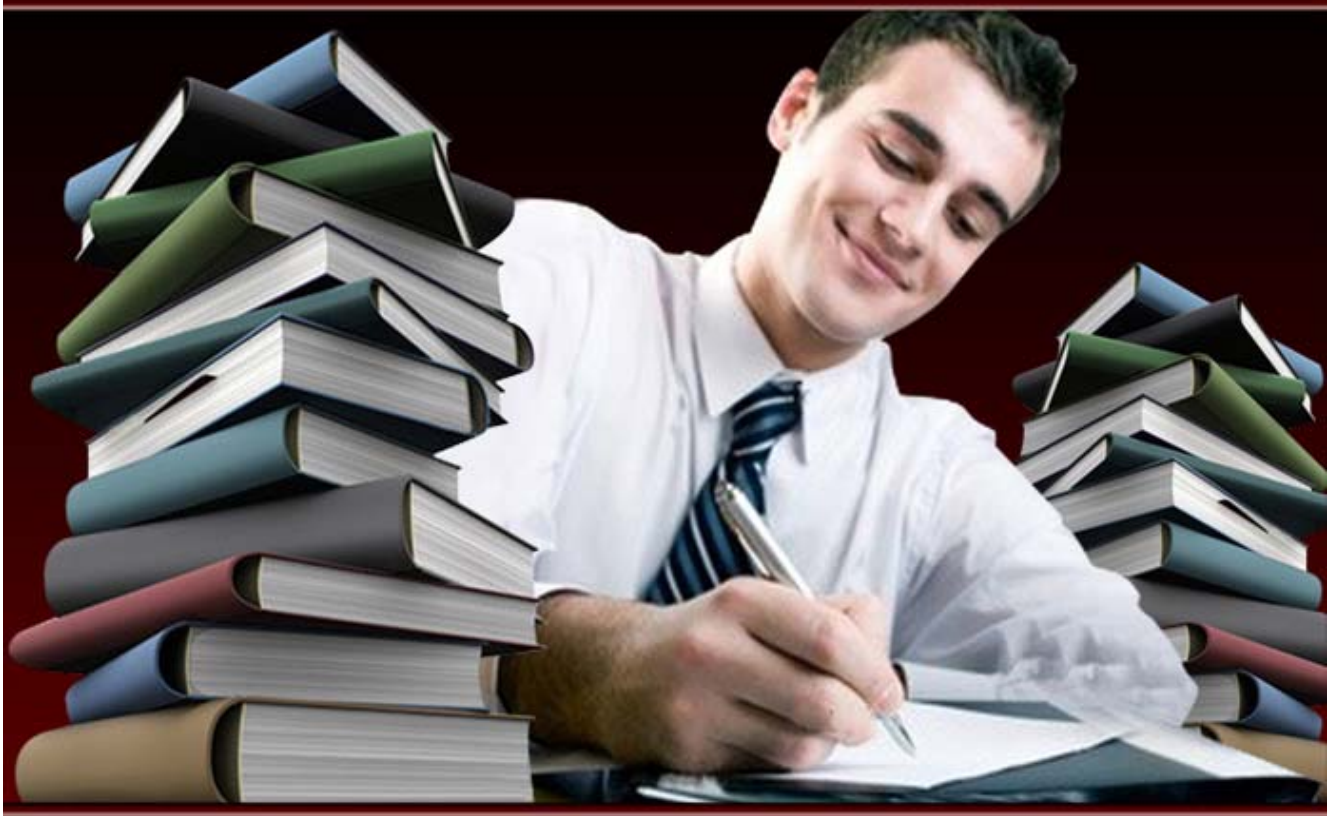
Mike Steup's

HOW TO WRITE YOUR FIRST ARTICLE



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The purpose of this guide is to teach you how to write an article, one that will get your reader to click on the link in the Author's Resource Box so your reader's will visit your website. I am assuming if you are reading this guide that you have never written an article before, or that you haven't written many articles. Or, perhaps you have written a few articles but want to know how to write a better article, the type of article that will (1) get published, (2) get read and (3) get readers to visit your website.

This guide also assumes you have already completed niche research and keyword research on the subject you plan to write about. Now, why would you want to write articles? Because you need to boost traffic to your website, and article writing is a great tool for doing that. Article marketing often provides many small business owners with a free form of marketing and advertising.

Often new businesses on the web may garner just a handful or a few dozen visitors each week. You may have a few hundred visitors coming to your website if you have established your business. Think about how much more business you could be doing if you had a few thousand visitors coming to your site each week. Is it possible? It is, if you create great articles that get your name out there and links to your website.

Articles can become a traffic magnet when written well. They can generate tons of targeted traffic. And, you don't have to spend a lot of time writing articles once you get the hang of it. In fact you can probably spend just one to two hours a week working on your articles once you get the hang of it. That's not very much time at all.

