

TOO SHY TO STOP: THE COMPLETE GUIDE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>THE TOO SHY STORY</u>	1
<u>WHO ARE WE?</u>	
<u>WHERE ARE WE GOING?</u>	2
<u>WHO IS SHE?</u>	
<u>WHO ARE YOU?</u>	
<u>WHO ARE THEY?</u>	3
<u>TOO SHY STYLE GUIDE</u>	
Abbreviations	
Capitalization	
Commas	
Dashes	
Dates	
Foreign Words and Phrases.....	4
Hyphens	
Numbers	
Passive Voice	
Periods	
Quotation Marks	
Tech Terms.....	5
Titles	
<u>TOO SHY STANDARDS</u>	
Finding Sources	
Professionalism	
Preparing for the Interview.....	6
Interviewing	
Quoting	
Story-telling	
Press Releases	
Fact-checking	
<u>GUIDELINES FOR NEW WRITERS</u>	7
<u>CONFIDENTIALITY</u>	
<u>TOO SHY TO STOP E-MAIL ADDRESS</u>	
<u>GUIDELINES FOR ARTICLE SUBMISSION</u>	8
<u>GUIDELINES FOR PHOTO SUBMISSION</u>	
<u>HOW TO ACCESS AND USE TOO SHY TOGETHER (TST)</u>	
<u>HOW TO COMMENT ON TST</u>	9
<u>EDITORIAL PROCESS</u>	
<u>EDITORIAL CALENDAR</u>	10

THE TOO SHY STORY

In May 2008, Laryssa Wirstiuk founded *Too Shy to Stop* (www.tooshytostop.com), when her then boyfriend challenged her to create a blog. The name Too Shy to Stop was inspired by a phrase from “In the Waiting Room,” a poem by Elizabeth Bishop.

When she returned to school in September 2008, she wondered if other young writers might like to contribute; she was tired of reading her own writing day after day, and she wanted to provide a venue for other voices.

Using Craigslist, alumni connections, word of mouth, and internships databases, she found a small group of writers who were excited to contribute articles about topics related to American arts and culture. In October 2008, she created *Too Shy Together*, a private blog where the contributors can share story ideas, ideas for promotion, and contact one another for collaboration.

In November 2008, Laryssa went to College Station, TX to meet web designers Always Creative for the first time. She spent a weekend brainstorming with Bill Erickson, the Wordpress programmer, and Roby Fitzhenry, creative director for Always Creative.

On New Year’s Eve, we hosted Too Shy Oh Nine, a party to celebrate the new design. The party took place at Stain Bar in Brooklyn, NY, and we had live music, free food, door prizes, and lots of fun! On January 9th, 2009, the new Too Shy to Stop website went live.

WHO ARE WE?

Too Shy to Stop is an online arts and culture magazine for young people who live, work, study, or play in the United States. We are an alternative media outlet where readers can access diverse content from young writers and other creative individuals.

Our content includes articles about the arts, literature, entertainment, food, social and political issues, travel, and interesting individuals. We also feature book, movie, music, and restaurant reviews. Every Sunday, the readers take over; “I Scream Sunday” is a creative space for reader-submitted art and writing.

Though each of us has our own opinions and experiences, Too Shy to Stop has no political agenda, and we strive to provide readers with fair and honest reporting. Through careful thought, research, and attention to detail, we present accurate facts and fair, respectful opinions. Too Shy to Stop strives to create community and dialogue.

We believe that the Internet is the most easily accessibly and most environmentally friendly medium, and we hope to conserve paper and ink by keeping our content digital. Too Shy to Stop prioritizes creativity, encourages curiosity, and welcomes everyone who cares to tag along.

WHERE ARE WE GOING?

Too Shy to Stop is a business that requires our time investment. One day, we will support a paid staff of writers and photographers, and we will have a sleek office in New York City. We will win awards for our creativity and innovation, and we will shape the face of journalism and new media.

