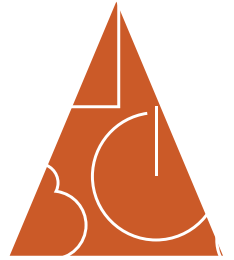


MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY | Extension



# Article Writing Toolkit 2017



## INTRODUCTION

<b>Introduction to article writing for MSU Extension .....</b>	<b>3</b>
What is the purpose of articles?.....	3
What should I write about? .....	3
How many articles do I need to write?.....	3
What if I have questions?.....	3

## ESSENTIALS

<b>Writer's quick guide .....</b>	<b>4</b>
How to use this guide .....	4
Structure .....	4
Content .....	4
Consistency and style .....	4
Sources .....	5
Before sending to a colleague(s) for review .....	5
Final checks before submitting to news.msue@anr.msu.edu .....	5
<b>Article template –MSU Extension 2017 .....</b>	<b>6</b>

## MAIN GUIDES

<b>Writing articles made easy .....</b>	<b>7</b>
The Four-factor Approach.....	7
Five Qualities.....	8
<b>Sourcing and citing .....</b>	<b>9</b>
When to use external sources and quotations .....	9
Citing your work .....	9
Alternatives to using direct quotes .....	9
How to hyperlink sources in Microsoft Word.....	10
What are MSU Extension-approved sources? .....	10
<b>Reviewing articles .....</b>	<b>12</b>
Content .....	12
Sources .....	12
<b>Submitting articles .....</b>	<b>13</b>
Use a descriptive file name .....	13
When sending the submission email .....	13
What happens once you submit an article?.....	13

## SUPPLEMENTARY GUIDES

<b>Article types, tips and photos .....</b>	<b>15</b>
Listicles, tips, steps, how-tos .....	15
Long reads.....	15
Interviews .....	16
Adding photos .....	16
<b>Evergreen and event articles .....</b>	<b>17</b>
What are evergreen articles?.....	17
Updating evergreen articles.....	17
<b>Incorporating recipes .....</b>	<b>18</b>
When to use recipes and how to cite them .....	18
How to format recipes for articles .....	18
Spoonbread Corn Pudding.....	19
<b>Writing an article series .....</b>	<b>20</b>
Choose your series topic carefully .....	20
How to title a series.....	20

### NOTE TO USERS:

The content in this interactive Adobe Acrobat PDF document (such as the Table of Contents on this page) can be easily navigated by clicking on the underlined links as well as by using the Acrobat Bookmarks feature. (To view the Bookmarks navigation pane in Acrobat, click on the top menu items: View; Show/Hide; Navigation Panes; Bookmarks. The Bookmarks navigation pane will be available on the left side of the document.)



### MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY | Extension

MSU is an affirmative-action, equal-opportunity employer, committed to achieving excellence through a diverse workforce and inclusive culture that encourages all people to reach their full potential. Michigan State University Extension programs and materials are open to all without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, religion, age, height, weight, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status, family status or veteran status. Issued in furtherance of MSU Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Jeffrey W. Dwyer, Director, MSU Extension, East Lansing, MI 48824. This information is for educational purposes only. Reference to commercial products or trade names does not imply endorsement by MSU Extension or bias against those not mentioned. Produced by ANR Creative. IP-Web-4:2017-TC/AS/MR WCAG 2.0

# Introduction to article writing for MSU Extension

## What is the purpose of articles?

Michigan State University Extension's mission is to help people improve their lives through an educational process that applies knowledge to critical issues, needs and opportunities. Producing high-quality, useful, current and reliable content on a consistent basis and sharing this content on our website is a large part of this mission.

Michigan residents have been turning to MSU Extension for answers for more than 100 years, but they are also increasingly turning to the Internet. We need to adapt so that we can continue to meet people where they are, whether that is in the field or online.

Writing articles helps bring the vast knowledge and resources of MSU directly to individuals, communities and businesses throughout Michigan and the world. The more people who read our articles, the more people know about MSU Extension – who we are, what we do, what we offer, and the many ways that people can connect with us and get involved.

## What should I write about?

You should write about topics that relate directly to your current MSU Extension role and area of expertise. If you want to explore writing on a topic outside of this purview, you need prior approval from your institute director.

## How many articles do I need to write?

Institute directors determine the number of articles that educators are asked to write for the MSU Extension website each year. For current information about this requirement and answers to any questions or concerns you have related to it, please contact your work team leaders or institute director.