So, how do you get started? Simply follow the steps outlined in this guide. You need a computer and a few hours and you will be well on your way to creating perfect articles.

Here is quick summary of what we'll be talking about in this guide.

- How to create great titles and headlines for your articles, so you attract the right types of visitors and you reel them in.
- How to create a solid structure for your articles so they read like professional articles.

- How to format articles so they are easy-to-read and flow well on the page.
- How to create many different kinds of articles including review articles and list articles.
- How to create SEO articles and where to place keywords in your article to get the most bang.
- How to write in a conversational style so you keep your visitors interested in what you have to say.

Are you ready to start learning more? Then let’s begin!

The title of your article is the most important part of your article. If the rest of your article is only ok, but the title of your article is great, then there is a pretty good chance most people will read your article.

The good news is you will create a great article AND a great title using this guide. A great title, however, is critical because it will get your article published and entice people to read your article. An attractive title sells your article and your website. It tells people you know what you know. It conveys expertise.

You Can Sell And Promote With A Great Title

The title is also known as the “headline,” although you may have many separate “headlines” or sub-headlines throughout your article. This part of your article is the main piece or the feature of your article because it is what you hope will draw people in, like a worm on a fishing pole.

Now, let’s pause for a minute to think about why it is so important to have a great title.

Think about all of the articles you pass by in the grocery store when you go to the checkout line and see the magazines piled up at the counter.

Which articles are you most likely to read? The ones with the most dynamic titles, because you are short on time, right? It’s not like you are going to be in the checkout line at the grocery store very long.

The same is true of your visitors online. They are not going to hang around that web page very long. So, they are going to look for articles that have the most interesting titles and headlines. They look for the ones that are concise and attention-grabbing.

If your headline is not good, then why would the reader pursue what it is you have to say? That said, your title must also be accurate. You can’t just paste some flashy headline about anything on your article and hope for the best. If you talk about the *10 Greatest Tips For*

Making Money, then your article should cover making money, not how to raise goldfish. If you don't offer what you say you will, you won't get anywhere.

Your Title Should Define Your Article

Your title should be the start and end point of your article, defining where your article will start and end. Your reader should have a sense of what they will get from your article after reading it.

This may sound like a lot of work, and on the surface it is. But it shouldn't cause you a lot of grief. You shouldn't spend hours sweating it out trying to come up with great titles.

That doesn't mean you won't at first. Many people get stuck on the headline. They waste hours and hours trying to come up with a good headline. Most of the time the two major problems people have with their headlines are:

- Their headlines or titles are too long.
- Their subjects are too broad.

How Long Should The Title Be?

The title of your article should read like a HEADLINE. You don't want it to be too short or too long. You want it to be exactly right. How great your headline is determines whether your reader continues to read your article, so you want it to be great.

You don't want it to read like an epic novel. Think about the headlines and titles you read in the newspaper. In fact, it may help for you to get out a favorite magazine or newspaper and look at the headlines and titles. What do you see?

The length of many of these is often short and concise. There is no one precise definition of the "correct" length, but a good length is one that conveys a message, draws the reader in and moves them along without putting them to sleep.

Here are some tips for writing a title that is not too long or short:

- Keep your message to the point.

- Avoid being too clever or cute. You don't want your message to be subtle. Your reader doesn't have time to figure out riddles or word rhymes. Just tell them exactly what you plan to give them.

- Tell your reader how they will benefit by reading your article.

- Tell your reader what you plan to give them. Shout it out, don't make the reader search for this information. Don't bury it in the third paragraph down on the page. Your reader won't take the time to get this far.

- Make sure your title reads like a press release or something worthy of the six o'clock news.

People want specifics. Don't try to write on a broad topic. Narrow it down to one specific part of that broad topic. Keep things precise and exact.

Here are some examples of good titles:

- "German Scientist Discovers The Cure For Cancer In Your Cupboard"
- "Unemployed Carpenter Discovers How To Make $3,000 A Month Selling Paper Clips"
- "Learn How You Can Turn Your Paper Plates Into Fast Cash"
- "Make $500 A Week Shredding Paper In Your Spare Time"
- 5 Ways to Make $100 Today

These titles are all simple and to the point, and likely to capture someone's interest. They tell the reader what they will get or how they will benefit, or they inspire mystery, intrigue or interest. They are headlines.

Now, something else that will improve your titles and your articles are keywords. Later in this guide we will learn more about selecting keywords and creating search engine optimized (also called SEO) articles. This will be an invaluable section because it will teach you how to improve your page rank in major search engines like Google and MSN. If you want visitors to find you then you have to create articles that are SEO.