Right now, we all work on a volunteer basis. Our main focus is to build our brand, attract a steady readership, and gain a positive reputation. Many people in new media work long hours for little to no pay because no one has solved the question of the new media business model.

We haven't figured it out either, but we do not believe in traditional advertising as a way to generate income. Until we come up with the perfect business model to suit Too Shy to Stop, we have to tough it out.

New media needs us.

WHO IS SHE?

Laryssa founded Too Shy to Stop because she loves writing, the Internet, and new media. Laryssa's first website was an Angelfire page dedicated to the alternative rock band Everclear.

She grew up in northern New Jersey, went to a private all-girl's high school, and moved to Baltimore to attend Loyola College in Maryland, where she studied Writing and Spanish. After graduating (2007) with a Bachelor of Arts, she completed (2009) her Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing at the University of Maryland in College Park.

Laryssa has interned at two publishing houses, two magazines, and a company that licenses and distributes DVDS; for a short time, she even ran her own freelance writing business. She blogs about new media regularly at Comma 'n Sentence, her personal think tank (<http://www.commansentence.com>).

WHO ARE YOU?

Our contributors are college-educated Americans between the ages of 19 and 29. They aspire to work in the media industry or they already do. They are talented writers, photographers, and editors, and they have a passion for American arts and culture.

They are enthusiastic about being a part of a community of young people who are trying to reshape the face of American culture and who are eager to learn something new about writing and media.

WHO ARE THEY?

Our readers are young Americans who value education, culture, the arts, and information. They are curious, active, ambitious, and interested. Eager to shape and define American culture, our readers support the arts and care about the future of our country and cultural identity.

TOO SHY STYLE GUIDE

Note: Most newspapers and magazines require AP style, outlined in the AP Style Book (<http://www.apstylebook.com/>). My background is in English and Creative Writing, and I am most familiar with MLA and the Chicago Guide. I pick and choose what I like from a few style guides. Please try to follow these guidelines.

Abbreviations

States and countries are abbreviated without periods. Use this guide as a reference: http://www.usps.com/ncsc/lookups/abbr_state.txt
(ex. Pennsylvania is PA, and the United States is US).

Capitalization

In a title, the first and last words are capitalized. All words except the following are capitalized: all prepositions, a, an, the, but, as, if, and, or, nor.
Capitalize all proper nouns (ex. Baltimore, Maryland).
Capitalize a title if it precedes a person's name (ex. President Barack Obama).
Capitalize a title in a direct address (ex. Will you take my temperature, Doctor?).
Do not capitalize seasons.
Do not capitalize academic subjects, unless they refer to a specific course.

Commas

We use the serial comma, which means a comma appears in the second-to-last item in a series. (ex. At the store, I bought peaches, pears, and apples. **NOT** At the store, I bought peaches, pears and apples.)

Dashes

I prefer that we don't use dashes. Semi-colons and commas are much more effective tools for breaking up parts of a sentence. Please separate clauses with commas, not dashes. If you use a dash in your article, and I can substitute it with a comma, I am going to substitute it.

Dates

Decades: 1950s and 60s
Specific Date (with year): February 20, 2009
Specific Date (without year): February 20th
Series of Dates: February 20th-March 1st

Foreign Words and Phrases

Please italicize all foreign words and phrases.

Hyphens

Use a hyphen for compound adjectives that precede the noun (ex. well-known actor, twenty-year sentence).

Do not use a hyphen when the compound modifier occurs after the verb.

Numbers

Write the numbers one through nine in written form.

Numbers 10 and greater should be written in numeric form.

Passive Voice

The passive voice is one of my biggest pet peeves, and I always edit with an eye for it. Though not a grammatical error, passive voice is an issue of style. By avoiding it, you will write clearer, stronger sentences.

The problem with passive voice is that it usually obscures the subject. The verb and the direct object become the focus in a sentence. When you clearly display the noun, the verb, and the direct object, the reader understands the order of operations in the sentence.