## What if I have questions?

Feel free to contact your communicator if you have any questions about article writing or the contents of this toolkit. Alternatively, you can send an email to [news.msue@anr.msu.edu](mailto:news.msue@anr.msu.edu), and a staff member will endeavor to send you a response within two business days.



# Writer's quick guide

## How to use this guide

This quick guide is designed to provide you with the bare essentials that you will need to write and submit articles for the MSU Extension website. It also serves as a way for you to navigate the other resources in the *Article Writing Toolkit*. Each section includes directions to more detailed resources within the toolkit if and when you need them.

Write your article within the *Article template* included on page 6. This template can be copied and pasted into a new document or downloaded from the [MSU Extension Organizational Development website](#).



## Structure

(See *Article template*, page 6.)



Articles include the following components:

- Simple, descriptive headline.
- Informative deck (subheading) that summarizes the focus or purpose of the article.
- Strong lead or introduction that outlines the main idea of the article.
- An organized, logical sequence of body paragraphs.
- Incorporates “Michigan State University Extension” with hyperlink to [msue.anr.msu.edu](http://msue.anr.msu.edu). Subsequent mentions of MSU Extension should be written as “MSU Extension” not “MSUE” or “Extension.”

## Content

(See *Writing articles made easy*, page 7, and *Article types, tips and photos*, page 15.)



- Relates to your current role (if outside your role, it should be approved by your institute director).
- Is educational and related to MSU Extension programs, services or initiatives, and one or more of the following:
  - A real-life situation, challenge or experience.
  - Research-based information.
- Is written with a specific audience in mind (e.g., general, agricultural, healthcare providers, early childhood caregivers, etc.).
- Is written in plain language – avoids overuse of jargon, especially academic.

## Consistency and style

(See *Writing articles made easy*, page 7, and *Article types, tips and photos*, page 15.)



- Article components (headline, subhead, keywords) are consistent with the main topic and body content.
- Writing style should be less formal than a research paper but not as casual as a blog.



## Sources

(See *Sourcing and citing*, page 9.)



- Cite sources every time content is paraphrased, quoted or adapted.
- Use reputable, MSU Extension-approved types of sources in an unbiased manner.
- Incorporate hyperlinks to relevant or related MSU Extension-approved sources.

## Before sending to a colleague(s) for review

(See *Reviewing articles*, page 12, and *Article types, tips and photos*, page 15.)



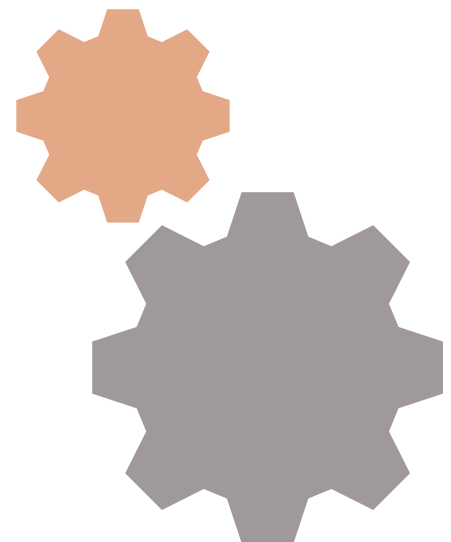
- Run spell checker.
- Check that all structural elements (headline, subheading, etc.) have been added.
- Read aloud to check sentence structure and ease of reading, and look for incomplete thoughts.
- Double check names, facts and any possible math – accuracy is essential.
- Check for insensitive or questionable language.
- Include a relevant photo. Photos should be included as additional attachments in their original format/highest resolution. Proper photo credit should be given. (See *Article types, tips and photos*, page 15.)

## Final checks before submitting to [news.msue@anr.msu.edu](mailto:news.msue@anr.msu.edu)

(See *Submitting articles*, page 13.)



- Resolve any tracked changes and comments from reviewer(s).
- Add name(s) of reviewer(s) to article template.
- Save and name file appropriately.
- Include (Cc) the reviewer when you submit an article via email.
- Send one article as an attachment per email to [news.msue@anr.msu.edu](mailto:news.msue@anr.msu.edu).



