

Format Guidelines: How To Articles

General Guidelines

Explain the essential information a reader would need to accomplish a task in roughly 400 to 500 words.

Be specific. If you are writing an article called “How to Dance the Samba,” provide exclusive information that applies to the samba dance as opposed to writing general dance instructions.

Research your articles thoroughly. Never write off the top of your head, even if you have expertise in the field your subject covers.

The content within your article, regardless of the format, must be particular to the title. For example, 75 percent of the article “How to Open a Small Business in Memphis, Tennessee” must provide information particular to Memphis. If you can substitute the name of another city throughout the piece, it’s too generic and will not be accepted.

Provide detail. If you’re writing a “How to Make” article, detail at which points the construction takes place and describe whatever tools the reader needs to complete the task.

Never send readers on general Internet searches, and don’t refer them to common resources, such as the Yellow Pages.

Rate the Difficulty of Your How to Article (REQUIRED)

Rate the difficulty of completing the task according to the following criteria:

Easy: Anyone can do it.

Moderately Easy: Just about anyone can do it.

Moderate: Activity requires some concentration and preparation.

Moderately Challenging: Activity may require multiple attempts before it is executed properly.

Challenging: Activity requires a certain amount of expertise or physical fitness.

Write a Brief Introduction (REQUIRED)

All articles must be actionable, informative and successfully explain the subject put forth in the title in a logical, cohesive flow. **Do not add words to meet a minimum word count.**

The introduction should ideally contain 75 to 100 words.

This opening paragraph summarizes the general information everyone should know about the topic. The Introduction/Overview is the best place to provide background info and explain why the topic is important.

Do not refer to the article you’re introducing in an obvious manner. For example, don’t include phrases such as “This article will teach you” or “In the following article you will learn.”

Keep the Introduction section informative, but avoid introducing or overlapping information that will appear in the body of your article.

Things You'll Need (REQUIRED)

List all the ingredients, tools, gear, supplies or materials needed to complete the specified task. Be sure to list only each item—and not how it will be used—in the order it is mentioned in the steps.

Do not include intangibles, such as “time to complete the task,” “an open mind” or “patience.”

Capitalize the first letter in the first word of each item, and don't use articles, such as "a," "the" and "an," to introduce items. See examples below:

RIGHT:

- Spoon
- Ice bucket
- ½ cup flour

WRONG:

- Spoon to stir the liquid
- An Ice Bucket
- A Half Cup of Flour
- Cooking Experience

Add Article Steps (REQUIRED)

Complete at least three steps (but ideally include five to seven) in chronological or logical order. Clearly outline the actions a reader must take to complete the stated objective.

Start each step with an actionable verb, and tell readers precisely what they need to do, without generalizing. For example, write “Insert the tube of caulk into the caulking gun with the tube nozzle pointing away from the trigger,” instead of “Fill caulking gun with caulk.”

Each step should be short and concise—containing about two sentences. It can be longer if information essential to completing the step must be provided.

Refrain from stating the obvious. For an article entitled “How to Attach a New Cable Box to a TV,” don't start with “Open the box and remove the cable box from it. Unwrap the packaging around the cable box.” Instead, go directly to the task.

Do not refer to the order of the tasks within the steps. For example, don't write “The first thing you must do is ...” in Step 1. The reader knows it's the first thing: Step 1 was the clue. Do not refer to the action in previous step, unless you must do so to clarify an instruction.

RIGHT:

Step 1: Split the wire in two. Firmly grip the two sides in each hand, and gently pull apart until you separate an inch of wire.

Step 2: Attach the ends to the coaxial cable.

WRONG:

Step 1: Split the wire in two. Firmly grip the two sides in each hand, and gently pull apart until you separate an inch of wire.

Step 2: Now that you've split the wire in two, attach the ends to the coaxial cable.

Add Tips to Your Article

Provide additional information and/or offer further advice. An example tip might be: "If you are diabetic, you can leave the sugar out of the pie or use 5 tsp. of artificial sweetener instead."

Order tips from most important to least important. Do not repeat steps in the Tips section, and do not use the Tips box to summarize steps or the article.

Add Warnings to Your Article

Note any possible dangerous consequences, risks or undesirable results that can occur when following the steps. Order warnings from most important to least important.

Location

Although not mandatory, we highly recommend including a location name or address that directly relates to your article if your article is location-based. This is designed to help categorize and increase traffic to published articles. The location information will also be used as tags on the publication site.

Keywords (REQUIRED)

Each article **must contain three to five unique keyword phrases** that are relevant to your article. Keywords (or tags) are the phrases the reader uses to search for the subject of your article online. Add one keyword phrase per box. In addition to adding keywords in the keywords section, you should include them within the body of your article as well.

