

HOW TO WRITE AN ARTICLE FOR YOUR WEBSITE



An article on your website can provide the public with an inside look at the happenings inside your Court. It is an opportunity to connect with courthouse stakeholders on an informal basis and highlight all of the great work being done across Illinois.

While press releases are meant to inform audiences about timely news (e.g., hiring announcements, awards, or new programs), articles are more casual and evergreen – meaning they don't go out of date.

The goal is to provide your audience with valuable information on a topic in a pleasant and engaging way.

WHEN SHOULD I DRAFT AN ARTICLE VS. A PRESS RELEASE?

Articles can provide audiences with a positive look at the workings of the Court that isn't tied to breaking news or a deadline. This may include:

- Q&As or profiles with judges and courthouse staff
- Updates on Court programs and interviews with those participating
- Coverage of courthouse events, like holiday celebrations or visits from the public
- Visits by judges or courthouse staff to local schools or civic associations
- Updates on new courthouse technology or processes

HOW SHOULD I FORMAT AN ARTICLE?

As mentioned before, aim for pleasant and engaging yet informative reading. Just because an article isn't breaking news, doesn't mean there shouldn't be a clear reason why readers should care.

- **Develop your main idea.** Grab readers' attention with the main point of the article. When developing the main idea consider, "why should readers care?"
- **Write for your audience.** Who will be reading the article? What do they know and what should they know?

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- **Keep your paragraphs and sentences short.** It's easier for your audience to understand short, simple sentences that express only one idea. To improve readability, paragraphs should be 2-3 sentences only (no one wants to read a wall of text!).
- **Use the active voice.** The active voice is clear, direct, and concise. The subject does the action in the sentence. Readers comprehend "the dog chased the ball" (active) quicker than "the ball was chased by the dog" (passive).
- **Avoid superlatives like "very," or "extremely."** Share as much information as the reader needs to know without embellishment or unneeded content.
- **Add substance.** If you have trouble adding substance, reconsider writing the article. Write to convey meaning and understanding rather than to meet a quota. Share something new with your readers. Picture them asking "why?" in response, and then answer that question.
- **Include a story.** People respond to a compelling story. Bring the stories of your courthouse to life through the lived experiences of your colleagues, quotes, photos, and recounting courthouse events.
- **Tell them what you are going to tell them, tell them, then tell them what you told them.** When structuring your article, first present your topic to the audience, then explain what it is, and finally help them understand why it's important.

HOW DO I DISTRIBUTE AN ARTICLE?

An article can be posted on your Court's website and your social media platforms. It can also be included in email newsletters, on your intranet, or even shared with local media contacts who are often looking to fill their pages.

Finally, please share all articles with the Illinois Supreme Court's Communications Department at Communications@IllinoisCourts.gov.

QUESTIONS?

If you have questions, please contact the Illinois Supreme Court's Communications Department at communications@illinoiscourts.gov.

