The ARRL Author's Guide

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So What Are We Looking For?

QST

Despite the common misconception, *QST* is *not* a technical or engineering publication. *QST* is a *membership journal* that appeals to a broad cross-section of readers. With that in mind, we're looking for articles that are likely to please the highest percentage of our readership.

A **technical article** that has the best chance of being accepted for *QST* is one that…

• Presents a project or idea that is useful and engaging to most hams. Example: A description of an HF antenna that can fit in a small attic is useful and engaging to a large portion of our readership. A discussion of feedhorn design for 24-GHz transmitters is not (this type of article would be better suited to *QEX*, the *QST* sister publication).

• Is written in a natural, conversational style. We like articles that speak to the reader as if the reader was sharing pizza with the author. Talk directly *to* the reader; make ample use of the word "you." If your text is sprinkled with words such as "thus," "therefore" and "shall," you need to go back to the drawing board.

For general-interest articles . . .

Tell an engaging story. If you're writing a story about your amateur operation from a far-flung island, try to tell a good story. Give the reader a sense of what it was like to be there. The more you can paint a vivid picture in our minds, the more likely we are to accept your article. For example . . .

Weak: Our boat left the dock at 9 AM and it was raining.

Better: Wind and rain lashed our boat as it struggled away from the dock at 9 AM.

Remember that *QST* is a national magazine. We want content that is of interest to a *national* audience. Don't attempt to use a *QST* article as a vehicle to promote an event in your area—unless the event is national or global in scope (such as the Dayton Hamvention, for example). We almost always reject such promotional articles. If your goal is promotion, send a press release to **qst@arrl.org** and we will consider it for use as a "*QST* Stray" announcement.

QEX

Unlike *QST*, *QEX* **is** a technical, engineering-oriented publication. In fact, we accept only technical articles for *QEX*. The *QEX* audience consists of hams with strong technical backgrounds. Many *QEX* readers are active or retired professional engineers.

We accept a much broader range of technical material for *QEX* than *QST*. We're happy to consider any technical article as long as the subject matter is relevant to Amateur Radio. That said, we still expect good writing for *QEX;* a conversational style will make your article stand out among the candidates.

National Contest Journal (NCJ)

This is a magazine for hams who love contesting. For *NCJ* we're looking for articles that run the gamut from reviews of hardware and software, to antenna designs, to stories about your last contest operation. A friendly writing style is particularly important for *NCJ*. Remember that you are writing for a tight-knit brotherhood of competitors who deeply enjoy what they do.

ARRLWeb

Many people are astonished to learn that of all ARRL media, the ARRLWeb has the highest readership—far larger than *QST* on any given month. We're seeing an increasing demand for

ARRLWeb material, so we're particularly interested in short general-interest or technical articles that our audience can easily read and enjoy online.

Seven Easy Tips for New Writers

1. Use conversational copy. *Talk* to your readers. Use words they know. Keep jargon to a minimum – including the use of Q Signals (instead of QTH, say "location" instead). Write like you talk and let your personality and experience shine through.

2. Go active. Words have power. Find specific active verbs to paint your copy. Action verbs are more engaging and will move the reader along. Another plus: By using action verbs, you automatically reduce the number of words it takes to get your message across. 'John loves Mary' is stronger than 'Mary is loved by John.'

3. Make your technical article benefit-oriented. When it comes to technical material, all your readers care about is: (A) what they can learn from your article and (B) how your article can help solve their problems. They don't care about your life story, awards you've won and so on. Leave that text on the cutting room floor.

4. Keep sentences and paragraphs short. When readers see articles with long sentences, long paragraphs and no bullet points or subheads, they automatically stop reading. Therefore, make your sentences and paragraphs short. If your sentences are longer than 20 words, cut them up into two sentences. You can also add lists and bullet points. Use subheads to draw in readers as they scan your article.

6. Front-load your point. When you make readers wade through paragraph after paragraph of unrelated anecdotes before you get to your point, you've lost their attention. Yes, Mark Twain pulled that stunt all the time, but you're not Mark Twain. Tease your readers with bits of information they need to know. This way they'll stick around to the end.

7. Simplify. Worried you're not using the right words? Use simpler words. Worried that your sentences are not clear? Make simpler sentences. Worried that people won't see your point? Make your point simpler.

Don't boil everything down to 'see spot run' simplicity. But, if you can't make people understand what you write, it's not because the world is filled with morons. It's because your messages aren't clear.