Tips For Creating Great Titles

How do you create great titles? One simple way is to borrow from others. You can simply look for great titles from other websites and from other articles. If you find some then print them out or save them to a file.

The next time you have difficulty coming up with your own title refer back to your file.

Marketers often do this when trying to come up with a sales page. They sometimes refer to this process as creating a “swipe” file. Now, you can’t simply copy and paste the title from the other article.

The idea is to borrow the idea or theme behind the title or topic to create your own. It may get your juices flowing. You may find you use one or two words from the other headline or title to create your own title.

You may find you can create an opposing title from the one you selected. As an alternate approach, some days instead of writing articles you can brainstorm and just come up with a big list of titles or topics you can write about. You can also store these in a file. You can select some days to play around with these titles to add keywords or tighten them up so they are attractive and read well. This will save you time when you are ready to write articles, so you don’t have to spend hours trying to come up with great titles! Often, great articles are written around great titles, so remember that. If you get the title down, the rest should be easy!

But more on this later . . . Once you discover your title, the next part of article writing involves building the structure of your article. Let’s learn how to create great articles now from the bottom up by learning more about article structure.

A good title often inspires many good ideas. You can often write a great article from a great title. But, if you don't know anything about article structure, sometimes your article can fall into great disarray. Don't worry! If you understand the basic "structure" of an article, you will find that creating an article is much easier than you think.

Think Of Your Article Structure As You Might The Foundation Of A Home

The structure of an article is much like a skeleton or the foundation of a home, providing much needed support. It is the basic framework necessary to build the foundation for an article from the bottom up. Once you have the structure in place you can flesh out the rest of your article. If you don't have a solid structure, the article will fail. Much like a home requires a sturdy foundation, a good article needs a sturdy structure.

Now, many people don't like the idea of outlining an article, or completing an article because they associate writing an article with "assignments" . . . the type they might have completed in school, for example.

Don't think of writing articles as work however, at least not in this sense.

Article Writing Isn't Work, It's Money-Making Fun!

Unlike many "assigned" works, writing an article can be much more stimulating because often people find they write articles on subjects they feel passionate about and subjects they know a lot about.

And, when you write articles in this manner, you will do so because you want to generate traffic to your websites. This should translate into increased profits. In other words, you write articles so you can increase your pay or the money in your pocket. Who needs more incentive than that?

If someone paid you to do your homework back in school the odds are high you would have had a lot more fun completing your homework, right?

And remember, you will have an easy time finding content, because you will be the subject expert most times, and when you aren't you will feel passionate about the subjects you work with and will have access to plenty of information, the type you need to write good articles.

Don't worry too much right now about finding the content for your articles. If you plan to market your own products and services, the odds are high you will not have too much trouble with content, because you probably have a strong handle on the subject matter.

How Long Should An Article Be?

How long your article should be depends on many factors. The purpose of your article largely determines how long it should be. If you plan to submit multiple articles for SEO purposes, for the purpose of improving your page rank, then most people create articles between 300 and 500 words.

If you plan to create many articles to increase your visibility and to get your bio and resource box out there, and to create quality content likely to attract many e-zines and other publications, you may need to create articles that are a bit longer, between 500 and 600 words.

Some article distribution services recommend you don't write an article less than 700 words because it is not likely to be picked up by a publisher. Some publishers feel that shorter articles do not offer quality content readers are likely to enjoy. However, if you are a good writer or become one, you can fit a lot of good content into a couple of high-quality pages (this generally amounts to roughly 500 words). So, check with the article distribution service you plan to use.

Try writing a few longer and shorter articles and see which generate more clicks. If you write longer articles but they don't have a lot of "meat" or good content, then they are not worth their weight in gold. But, if you create several shorter articles with great content, people will appreciate the high quality of your content.

As you get better at writing articles you may find that certain subjects

command a certain requirement. You can also check out your competition to see what they are doing. If you find that your target marketing responds better to a certain type of article, or to a certain length, then be sure that you provide what they are looking for.

If, for example, you need to explain the goings on of a complicated product, then be sure to include enough words to describe the product adequately, don't skimp on the details.

Now, let's assume you have the content you need for your article. Creating a winning article begins (as we've hammered into your head now) with structure. Here are some important points to consider when building the structure of your article:

1. Introduction
2. Body
3. Conclusion

Let's review each of these in more detail so you become more familiar with each of these important pieces of article writing. Then you can practice creating your own article.

Introduction

The introduction of your article will lead into the most important part of your article . . . the "meat," or the body of the article. This part of your article typically contains an overview of what you will talk about.

In the introduction, it is important that you introduce the problem you plan to solve for your reader. What problem do you plan to talk about? Is your article a "how to" article? Then what do you plan to demonstrate? Give your audience a brief review of how you plan to proceed and pump them up so they are excited to read what you have to say!

