



## Submission Guidelines for Nastawgan

*Do you wish to submit an article?*

Please review the following to improve your chances of publication

### In General:

We seek out articles about a variety of topics – backcountry trips you've undertaken, ideas about wilderness travel, trail/waterway development, club projects, gear, programs, recipes and training. The story does not have to pertain primarily to canoe travel, and to any particular region. With some exceptions, trip summaries (Day 1, Day 2, etc.) are not favoured. There can be moments of personal references, such as briefly in the introduction, or otherwise related and informative to the story, but they should be limited in word count and *not* dominate the story. *PLEASE – no repetitive accounts of the number and kind of fish you caught on each lake along your route, or the entire content of your daily menu. Try to avoid writing articles that read like a blog. Our readership is looking for interesting content.*

As many of our writers are giving accounts of trips they've undertaken, even at the risk of being stylistically repetitive, you should begin with a good map of your trip route, with the put-in and take-out location obvious. A person, topic, or issue that is universal to the Wilderness Canoe Association community will be considered a very legitimate submission. Such a person does not have to be famous, just relevant to our readership.

Some recent feedback from our readers has asked for our articles to NOT be so long. Anything over 6000 words, unless it is Shakespearian in style and content, is probably not suitable for Nastawgan.

### The General Format of Nastawgan:

Most issues have two major articles: one primary and one secondary, or of equal length. There will always be an editorial page included with content pertinent to the club's activities, and sometimes this will be written by the WCA chairperson. The final pages may include short pieces, of a page or two in length.

Any personal essay/story limited to humor (and, for good or for bad, the editors will be the judge of that), opinion, a recipe or gear review, always related to WCA readership in some way, will be considered for these final pages. This section is limited generally to one or two pages, and a minimum of 1 or 2 photographs. The Editor-in-Chief shall determine the final content of each issue.

Articles should NOT be considered complete when first submitted.

Nastawgan attempts to monitor the frequency in which articles about a river, or idea, are published. Some rivers are paddled frequently (example the Bloodvein), and our readership is looking for original content. For this reason, if you write an article, spend hours on it to make it great, you cannot expect it to be automatically published when you submit your 'newborn child' to us. We suggest, then, that if you have an article idea and wish to hear from us whether it would be suitable, please contact us. When ideas are pitched, email a paragraph or two on your story idea to: [journal@wildernesscanoe.ca](mailto:journal@wildernesscanoe.ca). Also, you might consider submitting a good working copy afterwards to get some helpful feedback. We will take a quick read and then respond. Please do not submit only partially written articles, though, feedback cannot be iterative. This method also limits uncertainty and increases the odds that your story *will* get published as opposed to 'shelved'. Nastawgan will attempt to get your words printed, but be patient as submissions actually do pile up, sometimes. And other times, we are starving for content! 😊



### Word Count Limits

Our primary and secondary articles are between 3,000 and 5,000 words (there are exceptions). It is also possible that the initial word count could be reduced through the editing review process. Please do not think that word count limits are for everyone else but you. Word count limits are inherent in any magazine. Artistically, word count limits force us as writers to produce the best, most concise, and forward-moving content; they make us better writers. Also, we don't want the magazine to contain only one significant story in each issue, and going over the word count limit means some other story may get bumped, which isn't fair to anyone.

### Formatting

Word documents are preferred, but no story will be rejected based on format. That is for the editing process. The layout process gets it in magazine shape no matter the format submitted. Also, it's great if you are a professional writer, and know the AP or Chicago manuals on writing. However, what is more important are stories from excellent storytellers, who get their facts right and give readers something of real interest presented in a vivid way. We'd all rather read a good gripping yarn any day rather than an encyclopedic dissertation. Yes, please use spellcheck, and read through for typos or grammar errors, and even read the story out loud slowly, which is one of the best ways to catch errors — but we're not looking for grammatical or spelling perfection. Putting that final polish on is the editor's task.

One thing that helps us is to submit your article in multiple formats. If you submit your overall article with its pictures where you think they belong, in .pdf format, our editors might get a better idea of how you visualize it. But also, submit your words, alone, in a Microsoft Word document. This is what the editors need in order to focus on the content, alone. Then, put your photos in a separate word document (please in high resolution!!), or even emailed separately as jpeg files, or placed on a google drive, makes the production of a quality magazine easier for our layout editor. Scenery alone, no matter how beautiful, is not preferred. Nastawgan prefers most photos have a person, people, and canoes (?) in them. Each photo should come with a brief caption, or appropriate title, with recognition of the photographer if necessary, whether that's you or someone else. (This can also be in a separate file ... but then the photo must be indexed: i.e. photo1.jpg)

### Helpful Hints to Take to Heart While Writing

1) Know Your Audience: Nastawgan's readership is different from writing for a general newspaper. The basics, such as being outdoors is good, but most of our readership is looking for where their next trip might be ... or they might be living vicariously and want to hear about the details of what you saw and felt along your journey. Please avoid the basics that our readership has long understood, already.

Show Don't Tell: This is an oft-quoted rule that is as overstated as it is true – and too often ignored. As examples:

2) The Tell: This trail is like no other, beautiful and challenging and fun and exciting.

The Show: A winding single track, the \_\_\_\_\_ trail takes you on a \_\_\_K journey around gentle turns through 80-foot, heavily scented pines, a mystery awaiting around every frequent curve, leading you to campsites, scenic overlooks, and, to the sound of water flowing around boulders, the \_\_\_\_\_ river, where deer or beaver may join you along the shoreline.

In other words – *don't tell* the readers something is beautiful; instead – *show* the readers the experiences unique to the place described, using the 5 senses and the physical characteristics of note. This way, your subject stands out and the readers can feel for themselves as they read why the place is beautiful or the event is outstanding.



Telling isn't always bad because you don't want your story to exceed word count, especially on fact points such as location and length and history. But when it comes to a sentence that starts out: *This event is ...* and you are about to write "the best" or the "most beautiful" or "the most exciting" and the like, then this is likely the exact place to *show* your readers the details of why without telling why something is so. After all, experiencing the features of what makes a particular sunset over a particular lake so beautiful is not only more effective but also more convincing to *show* what you're saying is true. You will also discover in short order that showing in your writing helps immerse you in your story's environment as you write, experiencing the details for yourself that you then put into words, which is a showing way of telling you that it makes our writing much more enjoyable.

3) Avoid Superlative Language: Similar to show don't tell, please don't write that this place or event is absolutely the best. Such a conclusion is subjective in the first place no matter how great an event or trail may be. Plus, this magazine serves to honor all of its coverage and recognizes that every event, place to visit, accommodation, and the like, has something special and grand to offer. Writing that something is the best not only doesn't show why something is so good, but it also works as a slap in the face to other events or places, and so on.

4) Don't Cross into Medical Expertise: Unless you truly have the accepted education and training, do not cross into the realm of medical advice. Please leave such advice and other similar advice to the individuals and their personal health care providers.

5) Make People Think as They Read –*I didn't know that!* While having writing experience is great, this magazine is NOT looking for the polished essayist. Rather, we look for the storyteller who can spin the good yarn and show the wonderful tale, as though in a conversation with best friends who have asked, *so what is this place, thing, or event all about?* You, and we, don't want a story that people can easily find on the Internet. Show the story that *you* know, using your knowledge and passion, presented in a way so that it can be experienced by the readership. If a story is submitted with some typos and grammar errors, *but shows a unique story*, you have crossed the finish line to acceptance!

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