When choosing keywords, consider how you would search for the subject on the Internet. Very simply, what is the article about? If the keywords do not relate to the article, your article will not appear when a reader searches for the article's topic.

Keyword phrases should be lowercase, except for acronyms, proper names and brand names. Do not duplicate keywords.

Use two-word phrases when possible (i.e. downhill skis, Oprah Winfrey, iPhone apps). It is permissible to repeat keywords when they serve as unique search phrases, such as "gourmet popcorn" and "make popcorn."

- For example, the article "How to Make Your Own Gourmet Popcorn," would include the keyword "gourmet popcorn," as that is obviously what the article is about. Other keywords should reflect the key elements found in the article. For example, keywords for the popcorn article might include "gourmet seasoning," "butter flavor," "popcorn bowl," "make popcorn," etc.

When incorporating keywords into the body of your article, they should appear about once every 80 to 100 words, falling naturally into the copy. For example: An article on "How to Bid at Auctions" should include words like "bidder," "seller," "auctions" and "collectibles."

Add References to Your Article (REQUIRED)

The References field is used to cite external sources and reference any material you used for your research. Sources enhance an article, improve the quality and lend a tremendous amount of credibility to your work.

All articles **must include at least one reference**, although two or more is preferred.

To cite an online source, please include the website address (URL, including the “http://” portion) and link text. For example, if you were citing the American Cancer Society, the URL would be <http://www.cancer.org> and the link text would read “American Cancer Society.”

To cite an offline source, such as a book, magazine article or person, type the offline source in the box marked “text” and leave the URL box next to it blank. Place books and magazine names in quotation marks. Please use the following guidelines:

- **Book:** “Name of Book;” Author; Year Published

Ex: “Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus;” John Gray, Ph.D.; 1993

- **Publication:** “Name of Publication;” Name of Article; Author; Month and Year Published

Ex: “Time” magazine; Researchers Find First Signs of Autism Even in Infancy; Claudia Wallis; May 2009

- **Person:** Name of Person; Relevant Affiliation; Location

Ex: Dr. Jane Doe, DDS; Urban Dentistry; Austin, Texas

For online sources, cite websites that end in .gov and .edu, as these hold a high degree of authority. It’s acceptable to cite sites that end in .org, .com and .info as well. Make sure all references are credible and authoritative on the topic you’re writing about. Personal websites and blogs are unacceptable.

If you pull a quote that was used in a magazine article, reference the magazine article. If you interviewed someone and quoted them within the text of your article, reference the person.

If you cite a study within the text of your article, include it in the References section. Use the online citation guide for studies that are online and the publication guide for those that are offline.

Citing Sources in the Article & References Section

We strongly recommend using in-text citations, such as “According to,” in addition to citing sources in the References section. Not only does it greatly increase the quality and reliability of your article, but it also shows the reader that you are a professional who conducted the proper research—and this adds a tremendous sense of trust between the writer and audience.

Be specific when citing sources. Do not say “Scientists claim” or “According to a study.” Name the scientist and when and in which venue the statement was made. If you’re citing a study, identify who conducted it, when it was conducted/published and in what publication it was published.

- GOOD: In the Feb. 12, 2009 issue of the “New England Journal of Medicine,” Dr. Ola Landgren states that B-Cell clones serve as early markers for chronic lymphocytic Leukemia.

- BAD: A recent study proves that B-Cell clones serve as early markers for chronic lymphocytic Leukemia.

Get as close to the original source of information as possible. If you find an article about the topic you’re covering with interesting information you want to use but see that the author referenced an article published elsewhere, find the original article. You might find that the information from the secondhand source had been misinterpreted or tailored to support an alternative agenda.

Stay away from opinionated sources with obvious biases, and stick to the facts. If you are dealing with a controversial topic, represent both sides of the story.

Stay away from sources that may contain information that was added anonymously or without citations, such as **Wikipedia** or **Yahoo! Answers**. If you use information found on Wikipedia, verify it first by looking for other more credible sources that supports the information, and use one of those sources as reference point in your article.

Other Sites to Stay Away From

When citing references or resources, stay away from the following sites:

| | | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| 5min.com | essortment.com | instructables.com | sutree.com |
| about.com | examiner.com | life123.com | teachertube.com |
| answers.com | ezinearticles.com | lifelife.com | tricklife.com |
| articlebase.com | fixya.com | lovetoknow.com | videojug.com |
| associatedcontent.com | graspr.com | mahalo.com | vidipedia.org |
| busika.com | helium.com | monkeysee.com | viewdo.com |
| buzzle.com | helpfulvideo.com | scippo.com | webMD.com |
| DIYnetwork.com | howcast.com | SearchWarp.com | wikihow.com |
| Doityourself.com | howstuffworks.com | squidoo.com | wisegeek.com |
| ehow.com | howtodothings.com | suite101.com | wonderhowto.com |

Resources

This field provides pertinent information that expands on the article content. It is separate from the References section, which is used to cite material and research. Think of this as suggested reading for the audience.