Some people start their introduction with a simple, "In this article you will earn how to . . ." or "In this article you will learn about . . ." This is a perfectly ok introduction albeit a bit bland. You might start with something a bit more dynamic. However, you will certainly get the point across. Remember your visitors want information from you. You want to get information to them.

Here are some tips for creating a great introduction:

- Present your topic or a problem if one exists, which sums up what the article will talk about.
- Ask your reader a question, or state some fact or comment in a way that draws in and engages your reader. Make your first or second sentence pop!
- Tell your reader the "who's, what's, when's, why's and how" of what is going on or what you plan to cover in your article.
- Sum up what your reader will learn or uncover on finishing the article.
- Go back to your introduction once you finish your article to review and make sure your introduction matches your article.

Many people find it pays to answer simple questions in the introduction, or the "who, what, where, why and when" of their article. If you have this information then you will come across as knowing exactly what you write about.

Most people start reading an article wanting to know this information anyway.

Then transition them into the next part of your article . . .

Exercise: Writing an Introduction

1. Select a simple idea, or come up with a topic for your introduction. If you want to work from a title, then begin with a title. If you have not already created a list of titles to work from, you may consider doing this before trying to write an introductory paragraph. This can help you considerably, because you won't spend hours trying to come up with subject matter.

2. Begin with a first sentence. You can lead in with (1) a question, (2) a statement of fact supported with statistics or

other information, (3) an analogy or (4) a personal anecdote. If you were in school, you might think of this statement as the thesis statement, although I hesitate to use this word, because this inspires a lot of anxiety in most people. The first sentence can boldly proclaim something . . . what your intention is. Just make sure it makes a powerful impact and is clear, concise and to the point.

3. Review what you plan to talk about and how you plan to solve any problem that exists. You should also have in mind the benefits you plan to offer your visitor.

4. Conclude with what the reader or visitor will gain from reading this article and what you hope to accomplish. The final sentence of the introduction should sum up what you just said or what the entire article will say. It may sound a bit redundant, but that's ok because it is.

All of this makes it sound like the introduction should be quite lengthy, but realistically speaking the introduction of your article will only be a paragraph or two. The key to good writing is creating a paragraph that contains quality content in a small space.

Some people find it helps to write out an introductory paragraph that may be too long at first, then shorten it after they write out the rest of their article. This is fine too as long as it works for you. Remember, the goal is to reduce the amount of work you have to do, not to increase it.

Once you complete the introduction of your article you can move onto the body of your article.

The Body

The body is the next part of your article; some people call this the meaty part of the article because it often contains the most information. For this reason it is important you keep the reader moving along in this section. You can accomplish this many ways, like by using bullets throughout the article's body so it is easy for the reader to skip along the page.

This is especially helpful when creating text for the web, because reading a solid block of text can be tiring on the eyes.

In the body of the text you will want to do the following:

- Break text up into bulleted points like this. Make sure you present a main idea in each point. Limit the length of each bullet to one or two short sentences. Otherwise you will bore the reader.

- Present your main ideas and topics in paragraphs.

- Talk about all of the different answers or solutions to the problem you plan to present in different paragraphs. These are supporting points. Make sure you expand on these points by providing detail or some discussion.

- Create subheadings for each section so the body is easier to read.

- Support any propositions you make with facts and statistics.

For every argument you may make in the body of your article, you should always provide supporting documentation. You can't simply make a statement without some supporting information. You can do this if there is adequate evidence supporting your role as an expert, but people are more likely to believe you if you provide adequate supporting information.

When creating the body of an article, most people find it helps to (1) make a point, (2) support this point, (3) elaborate or provide detail on the point, (4) summarize the paragraph and (5) move on to the next point.

If you do this for two or three paragraphs, you should have a strong enough "body" for your article to write a conclusion and finish your article. If you plan to write longer articles you may need to write more paragraphs. Some articles will not follow this exact pattern. List articles or "how to" articles especially may deviate from this pattern.

A "how to" article, for example, might list instructions about how to accomplish something or solve a problem rather than present a body in a typical "main" point and "supporting documentation" fashion. Keep this in mind. While the information presented here works 99% of the time for most of the articles you will write, you will find times you may need to deviate from the course presented, and that is ok.

Generally however, when you present ideas followed by support and evidence, you will keep your article logically organized so your visitor doesn't just bounce from one idea to another. Don't forget to present your ideas in chronological order if that applies.

Exercise: Creating The Body

In this exercise you can work on creating the body of your article. This is a great exercise for building your first article. You can work off of the introduction you already started in the previous exercise if you like.

To create a solid body for an article, first come up with at least two main points you want to support in your article.

For example, let's say that you want to talk about saving trees. Let's say you want to sell recycled paper, and you are interested in the subject of the environment and sustainable living.