Some phrases that indicate passive voice are *there are, there is, there were, it is, it was, that is, this is*. Frequently, these phrases are redundant; you will be tempted to use them in a rough draft. However, if you watch out for them, you will find that you can rewrite those sentences.

Passive Voice: There is a lot of noise being made by the children on the playground.

Active Voice: The children are making a lot noise on the playground.

In the first sentence, the reader must fish for the source of the noise. In the second sentence, the source is disclosed immediately. Passive voice is not always a mistake but try to avoid it as much as possible.

Periods

Use a single space after the period at the end of a sentence.

Quotation Marks

In dialogue, place quotation marks at the beginning and end of each person's speech. Periods and commas always go inside quotation marks.

Dashes, semicolons, question marks and exclamation points go within the quotation marks when they apply to the quoted material. They go outside when they apply to the whole sentence.

Use single marks for quotes within quotes: *She said, "He told me, 'I love you.'"*

Tech Terms

Internet, e-mail

Titles

Italicize book titles, movie titles, newspaper and magazine titles, album titles.

Use “quotes” for short story titles, poem titles, television show titles, article titles, song titles.

TOO SHY STANDARDS

“A world without primary reporting will be literally less human. Talking to actual, live human beings, as opposed to reading documents or commentary or what they say online, has an innately moderating effect on one's approach. A good reporter sees issues in greater complexity because humans are complex...”

(<http://www.salon.com/opinion/kamiya/2009/02/17/newspapers/index2.html>)

All articles, excluding reviews*, must include at least one original source. You can use previously-printed sources in your articles, but you must include one original quote in your article. This means that you will have to find a reputable person to interview and cite in your article.

***For restaurant reviews**, please include the following information, in this order, at the end of your review: Restaurant Name (URL, if Available); Street Address; City, State; Phone Number

Finding Sources

Be creative. Ask professors, colleagues, people in your community, bloggers, webmasters, and experts in the field. You should choose people who will add a fresh perspective to your article, someone who is both credible and interesting.

If you're really stumped, you can use Help a Reporter Out (<http://www.helpareporter.com/press/>). On this website, you can submit a request for sources. Three times a day, Peter Shankman sends an email digest to everyone on his e-mail list (over 50,000 people), and anyone who feels that they can add something to your article will e-mail you. I have used this free service several times with great success. Always be sure to say that you are from Too Shy to Stop and represent us in a professional manner.

Professionalism

Always be professional. Introduce yourself as a writer for Too Shy to Stop. Make sure the person knows that their responses will be used in an article and get their verbal agreement before you proceed to interview them. In-person interviews are ideal, phone interviews are preferable, and e-mail interviews should be a last resort.

Preparing for the Interview

Always prepare your questions beforehand. Make a list of five to 10 interesting and thought-provoking questions. Think about what you'd like to find out from your interviewee and phrase your questions in a way that will encourage them to talk a lot. Avoid yes or no questions, unless you think a yes or no answer will be helpful.

Interviewing

Often times, when you begin the interview, you will find that it won't make sense for you to follow your list of questions. Use them as a starting point when you're stumped or as a way to make sure you asked everything you wanted to know.

Otherwise, follow your instincts and ask questions that address the answers your interviewee just gave. The interview process is very organic, and you have to open yourself to the possibility that it probably won't go exactly as planned.

Quoting

Edit your interview notes for the most interesting and insightful nuggets of information. You can omit unnecessary or redundant phrases and edit them for grammar and proper punctuation. Keep the chunks of quote brief. No one wants to read a mess of rambling sentences.

Story-telling

Arranging the quotes in your article is an important part of the process. You want to make sure that the quotes guide the reader to a new level of understanding or, at least, to some end. Place the quotes in a way that tells a story. Think about the beginning, middle, and end of the story you would like to tell.

Press Releases

Please do not quote a press release unless you are quoting a statement from someone in the release. In that case, you would write: In a statement to the press, X said, "blah blah blah."

