

# **The Villanovan's Guide for Writers**

**September 2007**

# **I. Introduction & the Writing Process**

## **Welcome**

Welcome to the staff of The Villanovan! The following packet is designed to provide you with information about the editing process, how articles should be constructed and researched and what grammar and style rules we follow. Please review the information carefully and use this as a reference while writing your articles.

## **Editing Process**

- Your section editor will assign you a deadline for your article. By this time, please submit your article via e-mail. All articles should be sent to your section editor and to the copy desk at **copydesk@villanovan.com**.
- Once your article is submitted, it is reviewed by both your section editor and the members of the copy desk. Copy editors revise articles for grammar, journalistic style and formatting, readability, content, organization and accuracy.
- All revision is done on Monday evenings. You are encouraged (but not required) to come up on Tuesday afternoon and go over revisions with the copy desk chief.
- After section editors and copy editors revise articles, they are given to members of the editorial board for final approval before publication.

## **Before You Submit Your Articles**

- Please reread your articles. A simple reread can cause you to notice many simple errors you may have initially overlooked.
- Please spell check your articles.
- Please check your articles for accuracy. This includes double checking names, dates, facts and quotations.
- Please double space your articles.

## II. Journalistic Style

### Journalistic Style

- **Sentence Structure:**
  - Paragraphs should be between one and four sentences long. Quotations should be at the most three sentences long. Conciseness is key.
  - Exclamation points should rarely be used. They are okay every once in a while in features, entertainment or opinion, but they are never to be used in news or sports.
- **First Person:**
  - Avoid the first person as much as possible. Articles should be about the subject, not the writer. The first person should never be used in news, sports or features stories. The first person can be used in columns and reviews, but it should be used sparingly and only when necessary.
- **Audience:**
  - Keep The Villanovan's readership in mind. Articles should focus on the application to Villanova students and remember the average student's vocabulary.
- **Interviews & Quotations:**
  - Always try to get a face-to-face interview. We try to avoid telephone and e-mail interviews whenever possible. Reporters can gather much more information in person, and people also compose e-mails differently than they speak. Telephone and e-mail interviews should only be used when face-to-face interviews cannot be arranged.
  - When interviewing someone, make sure to get their full name. We do not print quotations from anonymous sources.
  - Staff members of The Villanovan cannot be interviewed for articles because this can indicate bias.
  - Use full-sentence quotations. While partial quotations are often used in academic writing, they should be avoided in journalistic writing.

## III. Guidelines for Specific Sections

### News Articles

- **Leads:**  
A lead is the opening sentence of an article. It should give the important details of the story (the who, what, when, where, why, how). It should be less than 35 words.  
→ example: Two deer entered Moulden Hall on West Campus this Sunday, causing damage to the residence hall and wreaking havoc at a student barbeque.
- **Organization:**  
The typical news story is written in the format of an inverted pyramid. The beginning should tell the most important information. Then the article should proceed to tell the less important and more specific details.
- **Quotations:**  
The only attribution used in news stories is “said.”

### Features Articles

- **Leads:**  
Most articles begin with a creative introduction that is often reprised in the conclusion. Following this creative introduction, the article should have a nut graph. The nut graph is like the lead in a news story; it gives the news value of the article. Here is a brief example of a creative lead followed by an informative nut graph:  
  
What if you lost everything but your life? For hundreds of thousands in Louisiana, this scenario was their reality. And they were the lucky ones.  
This spring break, over 190 Villanova students went to Slidell, La., in an effort to ease the pain many families have experienced during the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. The students went with Habitat for Humanity’s break program, which sends Villanova students around the country to build houses that will be sold to families in need with an affordable mortgage and no profit made.
- **Organization:**  
Features articles do not usually follow the typical inverted pyramid style. They typically begin with a creative introduction, followed by the nut graph. The body of the article is often organized by topic or by a narrative. The conclusion is also creative and often reprises the theme of the introduction.
- **Quotations:**  
The attribution most commonly used in features stories is “says.” Other present tense verbs, such as “responds,” “notes,” etc., are also acceptable.

## Sports Articles

- **Leads:**

A lead is the opening sentence of an article. It should give the important details of the story (the who, what, when, where, why, how). It should be less than 35 words.

→ example: The Wildcats picked up their first win of the '07 season on Saturday after defeating the Lehigh Mountain Hawks by a score of 30-20 at Goodman Stadium in Bethlehem, Pa.
- **Organization:**

A sports article reporting on Villanova sports usually follows the narrative of the event, includes post-game commentary and ends by mentioning upcoming games.
- **Quotations:**

Sports articles use the attribute "said." The only exception would be a sports feature, which would use the attribute "says."
- **Punctuation & Grammar:**
  - Make sure nouns and possessive pronouns agree. "Team" or "Villanova" should always be linked with "its," while "Wildcats" should always be linked with "their." Also, nouns and pronouns must agree.
  - "Matchup" is a noun; "Match up" is a verb.
  - Postseason, preseason, midseason and postseason are all one word.
  - Half time, first half and second half are all two words as nouns, but they are hyphenated as adjectives.
  - example: The team scored twice in the first half.  
The team scored two first-half points.
  - Rankings are written as No. \_\_ instead of number \_\_.
  - example: They are ranked No. 3.
- **People:**
  - When referring to Villanova athletes, give their full names, positions and class standings on first mention. Do not include their home towns.
- **Wording:**
  - Teams do not "suffer" a loss.
  - The lead does not need to say "the Villanova \_\_\_\_\_ team." The reader knows it is about the Villanova team. Just write "the \_\_\_\_\_ team."
- **Columns:**
  - See the section on op-ed columns.