Here are two main points you can cover in the body of your article:

1. Using recycled paper is better for your printers.
2. Recycled paper cuts down on waste.

Once you come up with these points, you will have to come up with some facts or supporting evidence for these points.

Perhaps you have a study that shows that printers use less energy when printing on recycled paper. You can show that less paper goes to landfills, and by what percentage, when consumers use recycled paper rather than new paper. You might also consider talking about the impact paper has on deforestation.

Once you support your point, you may want to embellish a little and add some details or elaborate. To conclude, sum up your paragraph, and then transition into the next one.

After you write the body of your article, step away for a short time and then come back to edit. You may also find it helps to spot check your work as you go along to avoid major errors. This will help reduce your edit time once you finish your article.

Once you are done with the body you can transition into the final part of your article.

The Conclusion

By the time you get to the conclusion of your article you should be ready to take a deep breathe! Congratulations you are almost there! The conclusion is a critical part of your article. Here you will sum up everything you have talked about in your article.

You can provide a brief review much like in the introduction of your article, covering the main points you made and then provide a nice close to your article. A nice and tight conclusion will leave the reader feeling like they got what they came for.

They should feel completed. Remember, the words you leave your visitor with will stay with them and influence whether they decide to continue on to your resource box, where you will try to entice them to your website. Don't try to cut corners at the very end of your article. You want to keep the same momentum here you had at the beginning of your article.

Keep things clear and concise.

The conclusion often reads very much like the introduction of an article. Sometimes you can write the conclusion by simply reading the introduction. You can often take one or two lines and re-write them. You want to (1) restate your original argument or premise, (2) summarize what you said and (3) leave the reader feeling fulfilled and satisfied.

Some would also argue that you should leave the reader with a little teaser that encourages them to click on your resources box, the one you will write and place at the end of your article. This is up to you. Whatever you do make sure when your article is complete, the visitor feels complete. They should feel like they have received everything they expected from your article.

If you told the reader you planned to teach them how to pot a plant, then that is what they should have learned.

You should not include only 5 of the 10 steps necessary to achieve this task. You can however write an article that teaches your readers how to pot a plant, and then direct them to your website where you teach your readers how to maintain their plants year-round.

Here are some questions you can ask to determine whether you have a strong conclusion:

- Did I summarize what I stated in my article (arguments, etc.)?
- Did I restate my original problem, statement or theme?
- Did I leave my reader feeling satisfied?

If you answered “No” to any questions, go back and re-read your article and try again. Don’t forget to proofread your conclusion, and the rest of your article at this stage too!

The Resource Box

The resource box is one of the most important sections of your online article, because it is the part of the article where you are going to hopefully direct the reader to your website or your newsletter. Here you want to provide the reader with a brief summary or biography of yourself. You want to tell them just a little about your business, tell them why you are the expert and then provide them with a link to you, your website or your newsletter so they can sign up.

This is your opportunity to shine. You can provide readers with a link to learn more about your products and services or to subscribe to your newsletter. Most of the time, the resources box is limited to 4 to 8 lines, although this may vary between different article directories.

Make sure your writing style is clean and concise to accommodate your limited space. You want to provide the best possible information and the most useful information to your visitors. If you provide insurance to people then tell them that. Don’t tell them you like fly-fishing. Who cares? You can tell them that on the “about us” section of your web page.

When you have limited time, work with the most critical information. Here are some questions you can answer that will help you create a good resources box:

- Who are you?
- What do you offer?

- Why are you qualified?
- What is your website link?
- What do visitors get?

You might consider preparing a couple of different bios and seeing which work best. If some work better than others then you can switch them out once you determine what is most likely to make people want to learn more about your website and your products.

You can prep visitors for your resource box by leading them in subtly in the last lines of your article. If you think about it, however, really your entire article is a lead in to your resources box. What you want to do is convince your readers that you are the expert.

You want to provide them with interesting information on a subject that will engage them, one that will send them hunting for more information about your products and services. Ask yourself, “Why would I want to click this link?” If you can answer that question then you have probably done a good job of writing your resource box.

Check the web for examples of your competitor’s resource boxes to see how they have done it. Are they much different from yours? What is good and bad about them? How can you improve on what they’ve done? You can always find examples of what is good and what is bad on the web. While you never want to copy these you can use them as examples to get your own creative juices flowing.

You can also use them to jump start your own brainstorming sessions. It’s always a good idea to keep a few copies of articles and resource boxes you find that are really good, because you can learn from these or refer to them when you have writers block.

Now It’s Your Turn

Now it’s time for you to practice writing your first resource box. Think about writing your own bio. First, ask, “Why are you the expert?” Limit your answer to one sentence. Then ask, “What are you selling?” And, “What is your web link?” You will have to figure out what web page you want to send visitors to.