# Article template - MSU Extension 2017

**Author's name:**

**Reviewed by:**

**Institute this article relates to:**

**Is this an update of a previous article? Y/N (if yes, include hyperlink for original article)**

**Headline (title):** [Brevity is important, use few words.]

**Secondary headline (deck or subheading may be no longer than 125 characters, including spaces):** [Still short sentence, tells readers why they should care, similar to a tweetable summary.]

**Web categories:** [See list of categories on separate attachment included in article writing toolkit.]

**Program(s) article relates to:** [Please list any specific program pages with which you would like your article associated. For a complete list of program pages in a topic area, visit the topic page(s) on the MSU Extension website and select the "Programs" tab. List any relevant programs here for association.]

**Three searchable key words/phrases:** [Think of words or phrases that people would type into Google when looking for the information on the topic you're writing about.]

**Photo caption (if applicable):** [Please include who took the photo so credit can be given.]

**Article body content:**

*Example article outline (suggestion only):*

*Intro paragraph - Grab the reader's attention by stating a statistic or little known fact. Include details (if appropriate) related to who, what, where, when, why and how. Explain briefly how this relates to the reader.]*

*1st body paragraph*

*2nd body paragraph*

*Note: Make sure you include Michigan State University Extension with a hyperlink to the homepage somewhere in your article.*

# Writing articles made easy

When approaching the task of writing an article for MSU Extension, it is important to keep in mind the outcomes that we want to achieve by doing so – empowering people through education, raising awareness of who we are and what we do, getting people involved in our programs.

One way to help achieve this is to use the following four-factor approach.

## The Four-factor Approach

All MSU Extension articles should strive to empower readers through education and help them learn more about who we are and what we do.

Combining the factors outlined below can result in an educational article that focuses on a real-life problem faced by Michigan residents, offers a research-based solution(s) to that problem and does so by drawing upon knowledge that is available through MSU Extension program(s).

### 1. Educational focus

Providing information in a way that educates the audience supports MSU Extension’s mission by empowering people to make their own decisions.

### 2. Real-life situation, challenge or experience

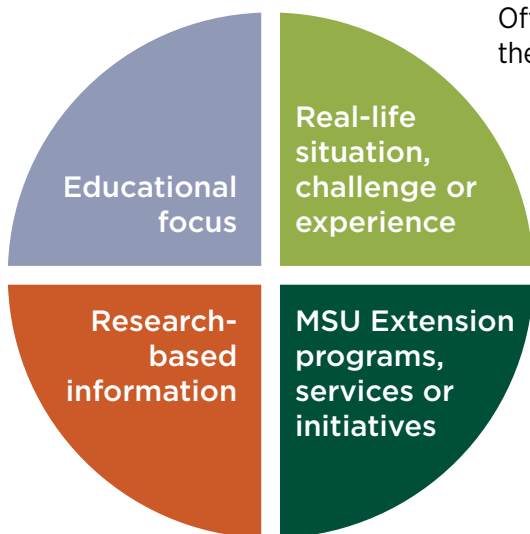
Focusing on a real-world scenario or problem that the reader could experience or could easily imagine experiencing in day-to-day life is a key part of producing content that is relevant and useful.

### 3. MSU Extension programs, services or initiatives

Drawing upon experiences conducting or participating in MSU Extension programs and initiatives is a great way to introduce readers to programs and resources that are relevant to the focus of the article.

### 4. Research-based information

Offering advice that is supported by scientific research helps ensure that the decisions that readers are empowered to make are informed ones.





## Five Qualities

Approaching the task of article writing with the four factors in mind (educational focus, a real-life situation, MSU Extension programs and research-based information) is a great way to help you produce content that is relevant, informative and actionable. The next step is getting this content in front of our target audience in a format that will catch their interest and be easy to understand. Lastly, we want readers to be able to easily share our content with others.



### 1. Actionable

What action can readers take after reading the article? For example, is there a related MSU Extension program that they could sign up for?

### 2. Relevant

Does the focus of the article relate to a real-life situation, challenge or experience?

### 3. Informative

Is research-based information presented to help inform and educate readers about the focus of the article? Is the information appropriately sourced and cited?

### 4. Engaging

Creating engaging articles involves combining the other characteristics with writing style and use of appropriate headlines. This allows readers to determine quickly if an article contains content that is relevant, informative and actionable.

### 5. Shareable

Shareability depends mostly on the way an article is structured and formatted. Breaking up large sections of text with appropriate subheadings and including useful hyperlinks is particularly important.