## Entertainment Articles

- **Leads:**
  - If the article is a review or other entertainment feature, it usually has a creative introduction followed by a nut graph, which gives the news value of the article. (See the section on feature articles for an example of a nut graph.)
  - If the article is reporting on an entertainment event, the opening sentence should follow the standard formula for a news lead.
- **Quotations:**
  - Most entertainment articles should use the attribution “says.” Articles reporting on an entertainment event should use the attribution “said.”
- **First person:**
  - While the word “I” can sometimes be used in reviews, it should be used as sparingly as possible and only when it adds something to the article. Articles should be about the subject, not the writer. Try to rephrase to avoid using the word “I”; the point usually remains the same.

## Op-Ed Columns

- **First person:**
  - While the word “I” can sometimes be used in opinion articles, it should be used as sparingly as possible and only when it adds something to the article. Articles should be about the subject, not the writer. Try to rephrase to avoid using the word “I”; the point usually remains the same.
- **Topics:**
  - Articles should present a new idea or present an idea in a unique way. It should not simply rehash a common theme or present an idea everyone already knows about.
- **Facts and statistics:**
  - Any facts or statistics you include in a column must be attributed to the source you used. The attribution should be worked into the sentence. We do not use parenthetical citation or other methods common to academic writing.

# IV. Grammar

## Grammar Rules

- **Punctuation:**
  - comma splice: When a sentence has two independent clauses combined by a conjunction, a comma must be placed before the conjunction. However, if there is no subject in the second clause, there is no comma.
    - example: The dog barked, and it ran away.
    - example: The dog barked and ran away.
  - The semi-colon is used to link two related but independent sentences.
    - example: The team played hard; it fought the entire game.
    - NOT: The team played hard; fought the entire game.
  - Apostrophes: Use apostrophes to indicate possession, not plural nouns or decades.
    - example: I read Lauren’s article.
    - NOT: I like the ’Cat’s.
    - NOT: It occurred in the 1940’s.
  - Hyphenation: Use hyphens when combining two words as an adjective but not when they are combined as a noun.
    - example: The team scored twice in the first half.
    - The team scored two first-half points.
    - note: Words ending in “ly” are never followed by a hyphen.
- **Voice & Tense:**
  - Always try to put sentences in the active voice and avoid the passive voice.
  - When describing events, always use the past tense and avoid the subjunctive tense.
    - example: The player scored a goal.
    - NOT: The player would score a goal.
- **All-inclusive language:**
  - When referring to a single person of unknown gender, write his or her, not their.
    - example: A student can use his or her WildCard.
    - NOT: A student can use their WildCard.
  - No one on campus is to be referred to as a “boy” or a “girl.” Refer to “male students” or “female students.”
  - Always avoid sexist or stereotypical language.
    - example: A nurse must work hard at his or her job.
    - NOT: A nurse must work hard at her job.

- **Common mistakes:**
  - Media is plural; Medium is singular.
  - Alumnus (individual male graduate), alumna (individual female graduate), alumni (group of male or male and female graduates), alumnae (group of female graduates)
  - Many phrases are one word as a noun but two as a verb.
    - example: He called for security backup.  
He told the thief to back up.
  - “That” is used when it is followed by a necessary clause (something that limits the identification of the subject), while “which” is used when it is followed by an unrestricted clause (something that is interesting or incidental).
    - example: University officials went to great lengths after the incident in order to remedy the damage that they believed had been done.
    - example: The event is a part of World Team Tennis, which Davenport, Kournikova and Morariu currently play for.

## Associated Press Rules for Grammar

- **Punctuation:**
  - In a list, a comma is not placed before “and” or “or.”
    - example: Red, white and blue. NOT Red, white, and blue
  - Martin Luther King Jr. → not Martin Luther King, Jr.
- **Quotations:**
  - example: “Our team is spectacular,” he said. “We’re great.”
  - The attribution (he said) should come after the first full sentence.
  - Put the name before the attribution.
    - example: he said, NOT said he
    - exception: When the person has a long title, put attribution first.
      - said Kathy Byrnes, vice president of Student Life
  - Put commas and periods inside quotations; semicolons go outside, unless part of quote.
  - News and sports use “said.” Features and entertainment use “says.”
- **People:**
  - Mention a person’s first and last name and title on the first reference. On each subsequent reference, use just the last name.
- **Times & Dates:**
  - A time must always be followed by a.m. or p.m.
  - 5 p.m., not 5:00 p.m.
  - Abbreviate month in dates but not when referring to the month as a whole.
    - Sept. 4 → not September 4<sup>th</sup>
  - If the date is in the current year, there’s no need to write the year.