Ultimately you want to get them to a page where they will have to enter their name and email address so you can start a list. Sometimes you will send them directly to a sales page, but this is not always the case.

Quickly, before we move on to the next section, I want to mention the kind of page that you can send your visitors to from your resource box. Many article directories don't allow you to use a direct affiliate link, so you'll have to send your visitors to a landing page first (unless you're promoting one of your own products, of course).

Your landing page could be a pre-sales letter for the product you are promoting, and then you have them click on a link to continue to the sales letter, or you can use this opportunity to build your list.

I have found that it works best to get the opt-in, and then send them to the sales page for whatever product you are promoting. You can get them to subscribe by giving them a free report about the subject, a product that you usually charge for, or even more articles through your newsletter.

Whatever the case, be sure that you are doing something to build your list from your articles.

Now that you know something about creating a writers resource box, it's time for you to start thinking about editing your article. Don't worry, it's a lot easier than it really sounds . . .

Once you complete the main structure of your article, you should leave your article for at least 24 hours. Most of the time before you edit your article you should let your eyes rest for a day or more. This will give you time to gain a more objective view of your work.

Often when editing an article you find more errors if you've let the article sit for a day or more than if you try to edit the article on the same day. It pays to have fresh eyes. Of course, if you plan to have someone else edit your work and approve it, then you don't have to worry about this.

You can wait until you finish your Resource Box and SEO work to edit your articles, but some people prefer to review the main structure of their articles before proceeding to the resource box section of their articles.

It's up to you. Whichever allows you to work in a timely fashion. In the next section you will learn how to write different types of articles. Writing different types of articles will keep your writing sharp and keep you interested in writing articles. It will also keep search engines picking up articles and keep readers interested in what you have to offer.

How to Edit Your Articles

How do you go about editing your articles? You go over them with a fine tooth comb because you want to make a good impression. If you are creating dozens of inexpensive ebooks to put on the market you may be tempted to gloss through them quickly. If you are putting out an article for the first time, one you want to make an impression, you better stop, look, and edit.

People are not going to consider you a subject expert if you don't take the time to at least marginally edit your work. That means you have to take the time to spell check and correct most common grammatical errors.

Not good at editing? Don't worry, you can hire someone to do it for you, or you can get hold of some software like StyleWriter relatively inexpensively. You just load your

article in and click “Enter” and let the software make editing recommendations for you. How simple is that?

Just make sure you use one or two sets of peepers to review your work. The most important things to be right include (1) your titles and (2) your web links. You don’t want to have a perfectly edited article with a broken link to your website, because your website won’t serve any purpose.

Different Types of Articles

Now that you know a bit about writing articles, and after you spend some time practicing articles, you will probably want to spend sometime thinking about the many different types of articles you can write.

There are many different kinds of articles you can write. The more varied your articles, the less likely you are to get bored and the more interested your readers and visitors will be. If you write several articles on a single subject it is a good idea to consider the best types of articles to write.

Here are some examples of the most common types of articles:

- List Articles
- Review Articles
- “How To” Articles
- Persuasive Articles

Let’s look at some of the more common types of articles and talk about how you can expand on these articles when creating your own articles.

List Articles

List articles are great articles to choose if you are short on time. These are the quickest and simplest articles you can write. You can usually write more than one article in an hour if you set your mind to it.

Here is how you typically set up a list article:

1. Create an introduction where you provide a brief overview of your subject. This must be very focused because you will be creating a very concise article of roughly 500 to 600 words. If, for example, you plan to write an article on flowers, your topic might be as narrow as “5 Ways to Save Cash at the Grocery Store.”

2. Create a list that will either provide your reader with a list of items or that will provide added details about something in the article, or one that will teach your reader something (like the steps in ways to save money at the grocery store, for example). It should be really easy for you to come up with the items on your list. Keep the details minimal, to two or three sentences.

3. Make sure the items you listed are organized. This is most important if you create a list of instructions. Just be sure whatever type of list you create the items on the list make perfect sense. If you need to explain the order of the items you list then do so; if the items require no specific ordering then you don't have to explain this, just list the items. If you need to describe the items on your list then do so as briefly as you can without skimping on important details that enhance your article.

Of course, you'll also want to include a conclusion to the end of the article, wrapping up everything you have just shared with them.

Review Articles

Review articles are often fun and challenging to write. They are an excellent tool for attracting viewers and getting people to click-through because people often search the Net for information and reviews about products and services. Reviews help buyers better understand the pros and cons of a product or service.

If you work in a service industry, let's say you are a green supplier, you can offer consumers information about the advantages and disadvantages of using eco or environmentally friendly products (going green). This will help sway consumers or visitors, or encourage them to visit your website for more information.

Here are some tips to help you write an informative review article . . .