Preparing Your Manuscript

You can mail e-mail your manuscript to ARRL HQ as a word processing file attachment. Although our editorial departments work primarily in *Microsoft Word*, they are capable of reading other word-processing formats as well.

When preparing your electronic manuscript for e-mailing, please observe the following guidelines:

(1) **DO NOT** attempt to format the document to look like a magazine page. If we accept your article for publication, that's our job!

(2) **DO NOT** embed images or illustrations within the manuscript. Send them as separate files.

(3) *DO* include captions for all images and illustrations within the manuscript file.

(4) *DO* make sure your name, call sign, postal address and e-mail address are included within the manuscript file.

E-mail your manuscript to: **QST@ARRL.ORG**

Please note: Our email system can only accept a total of **4 Mbytes** worth of attachments in any single message. That means if you are sending a manuscript file plus several digital image files, you could easily exceed the limit. When this happens, the email may bounce back to you with an error message, or it may simply vanish.

If you think your total files may exceed 4 MBytes, send them in several individual messages. We acknowledge all messages. If you don't hear back from us within a few days, it is safe to assume that we did not receive your email. (It is also possible that your Internet provider is using a SPAM filter that blocked our reply, or that a SPAM filter on your computer is doing the same.)

You also have the option to simply send your manuscript to us by postal mail. Write, typewrite or computer-print your manuscript, double-spaced, on one side of each sheet, and use 8-1/2- X 11-inch paper. Leave at least a 1/2-inch margin around all sides of the text on each page. The top of each manuscript page should have a heading. Include the author's name, a key word or two from the title, and a page number. It's is a good idea to make a copy of your article before sending it to ARRL HQ. (Material sometimes gets lost in the mail.)

Send your manuscript, including all drawings and photographs, to:

ARRL

ATTN: Editorial Dept

225 Main St

Newington, CT 06111

Important! **Send material to only one potential publisher at a time.** It is our policy to automatically reject any submissions that have been sent simultaneously to other magazines or Web sites. Multiple submissions can only lead to copyright infringement problems for publishers.

Photographs

• We can accept color prints or slides.

• We can also accept digital images if the resolution is sufficient. This usually means setting up your camera to take the largest size or highest resolution possible. Check your camera menu or manual. Look the "image quality" setting, or something similar. Set this at *maximum*, which means that your camera's memory will store the LEAST number of pictures.

• All photos, digital or otherwise, must include captions. Tell us what is going on in the photo, where it was taken and so on. If people are shown prominently in the photographs, you must supply their names and/or call signs. Don't write directly on the front or back of prints. Type photo credit

or descriptive information on a piece of paper and tape the paper to the back of the print, or use adhesive-backed notepaper. ***If children appear in your images, you must be able to supply their parent's written permission for the images to be published.***

• *DO NOT* send images captured from Web sites, or scanned from magazines, newspapers, catalogs or other media without obtaining the written permission of the author, Webmaster, company, etc.

• *DO NOT* send prints made on color laser or inkjet printers. The color quality is not sufficient for us to use.

• *DO NOT* edit your images in any way. Again, that's our job. Also, don't attempt to reduce their size for emailing. Image resolution will suffer greatly if you do.

• If your camera has a date-stamping function that adds the date automatically to every photograph, TURN IT OFF when shooting photos for possible publication.

Illustrations

Sketches and/or schematic diagrams you supply should be as clear as possible so that our technical illustrator can work directly from them. We do not require professional line drawings from you. Even pencil drawings are acceptable if they are clear and legible.

All illustrations must include the following:

• Component labels and values (for example: C3 – 10 µF)

• Dimensions of all construction components (PVC tubes, wires, aluminum tubes, etc)

• Text captions that clearly describe what is being shown. *NOTE:* Schematic diagrams must include captions that list *ALL* part values.

Project Source Codes

In keeping with the spirit of Amateur Radio, the ARRL supports open-source software. If your project includes a microprocessor or other device that functions with instructions that you have written, the source code must be made available *at no cost* to any reader who requests it. You can

supply the code to us for distribution from the ARRLWeb, or you can distribute it from your own site or via e-mail. *QST* will not accept a project article unless the source codes are freely available to the public.

What We Do NOT Accept

There are a several taboos that will result in immediate rejection of your article. These apply to all ARRL publications and the ARRLWeb.