Increasing how much an article or its content is shared increases the number of people that can read it and learn more about who we are, what we do and how they can get involved.

#### TIP:

Drawing upon the variety of resources available in this toolkit, making the most of the review process with your peers and working closely with the communications staff is the best way to create engaging content on a regular basis.



# Sourcing and citing

## When to use external sources and quotations

Using a quote or referencing another person's work is meant to enhance an article, not form the entirety of it. A few sentences from another source that supports the story or adds context make articles feel content-rich. However, if you're about to quote a paragraph or more, STOP. What is the value in reading the article you are writing rather than the original source you are quoting so heavily? In short, articles should not be a patchwork quilt of other people's words.

## Citing your work

When writing an article, it's important to cite sources clearly. For MSU Extension stories, hyperlink to the online source of your quote – not the website where the quote is from but the specific page where the text appears. Include this hyperlink within the body text of your article.

For example, if your source is Michigan State University Extension and the quote is *"From a very early age, all of us take in a steady stream of images, words, language and behaviors related to differences, and we're impacted at the personal, interpersonal, institutional and cultural levels."*

You would write something like this:

*According to [Michigan State University Extension](#), "From a very early age, all of us take in a steady stream of images, words, language and behaviors related to differences, and we're impacted at the personal, interpersonal, institutional and cultural levels."*

If you are unable to hyperlink to an online version of the source you are citing, reference the source within a sentence like this:

*According to the 2017 article "Don't avoid the hard conversations," by Michigan State University Extension, "From a very early age, all of us take in a steady stream of images, words, language and behaviors related to differences, and we're impacted at the personal, interpersonal, institutional and cultural levels."*

If you're referencing material such as a book that cannot be directly hyperlinked, reference it like this:

*According to "Buddha's Brain" by Rick Hanson and Richard Mendius, it's important to "get the nutrients your brain needs to maintain a good mood, relieve anxiety, sharpen memory, and strengthen concentration. If you can change your brain, you can change your life."*

## Alternatives to using direct quotes

If you don't want to use the exact words from the original source in your article, it is acceptable to paraphrase your source. You should still use a hyperlink to cite the source where you got the information.



Paraphrasing could look like this:

*Being exposed to light for an extended amount of time can make this vegetable appear less appetizing. Also, the temperature of the storage area is important. The ideal range should be 50 to 70 degrees Fahrenheit, according to [North Carolina State Cooperative Extension](#).*

**KEY POINT:**

Even if you paraphrase, always cite your sources.

## How to hyperlink sources in Microsoft Word

Copy the URL/link of your source, select the word(s) in your document you would like to link, right click and scroll down to “hyperlink,” paste the URL and click “okay”. The final result should look like this: [North Carolina State Cooperative Extension](#)

## What are MSU Extension-approved sources?

The hallmark of MSU Extension articles is that they are educational and unbiased. By quoting or paraphrasing information from a source, you, and in turn MSU Extension, are endorsing that information. To that end, we want to ensure that sources used in articles (or any MSU Extension publications) are reputable and peer-reviewed. Below are some suggestions to help guide you to sources that meet these qualifications.

**University and government research.** Scientific studies that have been peer-reviewed by Extension personnel and/or scientists at credible, non-biased institutions are often your best bet. When possible, link to the original research or journal article to provide context.

**Journals.** It is acceptable to quote from scientific journals, Extension curricula and bulletins because it is assumed that they have been peer-reviewed and developed using evidence-based science. Link to the original journal article when possible.

**Surveys.** When using raw data from surveys, be sure to give a source and always refer to it as survey data, not “research.”

**Books.** Books that have been peer-reviewed and use evidence-based science are acceptable sources. In addition, quoting reputable authors and information from other types of books is acceptable when it is attributed to that source and used to demonstrate a range of thoughts on a subject.



**Newspapers and magazines.** In general, do not quote newspapers or popular magazines as the source of science-based information. Instead, cite the original source of the information.

Example:

Not acceptable: *“According to the New York Times ...”*

Acceptable: *“John Doe, associate professor of everything at Best University, was quoted in the New York Times as saying that ...”*

You may include media as a source of opinion or backdrop on the current climate of a particular issue.

Example:

Acceptable: *“The Detroit News recently ran a series of articles about the seriousness of bullying in public schools.”*

You may also consider quoting the media as a source of controversy. The subheading of [this story on finely textured lean beef](#) is a good example. In this article, the authors referred to “the media” in general. It would also be acceptable to refer to a specific media source.