Every item must contain both an active hyperlink and link text associated with it.

The active hyperlink to the URL field requires an actual web address, including the “http://” portion of the value. For example, use: <http://www.travels.com> and not www.travels.com or travels.com.

The Link Text field requires a concise description of the Resource item. The word, phrase or sentence will display on the page as a live link that routes the user to the URL address in the website address box. Write it in 65 characters or less, including spaces, to avoid text wrapping.

Give the reader an idea of what the link is within the Link Text field. Never write “Go to...” or any other vague command. Instead, write “U.S. Forest Service” or “United States Forest Service.”

How to Buy Clams



Clams come in a variety of sizes

Clams are the underrated relative of oysters, and many people shy away from them. This is unfortunate because they come in many shapes and sizes, and they are flavorful enough to appeal to virtually anyone who enjoys shellfish. Whether eating them raw, in a stew or as an addition to a pasta sauce, clams are an interesting addition to any meal. If you know a few things about these delicacies, you can buy and eat them with confidence.

Instructions

Difficulty: Moderate

Things You'll Need:

Step 1:

Know what kind of clam you are looking for. There are many different types of clams available all over the world, but soft-shell clams and hard-shell clams compose the two basic groups. How you plan to use the clams will determine which type you should purchase. Despite their description, soft-shell clams do not have an especially soft shell, but their flavor and shape is different from hard-shell clams. They tend to be more oblong than the rounded, darker hard-shell variety. Soft-shell clams make better steamers and can be eaten raw, although most “raw bars” serve hard-shell clams. Hard-shells are preferred for stews and chowders.

Step 2:

Pick closed clams when purchasing soft-shells. If you find one that isn't closed, tap it gently and watch for 30 seconds to a minute. If the shell doesn't close, discard it; the clam is dead and inedible. Many soft-shell clams also have protrusions, or tails, sticking out from inside the shells. They are safe to use.

Step 3:

Look for Cherrystone or Little Neck clams if you plan to eat your hard-shell clams raw. To cook them in a soup, use a larger chowder clam like the Longneck clam. Calculate about 450 grams per person when buying clams because the shells weigh much more than the meat.

Step 4:

Buy clams at your local fish market. If there isn't a fish market in your area, try purchasing clams at a grocery store. The average price per pound will be somewhere around \$4 to \$10, depending on the variety. You can also order clams online (see Resources), but there's never any guarantee of what you will get.

Step 5:

If you buy frozen clams, keep them on hand for up to three months. These clams have been shucked, which means they no longer have their shells. Frozen clams may be fresher than so-called "fresh" clams because the frozen versions are often put on ice the same day they're caught to lock in freshness. With "fresh" clams, you have no guarantee how long they've been out of the ocean.

Step 6:

Try cockles. This small member of the clam family has a distinctive heart shape and you can tell if the cockles are alive the same way you would any clam. The shell should be closed when you buy them and they should open up after being steamed; otherwise they are dead. Cockles taste wonderful in an Italian clam sauce. Clean cockles as you would a hard-shell clam, and sauté them with olive oil, shallots and a cup of white wine over medium heat. Cover the pan and let them steam for five minutes. Toss with pasta. You can finish the dish with a handful of flat-leaf parsley and a dab of butter. Include a good crusty bread to soak up the cockle juice.

Tips & Warnings

- Soft-shell clams often carry more sand than hard-shells, so rinse them thoroughly. Afterward, soak the clams in a bucket of saltwater for one hour to clean off any additional sand.

A quick rinse before preparing usually is enough to clean a hard-shell clam.

Clams should be eaten within one day of purchase to ensure they are still fresh.

Summer clams are susceptible to bacteria, so winter clams rate as the healthier choice. It's harder to dig for clams during the winter though, so that makes them more expensive.

- Never eat clams you find on a beach. These bivalves can be highly toxic and potentially deadly in the worst case scenario.

If you harvest your own clams, beware of Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning (PSP), which you will get if you eat a clam that has ingested marine biotoxin.

When buying clams, the canned version is also an option, but it may contain lower quality clams. As with all canned products, check the product date. Do not buy anything that is open, rusty, cracked, dented or swollen.

References

- [Recognizing Inedible Clams](#)
- [Soft Shell Vs. Hard Shell Clams](#)
- [Cooking With Clams and Cockles](#)

Resources

- [Buy Clams Online](#)
- [Clam Recipes](#)