- Profanity. Please avoid gratuitous use of even mildly profane words such as "hell."

- Sexual content or discussions of any kind. This includes links to Web sites with sexual content or discussions.

- Depictions of violence or other mistreatment of humans or animals—even in jest. This includes links to Web sites that depict human or animal mistreatment.

- Personal attacks on other amateurs.

- Comments demeaning to others based on gender, race, religion, age or nationality, or links to Web sites with such content.

- Political discussions (other than the politics of Amateur Radio or those pertaining to Amateur Radio).

How Does the Article Selection Process Work?

Send your article to us as described above. You should receive an acknowledgment that your material has been received. Most authors submit their materials via e-mail, but in some instances their Internet Service Providers block our acknowledgments. If you continue to send email and receive nothing in return, it is safe to assume this is happening. Call our Production Coordinator at 860-594-0229, or use Postal Mail.

If you've submitted a technical article, it will be reviewed by our Technical Editorial Committee, which consists of ARRL in-house editors and a group of volunteers from various engineering disciplines. Articles are evaluated on the following criteria . . .

- Technical accuracy

- Quality of writing

- Quality of photography (if applicable)

- Editorial need (Do we need an article on the topic in question?)

Every technical article submission is considered not only for *QST*, but also for *QEX*, *NCJ*, the *ARRLWeb* and even the *ARRL Handbook*. The committee decides which venue is best for every accepted article. However, if you want your article to be considered for one vehicle only (say, *QST*), please note this clearly in your submission.

General-interest articles are reviewed in much the same way, except that the General Interest committee is comprised strictly of ARRL Headquarters staff. Quality of writing, photography and editorial need are the major evaluation criteria.

The editorial committees meet only once per month, so please be patient. It may be 4 to 8 weeks before you receive word of their decision.

If Your Article is Accepted…

If your manuscript is accepted, you will receive a notice by mail. Articles accepted for publication become the property of The American Radio Relay League, Inc. In other words, we acquire all rights to your article. We must do this because the ARRL has sharing agreements with our IARU sister societies worldwide. To fulfill these agreements, our articles must be available for publication overseas without copyright encumbrances from the original authors.

That said, it is important to point out that we only acquire rights to your article *as it is published in our media*. We do *not* hold rights to your ideas, designs, software, etc.

Before we can prepare a manuscript for publication, we must have your written permission to do so. This is the purpose of the *author's release form*, which is sent to you along with the acceptance letter. The release form specifies that the material you have submitted is original, except as noted; has not been submitted or published elsewhere, except as noted; and contains suitable credit for circuits or ideas borrowed from already published material. Please be sure to include your Social Security Number on the release form. If the material falls within our compensation

guidelines, and you are a US citizen or resident alien, we must have your Social Security Number so that we can report the payment to the Internal Revenue Service at the end of the year.

We will schedule your article for the next available issue, but please note that schedule changes are often necessary and that it could be up to one year before your article appears in print.

When your article is ready for publication, we will either post, fax or e-mail a copy to you (in Adobe PDF format). This will be your "proof" copy. Check it carefully for errors, and then contact us as soon as possible with any necessary changes.

Compensation

The League compensates authors of certain material published in *QST* according to these guidelines:

• Payment will be made for *QST* articles and Hints and Kinks items. Payment for articles will be at the rate of $65 per published page, or part thereof, including photographs, drawings and other related material. For *QEX* the rate is $50 per page. Authors of Hints and Kinks items will be compensated at the rate of $20 per published item. Feature stories for the ARRLWeb are purchased at $25 per story. We do not pay for material published in *NCJ*.

• Payment will be made upon publication. ARRL and IARU officials (officers, directors and vice directors as well as officials of IARU member-societies), and authors of ARRL National Convention articles are not eligible for compensation. For authors who are presently under contract to the League (such as Contributing Editors), the provisions of the contract, and not this policy, apply.

If Your Article is Rejected…

The first thing a budding writer learns is to not take rejections personally. Magazines decline articles for a wide variety of reasons, but they have nothing to do with the personalities of the authors. If we decide not to use your article, you will receive a notice by postal mail. Printed materials, illustrations and photos will be returned.

The best advice in the face of a rejection is to simply re-package the materials and send them to another publication. There are other amateur magazines available, and what may not appeal to one publication may appeal to another.

Attempting to argue your case with the editors will only result in bruised feelings. The decisions of the ARRL Editorial Committees are *final*.