**Websites.** Focusing on websites that end with “.edu” or “.gov” is a good tactic to help you avoid disreputable sources. When quoting studies that are presented by a non-university or non-government source, be sure to refer to the original author of the study.

Example:

Not acceptable: *“The website StopDiabetesNow.com says ...”*

Acceptable: *“According to a research study conducted by the American Diabetes Association ...”*

#### KEY POINT:

**Websites such as Wikipedia, WebMD and Urban Dictionary are not appropriate sources for MSU Extension articles.**

**Your expertise.** Feel free to use your expertise when writing articles, but be cautious about sharing your personal bias. It is assumed that, as an MSU Extension staff member, you have expertise in your field. You may preface the information by noting that it is your professional opinion or based on your experience. [This piece on hay prices](#) (especially paragraph six) is a good example of how to cite your experience.

If you have any questions or doubts about acceptable sources, contact your work team leaders or the communications staff.



# Reviewing articles

**It is required that every MSU Extension article be reviewed by at least one reviewer. Besides being a crucial part of the MSU Extension article writing process, reviewing is a great way for you to see what other writers are producing. As a reviewer, you help ensure that we consistently produce high-quality, useful, current and reliable content.**

## TIP:

Leaving comments and tracking changes in a Word document is a great way to ask questions and show authors what changes you've made or recommend. Turn on track changes by clicking "review," then select "track changes."

When you're reviewing an article, it is essential that you are knowledgeable in the topic area of the article. Communications staff members rely on your expertise to ensure the accuracy and validity of article content. With expertise in mind, remember that MSU Extension has many experts on a wide range of content areas, so do not be afraid to look beyond your institute for a reviewer when appropriate to your article topic.

When an author submits an article to be edited and posted, it is best practice for the reviewer to be copied (Cc) on the submission email. This is done so that there is an additional point of contact who is familiar with article content in case any inquiries or concerns arise.

In addition to checking spelling, grammar and punctuation, please evaluate each article for the following elements:

## Content

(See *Writing articles made easy*, page 7, and *Article types and tips*, page 15.)



- Does the content relate to the author's current MSU Extension role? (If outside that role, it should be approved by the institute director.)
- Is the content supported by research-based information?
- Is the content in the article easy to read and understand?
- Is the content accurate?
- Does the content reflect current best-practice in the topic area?
- Is it clear from the headline what the audience will learn about in the article? (Avoid ambiguous headlines.)

## Sources

(See *Sourcing and citing*, page 9.)



- Is there valid, credible information with proper citation according to the Sourcing and citing guide?

If the article you're reviewing does not meet any of the above criteria, please seek clarification from the author.

**If an author ignores critical reviewer feedback related to relevancy and accuracy of article content please contact your institute director.**

# Submitting articles

Once you have written your article and it has been reviewed, you should submit it via email to [news.msue@anr.msu.edu](mailto:news.msue@anr.msu.edu). (Attach only one article per email.) Let communication staff members know (*Article template*, page 6) if an article you are submitting is a part of a series or if it is an update of an old article. Include any photos as additional attachments in their original format/highest resolution. Proper photo credit should be given if the photo is not yours. (You must have permission to use photos that aren't yours.)

See *Article types, tips and photos*, page 15.



## Use a descriptive file name

Make sure the file name reflects the content of the article, and use the file name in the subject line of the email. This allows communication staff members to more effectively sort articles between institutes and manage the editing and posting process.

One option you might use is to include the following:

**Institute acronym\***, **article topic**, **your last name**, **date submitted**

\*If your article is for multiple institutes, list the more applicable institute first.

Example:

**HNI unsafe canning Smith 9.27.16**

### List of institute acronyms:

- **HNI** – Health and Nutrition Institute
- **GMI** – Greening Michigan Institute
- **CYI** – Children and Youth Institute
- **AABI** – Agriculture and Agribusiness Institute

## When sending the submission email

### Include the reviewer(s) when you submit an article

It is good practice to copy the reviewer in the final email submission. This is done so that there is an additional point of contact who is familiar with article content in case any inquiries or concerns arise, and it helps ensure that we consistently produce high-quality, useful, current and reliable content.

(See *Reviewing articles*, page 12).



