

How to write for *Amateur Radio* magazine

Amateur Radio magazine is the membership journal of the Wireless Institute of Australia (WIA). It is a forum for members to publish their amateur radio experiences, whether it is their latest technical achievement, a new antenna or an operating experience. The editors do not rewrite articles to any corporate style, but try and retain the original style of the author while correcting, where necessary, spelling, grammar, punctuation and the accuracy of what is written.

It is easy to write for *Amateur Radio* magazine. Hundreds of amateurs have already done it. Few of them are professional writers. All get a lot of satisfaction out of hearing their fellow amateurs say they enjoyed reading their article in the latest issue of the WIA journal.

Just about anybody can write. Some can turn an elegant phrase, while others just explain what they have in mind and keep right to the point. Practice develops skill in writing, just like anything else you do. The more you write, the easier it gets and the better it is.

The subject

Many amateurs love reading about simple equipment, and antenna construction and design articles. While most of us will not actually build the project we often follow the construction in our minds and enjoy reading about it.

It pays to be extremely careful in checking your article, particularly circuit diagrams, for any errors, or the mail will pour in.

If you are experimenting in a new field, you may want to write about it and let others know what you are doing and discovering. Bear in mind, however, that you are writing for a wide range of amateurs, from beginners to experts. Gear your article, if possible, to the "entry level" amateur. After all, this is an amateur radio publication, not an electronic engineering publication.

While the emphasis in *Amateur Radio* magazine is for technical articles, readers also like to read about any other area of amateur radio interest: A visit to a particularly interesting DX location, or perhaps a local event of significant interest to radio amateurs. Most amateurs have at least one good story in them.

The plan

Before you start to write the article, outline what you want to say. Remember the old rule: Tell them what you are going to tell them; tell them; then tell them what you've told them. Or, in more formal language: introduction, body, summary.

Follow this format for construction articles: introduction, theory, construction, alignment and adjustment, and summary. The title and opening paragraph are particularly important, as are diagrams and photographs. You win or lose most readers right at the beginning.

When writing, remember that *Amateur Radio* magazine is an informal, hobby magazine and that you are writing for friends. Don't be a stuffed shirt. Go lightly on impersonal third-person terms, such as "the author". It is in order, however, to use the first person "I", but do not overdo it.

Also use direct sentences whenever possible. They deliver your point more forcefully. "I fastened the nut" is better than "the nut was fastened". Write naturally, in short simple sentences, starting a new paragraph with each new thought. Avoid unnecessary abbreviations. Use sub-headings as signposts for the readers.

Misspelling is easily avoided. Most of you have word processors with spell checkers, and hard copy dictionaries are cheap. Look it up! The Publications Committee has decided to default to the language setting of English (UK) as the preferred setting – we dislike many of the common Americanisms that some software packages force us to use by default!

Minimise maths. It is often not necessary in *Amateur Radio* articles, and it scares many readers. While most readers can use high school algebra and trigonometry, they don't want to. They prefer practical projects, designed and ready to build. Graphs are next best. Maths is last. Even engineers prefer pre-designed circuits, if only as a starting point for their work. Use maths only where it is vital. If a mathematical derivation is necessary, show only the steps which introduce fresh logic. Steps of a purely mathematical manipulation nature should not be shown.

Avoid footnotes wherever possible. References in the text are easier to read.

Make sure you give credit when you borrow an idea or material from someone else. Quote the publication name and issue from which the information was gleaned if it has been previously published. This is important both ethically and legally.

Manuscript

Most authors use computers these days to write their articles and submit their manuscripts as an email attachment. However, you can submit your manuscript by post on a disk or as typewritten hard copy. We prefer not to receive handwritten manuscripts, but will not reject an article because it is handwritten, provided we can read what you have written. Even when submitted via mail, **electronic submission** (disk or CD) is **preferred** – it saves us the time of re-typing or scanning and OCR processing of the material.

The *Amateur Radio* editors work in Microsoft Word and do not accept MAC format files. However, we can read other popular word-processing formats as well as Word. If in doubt, submit your electronic copy as an .RTF or .TXT file as well as in your word-processor's native format.

When preparing your electronic manuscript for e-mailing (or for printing and submitting as hard copy), please observe the following:

Do not attempt to format the document to look like a magazine page.

All indentations should be made with the TAB key and not the space bar.

Do not use the ENTER key (line returns) at the end of each line, only at the end of each paragraph.

Images, illustrations, diagrams, or lengthy lists or tables of figures can be inserted within the manuscript to indicate where they are relevant. However, you **MUST** also send them as separate files or sheets. Tables and lists are best made using the 'Insert Table' command, or creating them as a separate Excel .XLS file.

Number all diagrams and photographs and include explanatory captions at the foot of the article.

Ensure your name, call sign, postal address, telephone number and e-mail address are included within the manuscript file.

When submitting hard copy, use regular A4 typing paper and make sure the printer produces sharp, black text.

If you must submit a hand written manuscript, perhaps block printing may be best.

Remember, we officially live in a country that uses the metric system. If you are used to using imperial measurements, please convert them to the metric equivalents – it will save the editorial time some effort and will please more readers.