- Use the Net to find information, including facts and statistics that will support any arguments you make in a review article. This will help your article appear logical and persuasive.

- See what other people are saying about similar products and services or the same product. You can do this by visiting sites like Amazon.com where people

post reviews. This can also help you learn how to write some simple reviews, although you will have to “flesh” out your review a bit more because you are writing a full article.

- Be sure you highlight all of the key facts and features of a product and/or service. The people reading the review will want to know whether the product they are reading about has the features they want or need. Same applies to a service.

- Tell the visitor how they will benefit by using the product or service and/or learning more. If the person plans to sign up for a newsletter, include the relevant features of the newsletter the user will benefit from. For example, you may offer weekly weight loss tips for visitors that sign up for your newsletter.

Remember, articles that are benefit-driven will always attract more click-throughs. People always want to know what is in it for them. Your job should include telling them.

Now let’s learn more about how to create “How To” articles. These are popular because there are obvious benefits the reader immediately gains from reading them.

How To Articles

“How To” articles are among the most popular articles; they are easy to write and they provide the visitor with instant gratification because they teach something. The visitor walks away with an instant “prize”. They learn something new.

You can also showcase your talents, and if you do a good job of this, your visitors are likely to come back for more!

Here are some important steps to follow when creating a “How To” article:

- First, select a subject or topic you want to talk about. What do you plan to teach someone? Make sure you narrow this topic down to something workable. Your article should not be longer than about 500 to 800 words.

- Use a keyword rich title. Remember, your title should be attention-grabbing.

- Before you start writing down any instructions, make sure you write down a list of preparatory ingredients. For example, if you are telling someone how to build something, what do they need to build the object? Do they need supplies? What kind? Make sure you create a list of supplies or other handy tools and materials the reader will need to complete the “how to” assignment.

- Tell the reader to review the steps before starting. Most “how to” lists don’t do this, and nine times out of ten someone starts and find they get stuck at some point. If everyone glanced over the instructions once before starting, they could probably avoid this!

- Write down the steps of your “how to”. Make sure you do this in an organized fashion. All steps should be in chronological order. Avoid putting more than one action in any step and keep all instructions simple. Try keeping instructions to one sentence, and try using general terms and addressing the general public.

- Add precautions or special instructions at the bottom of your “How To” list. Some people find that it also helps to add a section that includes steps to take if things go awry. Or, if you’d like, you can even make this a separate article and link to it from your “How To” article.

If you are creating a “How To” that is not entirely original, make sure you also include proper credit.

Persuasive Articles

Persuasive articles are often used as a mini-sales article to try to encourage visitors to subtly side with the author and proceed to their website to buy their products and services. The sales message, however, is deeply buried within the article. Usually a persuasive article is set up much like an ordinary argumentative or debate-type article.

You open with an argument or proposition, and then support that with two or more premises or statements of belief and fact. You should have facts to support these beliefs. If you do not have this information, then look for statistics and facts on the Net, because these will lend credibility to your case.

If you plan to argue, for example, that blueberry jam is the cure for cancer (maybe you sell a terrific homemade blueberry jam) then there better be a study that supports a similar conclusion perhaps. (It's probably best you stay away from such broad medical claims, but this is just an example).

Once you have established your argument, you can usually end with a conclusion. If you need to create a longer article you can add in an opposing view which you disprove just prior to the conclusion, which again will help establish your authority and credibility.

It also helps to include some explanation for your reasoning. Naturally, this is a very simplistic form of the persuasive type article. You don't want to be too pushy because you won't have a lot of space for a lengthy discourse. Just state your argument, support it and move on.

Now that you know more about the different types of articles you can write let's learn more about optimizing your articles for the Web.

Writing an article is one thing. SEO article writing is another. SEO stands for “search engine optimization.” Is it important? Yes. You should actually concern yourself with SEO before you start writing your article, because you will perform some SEO when you create your title, and when you create your opening line and headings.

SEO helps people find you. SEO is the process of placing keywords throughout your article so that search engines are more likely to find you and rank you highly in their listings.

This will improve the traffic your article receives, so SEO is important. Usually any article between 300 and 500 words will require SEO. Most people will not write long articles when all they want to do is drive people to their websites, and between 300 and 500 words is plenty for SEO articles.

Now, how do you actually write an article for SEO purposes?

Here are some important steps to follow.

1. First, make sure you chose careful keywords for your article, including in your title and headlines. Think about the types of words a user would type into a search engine if looking for your article. You might also use keywords someone might type into a search engine if looking for an answer to a question that you might answer in your article.

   If you aren’t sure what types of keywords you can associate with your topic, there are many places you can look on the Net to find keywords. First, think of the primary one or two words related to your topic or subject. Then you can go to any of several websites on the Web that offer free keyword search services including Good Keywords on the Net. Or you can type in “free keyword search” in Google and see what you come up with.

