

12 ½ steps to write a good article



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The formula for creating a good article is simply:

One good idea + an informed opinion + knowledge of your subject + a process!

The idea, opinion and knowledge are what will make your article unique, but getting the idea developed to a good article needs a solid process. If you really struggle to start, follow these steps and you should create a sound article that people will find interesting to read.

Step 1

Decide the subject you want to write about.

Step 2

What is the purpose of your article? Is it to inform, explain, complain, debate?

Step 3

What do you want people to know, think, feel or do when you've written it?

Keep this in mind while you're planning and writing. It will ensure your article stays focused.

Step 4

Using a piece of paper (or several) use either mind-mapping or simply linear lists to rough out your key points. Like a good speech, an article should aim for about three key points.

Point 1

Point 2

Point 3

Step 5

Take each point and list all the supporting material, anecdotal evidence, data, quotes and statistics that you want to include to create a strong case.

If you're writing an opinion piece you'll still need evidence to support your opinion.

These steps will require lots of spare paper and, possibly, your computer, depending on how you prefer to write. I'd suggest paper for planning and listing (right brain) and computer for writing (left brain).

Step 6

Organise the material into a logical sequence for each point. Mind mapping or using sticky notes both work well for this.

Step 7

Use the finished sequence as a skeleton to write around to create the material for each of your points.

Step 8

Once you have your three points developed into narrative, you will need to write the links between them so they flow from one to another.

Step 9

When you've completed the body of your article write the introduction. This should aim at engaging the reader by presenting something relating to your main theme in a way that will interest, intrigue or involve them.

The introduction should also introduce the purpose of the article.

Step 10

Finally, put together the end of the article, whether this is conclusions, suggestions, questions, a call to action or reinforcement of your opinion.

Step 11

Dos and Don'ts

- Do include references, links, images (pictures, diagrams, charts, visual representations)
- Do identify any quotes or information sources (in footnotes or endnotes if they are likely to interrupt the flow of the article)
- Do get someone else to check it for:
 - Spelling and typos
 - Grammar and punctuation
 - Ease of understanding
- Don't ramble
- Don't leave people guessing, tie up all the loose ends

Step 12

You're ready to submit it. This might be your own blog, your LinkedIn profile, an industry publication that your target audience read, an online article site, or a local publication.

Step 12 ½

If you plan to submit your article to more than one publication you will need to edit it so there is at least a 20% difference from your original article (although you can publish the same material on your blog and on your LinkedIn profile).

Lesley Morrissey runs Inside News, a boutique agency specialising in reputation marketing. The team focuses on generating content to:

*Take control of your **Reputation***

*Become the **Authority** in your field*

*Maintain your **Visibility***

*Demonstrate your **Expertise***



She is a copywriter and an expert in readability. She helps business owners to develop websites that engage, inform and persuade.