Authors are requested to include a short abstract or summary of their article (50 to 100 words) with the manuscript.

Abbreviations and Symbols

The editors of *Amateur Radio* magazine use the abbreviations as detailed in the Australian Government Publishing Service (AGPS) Style Manual, such as: Hz, kHz, MHz, GHz, μF , pF, mH, H, W, mW, μW , V, mV, kV, A, mA, μA , dB, km, Ω , k Ω , and M Ω . Do not use full stops or pluralise the abbreviations. Separate them from the number: 10 MHz, not 10MHz. Modes of emission, and acronyms in general, are capitalised: AM, FM, CW, SSB, RTTY, ATV, RF, IF, DC, AC, RMS, VFO, AGC, etc, with the exception of V dc, V ac. Though the text flow should be informal, keep away from 'hammy' abbreviations in your articles such as xtal, XYL, xmtr, xfmr, etc.

Greek letters such as μ and Ω can be created with most word processors. In Microsoft Word, use the 'Insert > Symbol' facility from the menu bar, select Font '(normal text)' and then scroll down until Subset shows you are in the 'Basic Greek' section.

Diagrams, Illustrations and Schematics

Put all drawings in separate files or on separate sheets of paper. Never put them in the text. If the standard of your drawing is not good enough to be published as is, we will redraw it for you. Be sure your sketches are complete, neat and readable. Put parts values on the schematic and include a separate parts list. Use terms R1 and C2, etc. Label the drawings numerically, for example Figure 1, Figure 2, etc. At the end of your article text, list the figures with a caption for each one.

The *Amateur Radio* draftsman uses TurboCAD for redrawing diagrams. However, if you are proficient in using other CAD programs, such as AutoCAD and Protel, please submit your drawing in your program's default format, as well as a .TIF or .WMF file if possible, and also send a flat (not folded) hard copy printout of the diagram.

Photographs

Good photographs can make all the difference in the appeal of an article. Photographs should be high contrast black and white photographs or colour prints with good contrast and bright colours – colour is preferred. We are always in need of interesting photographs for the front cover.

At the end of the article, list the photos along with captions describing each photo.

If you have a colour photograph that you want the editors to consider for the front cover of the magazine, take note of the vertical format requirement for the front cover, and send us a good quality image.

Digital images have become the norm. Generally speaking, this means using at least a 2.0 megapixel (or greater) camera with the image resolution set at maximum. If you want your photo to be considered for the front cover of *Amateur Radio*, it should be taken with at least a 4.0 megapixel setting, although sometimes a 3.0 megapixel setting will suffice.

High resolution .JPG, or standard or LZW compressed .TIF, files are preferred. It is suggested that you set your camera to record images in the native format (sometimes referred to as RAW format) at the highest possible resolution. These days it is easy to download such files to a computer and to then convert the image to a lower resolution jpg file. Always keep the RAW/native file in the highest resolution. If we think that you have a candidate image for the cover, we will need the highest resolution possible.

You will find a separate file on the AR section of the WIA website with additional hints for taking photographs.

PC boards

If your project includes a PC board, send a positive of the board with your article, either hard copy or digital. Separately sketch out the component layout. If the positive is not the same size as the board, be sure to tell us.

Software

It is considered poor practice to reproduce pages of code listing in the magazine. A preferred approach is to publish a description of the logic and function of the program together with an address from which the code file can be obtained.

If your project includes a microprocessor or other device that functions with instructions that you have written, the object code must be made available at no cost to any reader who requests it and/or it can be posted on the WIA website.

Submission

You can submit your article in several ways. **Electronic submission is the preferred method.** If the attachments total greater than 5 Mbytes, please send your submission in two or more emails.

Send all submissions to:

armag@wia.org.au

or post hard copy or computer disk to:

**Secretary
AR Publications Committee
PO Box 2042
Bayswater
Victoria, 3153**

All copy, diagrams and photographs become the property of *Amateur Radio* unless specific arrangements are made otherwise. If you wish photographs, diagrams or computer disks to be returned to you, please advise us accordingly and provide a SASE.

The editors will arrange publication of your article at the earliest possible opportunity. Be prepared to wait up to several months, however, before you see your work published in the magazine. It can take that time to edit and prepare your submission for publication, and place it in a particular issue to ensure a balanced magazine. As much as is possible, articles are published in the order in which they are received.

Copyright and permission to publish

Articles submitted for publication in *Amateur Radio* are accepted on the understanding that:

- the article is not currently on offer to any other publication;
- the article is an original work written and created by the Author;
- the article is subject to editing for length, style, grammar, spelling and taste,

and, if published, the Author grants to The Wireless Institute of Australia (WIA) for the term of the copyright therein an irrevocable, royalty-free, non-exclusive licence throughout the world to:

- reproduce, publish, republish, transmit and distribute the article in *Amateur Radio* and thereafter in any other WIA publication or compilation in any manner and in any medium whether now existing or developed in the future including in print, electronic and on-line formats, and
- to permit any other IARU national radio society to publish the article in its national magazine.

provided always the article is fully and clearly attributed to the author and, where appropriate, to the WIA and *Amateur Radio*.

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updated February 2012 by Peter Freeman VK3PF