- **Numbers:**
  - Numbers under 10 are written out.  
→ four, six, 11, 29
  - Ordinal numbers under 10 are written out.  
→ fourth, sixth, 11th, 29th  
NOTE: 11th, not 11<sup>th</sup>
  - Numbers that start a sentence are always written out, even if they are over 9.
  - Numbers for percentages are always written as numerals, even if they are under 10.
  - Dimensions, ages and monetary amounts also always use numerals.
  - Hyphenate dimensions only when they precede a noun.  
→ The six-foot man.  
→ He was six feet tall.
- **Formatting:**
  - No bold; no italics; no all caps.
  - Titles of books, movies, CDs and video games are put in quotations, not underlined or italicized. However, newspapers and magazines are not put in quotations.  
→ example: “Blood Done Sign My Name”  
→ example: The Baltimore Sun
- **Capitalization:**
  - Capitalize titles when they come before the name but not when they follow the name.  
→ example: President Bush; Bush, president of the United States
  - Earth is capitalized only in a solar sense.  
→ example: The planets involved were Venus, Earth and Mars.  
→ example: He was down to earth.
  - Awards are capitalized, but award categories are not.  
→ example: He won the Academy Award for best lead actor.
  - Democrat and Republican are always capitalized
  - Capitalize CD, DVD, TV and OK.
- **Possessives:**
  - Use “ ’s ” when the word does not end in “s.” Use just an apostrophe when the word ends in “s,” even if it is a proper name.
  - Make sure nouns and possessive pronouns agree. “Team” or “Villanova” should always be linked with “its,” while “Wildcats” should always be linked with “their.”
- **Military Terminology:**
  - Capitalize Army, Navy, etc. when referring to the U.S. branch but not those of other nations.
  - Military titles are abbreviated. See AP Stylebook.
- **Online Terminology:**
  - Web site → not Website, Web Site or website
  - Internet is always capitalized
  - e-mail → not email or E-mail

- **Religious terminology:**
  - Mass is always capitalized. Mass is always “celebrated” not “said.”
  - church is lowercase, unless referring to the Catholic Church
  - Augustinian priests’ names are written as: Rev. \_\_\_\_\_, O.S.A.,
- **States:**
  - state abbreviations:
 

Ala.	Ariz.	Ark.	Calif.	Colo.	Conn.	Del.	Fla.	Ga.
Ill.	Ind.	Kan.	Ky.	La.	Md.	Mass.	Mich.	Minn.
Miss.	Mo.	Mont.	Neb.	Nev.	N.H.	N.J.	N.M.	N.Y.
N.C.	N.D.	Okla.	Ore.	Pa.	R.I.	S.C.	S.D.	Tenn.
Vt.	Va.	Wash.	W.Va.	Wis.	Wyo.			
  - Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Maine, Ohio, Texas and Utah are not abbreviated.
  - Major cities do not require states.
  - Washington D.C. → not Washington, D.C.
- **Miscellaneous:**
  - Adviser NOT advisor.
  - T-shirt
  - Academics: bachelor’s degree, master’s degree
    - Bachelor of Arts in history
    - Master of Science in biology
    - majors are not capitalized
  - Regions/Directions: Capitalize north, south, east or west when referring to a region, but do not capitalize when referring to a direction.

## Rules Specific to The Villanovan

- **Timeliness:**
  - The newspaper is released on Thursday, so all stories should be written like it is Thursday. Instead of writing “on Friday,” write “tomorrow.”
  - Also, all events occurring on Wednesday should be written as if they already occurred. Use words like yesterday, today and tomorrow appropriately.
- **People:**
  - Refer to Father Donohue as University President Rev. Peter Donohue, O.S.A.,
  - Do not use Mr., Mrs., Ms. or Miss when referring to people.
  - When mentioning a professor or staff member who has a PhD, always write Dr. upon first mention of his or her name.
  - Refer to alumni as “Class of ’XX,” but refer to current students by class standing.
    - example: Ally Taylor, Class of ’07, attended ...
    - example: Junior Kathleen Vermilion attended ...
- **Spellings of common words:**
  - ’Nova, not ‘Nova; ’Cats, not ‘Cats
  - WildCard, not Wildcard

- **Villanova references:**
  - try to not mention The Villanovan, unless necessary
  - when referencing the administration, refer to “the University” instead of “Villanova”
- **Spellings of campus locations:**
  - Connelly Center, not the Connelly Center
  - Belle Air Terrace
  - 2nd Storey
  - Falvey Memorial Library, not Falvey Library
  - Jake Nevin Field House, not Fieldhouse
  - Capitalize common names for locations, such as Sheehan Beach, Mendel Field, the Oreo and the Grotto
- **Formatting:**
  - ellipses:        word ... word
  - dash:            word — word
- **Miscellaneous:**
  - Never refer to dorms or dorm rooms; they are to be referred to as residence halls and rooms.
  - Departments:        Capitalize administrative departments but not academic departments.
    - example:    Department of Public Safety, biology department
    - Note:        communication department, not communications
  - Try to avoid using “really” and “very.”
  - Among, not amongst; toward, not towards