Press releases are helpful when you need basic information about a subject or are looking for a place to begin. Use the media contact, usually listed at the end of the press release, if you want further information or want to set up an interview with someone at the organization/business.

Fact-checking

Please include the source's contact information (phone number and e-mail, if available) at the end of your article so that I can follow-up with them. Never show the source your article before publication or check the source yourself; often times, the source will want you to change what he or she said.

GUIDELINES FOR NEW WRITERS

1. Sign up for a Wordpress account so that you can access Too Shy Together. (See **HOW TO ACCESS AND USE TOO SHY TOGETHER (TST)** for more information).
2. Read and sign the Confidentiality Agreement (See **CONFIDENTIALITY** for more information).
3. We will discuss your first topic over the phone or by e-mail. If you have an idea, we will work together to shape it so that it matches our editorial vision. If you are not sure what you want to write for your first article, you can consult the story ideas on Too Shy Together (TST) or ask me.
4. Once we have agreed upon your first article, I will give you two dates: the first date is the deadline for your first draft, and the second date is the publication date.
5. Before you submit your first story, I will ask you to submit a 250-word bio and a photo of yourself. The bio can be funny or serious.
6. **Submit your final draft the night before the publication date** so that I can prepare it for publication.

CONFIDENTIALITY

While contributing to Too Shy to Stop, you will have access to confidential and proprietary information like business plans, story ideas, and plans for promotion. I will ask you to read and sign a confidentiality agreement before you can access TST.

I expect everyone to keep information private. Do not share your TST username and password, reveal information about your colleagues, or pass story ideas to people not associated with Too Shy to Stop.

If you violate the confidentiality agreement, your access to TST will be revoked, and you will no longer be able to contribute. When in doubt, ask me.

TOO SHY TO STOP E-MAIL ADDRESS

1. After one of your articles is published on TStS, I will provide you with an e-mail address. This address will be yourfirstname@tooshytostop.com.
2. You will not be able to send e-mails from this address.
3. All e-mails sent to your @tooshytostop.com email address will be forwarded to the primary e-mail address that I use to correspond with you.
4. All e-mails sent to your @tooshytostop.com email address will be forwarded to me as well. Please do not use this e-mail address for personal reasons; its sole purpose is to allow our readers to send you feedback without giving away your primary e-mail address (making you vulnerable to SPAM).

GUIDELINES FOR ARTICLE SUBMISSION

1. Please post a first draft on TST and email a copy to lawirstiuk@gmail.com. When you post a draft to TST, please include the following information in your title: TITLE OF STORY (YOUR NAME). Also, please categorize the post in "Drafts."
2. When you post a first draft to TST, please comment on at least two other stories. Make a habit of visiting the site regularly to see what your colleagues are writing and help them out with your draft. If you want feedback, you have to give feedback!
3. When you submit the final draft of your article, please submit two new story ideas. These story ideas ensure that you have plans for future stories, and they will keep you moving forward.
4. I will approve your ideas or ask you to modify them/offer you suggestions. Then I will assign two dates for each article. The first date is the deadline for your first draft, and the second date is the publication date.
5. You **must submit your final draft the night before the publication date** to ensure that I have time to prepare it for publication.

GUIDELINES FOR PHOTO SUBMISSION

1. I do not give photo assignments. Instead, I compile a weekly list of photo needs on Too Shy Together (TST).
2. If you see an assignment that you'd like to photograph, please e-mail me and let me know that you have claimed it.
3. The photo must be ready by the night before the publication date, which is listed next to the photo request on TST.
4. If you have any questions about the story, you can ask me or contact the writer directly. The name of the writer is listed next to the photo request on TST.
5. When you have the picture ready, please upload it to your Flickr account and add it to the Too Shy to Stop Flickr Photo Pool (<http://www.flickr.com/groups/tooshytostop/>).