   This is a great way to find out what keywords will benefit you the most. The keywords with the most competition are likely the most popular. You would

probably do best by using a combination of various keywords of different popularity. Often, keywords of different spelling do well in articles.

2. Make sure you don't over-saturate your article with keywords. While it is important you use keywords, you don't want to use too many. Too many keywords will trigger what are called "keyword filters" by many search engines. If you do this they might boot you out of the search engine for a couple of weeks and you will lose traffic, or your article may not get posted.

   Usually, there are a certain percentage of keywords you want to use in an article; the exact number may vary from subject to subject. Most experts recommend you keep your keyword density below five percent. This means less than five percent of the total words you have on any page. Sometimes, if you use a keyword too many times in an article this will actually do more harm than good. And, you don't want your article to sound like you just created an article centered on your keywords, even if that is the case. So use varied keywords, make sure they make sense in the sentence structure, and use them wisely.

3. Use your keywords throughout your web page, not just in your copy. You can include keywords in your titles, in your links, in the headings of your web page and anywhere else you want to on your web page. Get creative!

Keep in mind that using keywords in your title tags is one of the most powerful steps you can take toward improving your article's SEO. Just be sure you don't use a single keyword too often or you run the risk of what is called "stuffing" and your article might get dinged by a filter.

Usually any more than 2 to 3 times for any one keyword is plenty. Any more is too much. Keep in mind you will need to find out what works for your industry, your website and your business!

If you keep abreast of what keywords are popular and what type of competition you have in your business you should have no trouble keeping ahead of the game.

Don't spend too much time on Search Engine Optimization. You will probably spend a lot of time on SEO when you create your website. Just know that SEO is important to

consider when writing your articles, and you can save this part until you finish writing your article and then go back in and sprinkle your keywords throughout your article pages. In the next section you will learn a bit more about developing your writing style.

By now, you probably have developed a bit of a writing style. If you have written at least one or two articles you may have already developed a feel for the way you write. Or, maybe you are struggling to figure out how to write.

Usually people working in technical fields or fields where jargon is common have the most difficulty writing articles, because they tend to talk in “techno” speak, or language that is rich in difficult terminology.

Most of the time when writing articles for the web, you want to structure them so they read like they would if you were writing them for an 8th grader. It’s true! Now, this may be a bit different if you are writing a “how to” article about how to install a microchip into a computer. If this is the case you will probably use a lot of technical jargon.

But a lot of the time people are writing articles that try to get in touch with the general public. When doing this your best bet is to simply “write” in a conversational style, and this is writing just like you are “talking,” much like we are doing here.

Now, you don’t want to get too casual here. Or, you may, depending on your audience. In fact, some people may find a “chattier” style of writing may be just what their target audience wants.

Writing Articles Quickly & Easily

Apart from developing one’s writing “style,” one topic most people want to know more about is how to write more efficiently. The best way to do this is simply to plan one’s writing. You can start writing, or you can approach writing with a “plan.” If you have a plan of attack you are much more likely to succeed.

How do you plan to write? When writing articles, planning is easy. Here is how you plan to write articles:

- First, come up with a list of topics and potential topics. You can keep these in a file. That way, when the time comes to write an article or many articles, you don't have to sit there and strain your brains wondering what to write about.

- Next, write down 2 to 3 main points about that topic. Make sure you make a statement or argument or state something you can support with facts or statistics when you claim this point.

- Support your point. Use information you have that is legitimate and information you can document. You can do this all in outline form.

- Sum up your points in one sentence.

Once you have done this you can go back in and elaborate or provide more detail on each point, this will make up the body of your article. You can also go in and add a resources box. If you simply go in and have lists of topics and main points you can create files of these, pull them out when you need them and write fast articles. Just make sure you keep content that is evergreen or content that won't go out of date.

You don't want to keep subjects in a file for a long time that will become dated! This is definitely a no-no!

Are you ready to start writing your articles? I hope so, because it can be very profitable. There are people who rake in thousands of dollars each week just by writing articles, and there is no reason why you can't be doing the same.

One thing to remember . . . be patient with your article writing. It may take some time before you are confident in your writing abilities. Not everyone was born a great writer, but that doesn't mean you can't learn.

And when you start submitting your articles to the article directories, don't get discouraged when you don't see any results right away. Article Marketing can take some time, but if you stay with it and keep writing your articles, there is no reason why you won't start seeing the results very soon.

Good luck writing your articles, and remember . . . the time you are taking to write these articles will pay off not only in the short term, but you can be getting traffic from these articles for years to come.

So get started writing!

Mike Steup

www.MikeSteup.com
www.WritingYourFirstArticle.com

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