, PDF, or Word file, remember that many people will print it out. If it is all in color, this can be expensive. If it is long, it will use a lot of paper. So be considerate and keep your newsletter to the point both in length and decoration.

#### **The one big rule**

Have fun! It will spark your newsletter and attract readership.

## **Part 2: How your newsletter is judged**

### *What do judges look for in your newsletters?*

**Federation IDs/logos** should be placed on the front or back cover of the newsletter. Show the judges immediately that yours is a GFWC affiliated club.

On the masthead, with the name of your newsletter, it is **very important** to identify the name of your Club and your District.

- Month and year of newsletter.
- Index or table of contents
- Reports of Officers
- Members' recognition or information (illness, death, birthday, babies, etc.)
- Calendar of Events
- Reminders to members, such as what to bring to a meeting
- Minutes or Treasurer's reports

Judges also look for neatness and appearance. Newsletters don't have to be long or in color, have a lot of fill, or be expensive. The important thing is to make your newsletter pertinent to your audience. Give your members the tools they need to come to your next meeting prepared. The newsletter should be something a member can read before a club meeting, which will tell her all she needs to know to make the meeting meaningful to her. Including the minutes and Treasurer's reports can also make the meeting shorter, and for those who miss the meeting the newsletter will keep them up to speed. What are some of the things you would like to see in your newsletter?