HOW TO ACCESS AND USE TOO SHY TOGETHER (TST)

On Too Shy Together (TST), you can find the following: Editorial Calendar, story ideas, photography needs, drafts, writer/photographer contact information, ink to our Flickr photo pool, tips, announcements, and more.

1. To access TST for the first time, you must have a Wordpress account.
 - Visit <http://www.wordpress.com>.
 - Follow the instructions to sign up for a free account.
 - Confirm your new account.
 - Send me an e-mail with your username and the e-mail address that you used to sign up for the account.

- I will reply with the confirmation that you can sign in:
<http://tooshytogether.wordpress.com>.
2. When you sign in for the first time, you will see the blog.
 3. To comment on a post, click “Comments” at the bottom of the post, enter your comment, and click “Submit.”
 4. To create a new post, find the heading “Meta” in the left-hand column, and click “Site Admin,” which will take you to the Dashboard page.
 5. Once on the Dashboard, click “Posts” on the left-hand navigation bar and then click “Add New.”
 6. In the text box, enter your text, categorize the post in the appropriate category (“Drafts” for a draft, “Introductions” for an introduction, etc.).
 7. When you post a first draft, you must comment on at least two other drafts.

HOW TO COMMENT ON TST

No one benefits from comments like “great job!” or “fantastic article!”. We are all trying to become better writers, and we benefit most from constructive criticism. Please try to share insightful and helpful comments that will push the writer and help them reach a new level of clarity.

Ask questions like: *What is the writer’s main idea? Could the writer do anything to make the main idea more obvious? Do all the details support the main idea? Do the quotes and sources support the main idea? Are you left wondering anything about the main idea? Is the writer being fair to the subject? Are you curious about anything else in the article? Would you like to know more?*

EDITORIAL PROCESS

“The truth is, you have to learn how to be edited just as much as you have to learn how to edit. And learning how to be edited teaches you a lot about writing, about distance and objectivity and humility, and ultimately about yourself..

...You are forced as a writer to come to terms with the gap between your idea and your execution -- and still more deflating, between your idea and what your idea should have been...”

(<http://www.salon.com/opinion/kamiya/2007/07/24/editing/>)

At many publications, writers never have access to the changes that editors make. Articles are published, and no one benefits from a revision process; editors exert power, and writers never improve.

I want to give everyone the chance to produce the best possible article before I publish it, and I hope to make very few, if any, last-minute changes. I want all writers to be extremely proud of the work that they are submitting; I want them to know that all their hard work paid off.

When you finish a first draft, you will post one copy on TST and e-mail one copy to me. Within 48 hours, I will send you a Word document of your story with edits made using the “Track Changes” feature. Please do not simply click “Accept Changes” and call this a revision.

Take the time to look over the suggestions and changes that I have made. If you disagree with something or want to know about why I made a specific change, do not hesitate to tell me. I want you to benefit from my edits rather than feel threatened by them.

When you work on your final draft, consider both my comments and the comment from your colleagues. You are not obligated to make every single change but do understand that we are trying to help you develop the best article possible.

EDITORIAL CALENDAR

Everyone can access the Editorial Calendar through TST. On the blog view, you will find “Editorial Calendar” under the heading “Tools.” When you click on that link, you will see a Google calendar filled with names, article titles, and deadlines.

The easiest way to view the Editorial Calendar is in “Weekly” view. You can change the view by clicking “Weekly” in the top, right-hand corner of the page. Once in “Weekly” view, you will see FINAL and FIRST draft articles listed for each day. The FINAL drafts are listed earlier in the day, and the FIRST drafts are listed later in the day.

Time of day is not really the issue here. In general, I publish FINAL drafts in the order that they appear on that day, but the times are not accurate. FINAL drafts must be submitted by midnight the night before the publication date.

Please respect the Editorial Calendar. If you can’t make a deadline, notify me at least 48 hours in advance so that I can adjust articles as needed. I make a lot of changes on any given day so be sure to check the Editorial Calendar frequently.

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