## What happens once you submit an article?

When you submit an article, the email will be placed in the correct institute mailbox. From there, it is edited and posted by the communications staff. If there are any issues that cannot be resolved with light edits, you will be contacted (usually via email) by your communications staff member. The reviewer may also be included in this communication to help ensure a quick resolution of any concerns.



Please note that the article headline and secondary headline may be edited by communications staff members to increase search engine optimization (SEO). This approach can help increase the visibility of MSU Extension articles.

Once the article is posted, the author is sent an email with a hyperlink to the posted article. This lets the author know that the article has been posted successfully and is also an opportunity to double check that everything has been posted correctly.

**TIP:**  
You can keep track of what articles you have written and when they have been posted by checking your Expert Profile page.



# Article types, tips and photos

You can combine the key elements outlined in *Writing articles made easy* (page 7) in a variety of ways to produce high-quality articles. Below you will find a few examples of various article types – please view these as suggestions only.

## Listicles, tips, steps, how-tos

This type of article is a great way to offer a number of related recommendations or break down a single recommendation into consecutive steps. You could also outline key research findings or risk factors for a particular condition or approach.

### KEY POINTS:

- Ensure that you have at least one paragraph before and after your list to serve as an introduction and a conclusion.
- Tips should be either complete sentences or short (less than five words) blurbs, not a mix of the two.
- If your list involves steps, make sure that each has a bolded heading and is numbered, not bulleted, to show that points belong in a specific order.
- Keep the number of lists within one article to a minimum.

### Example:

[Ten things under \\$5 you need in your horse show bag](#)

## Long reads

This is an informal term to refer to articles that are 500 words or longer and explore topics in greater depth than listicles. When you're thinking of exploring a topic in depth, consider if it would be appropriate for an article series.

(See *Writing an article series*, page 20).

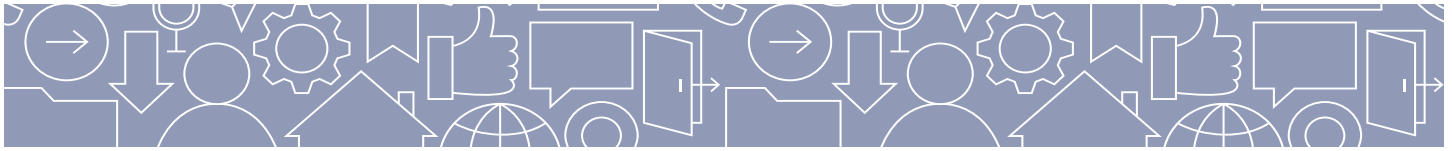


### KEY POINTS:

- Make sure all the content you have included is necessary and relevant. Even long articles should be as short as possible.
- Include additional subheadings within the body text to help break down the article into sections. This helps cater to skim readers who may want to jump to a particular part of the article.

### Example:

[Strategies for using digital technology in healthy ways](#)



## Interviews

Articles that feature an interview are a great way to introduce readers to a person, organization or idea.

### KEY POINTS:

- Before delving into your interview, be sure to provide readers with at least one introductory paragraph to establish the context and significance of the interview.
- Introduce the subject of the interview to the reader before beginning the question and answer portion of the piece.
- Structure the article in a Q&A format: write the question the interviewer asked followed by the subject's response.
- Do not interview yourself or quote yourself.

### Example:

[Sea Grant 50th Anniversary: Celebrating the work of our Extension educators](#)

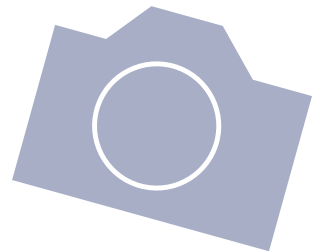
## Adding photos

Adding photos to an article makes an article more aesthetically pleasing, can provide important visual information and context, and makes it more likely to be read and shared by others, which in turn means it is more likely to show up higher in search results when people Google a question or topic.

When selecting images of people who are participants in MSU Extension programs or members of the general public, be sensitive to people's privacy, especially minors. Select only photo-released images of minors. When using images of youth at events who are wearing name badges, please edit out readable names.

### KEY POINTS:

- Submitting the photos in high resolution will allow editors to upload a quality file and crop as appropriate, if needed.
- Make sure you have permission to use the photo. You can use a photo you've taken yourself or use photos in the public domain that are available royalty-free or under certain conditions under a Creative Commons license. Always read the site license to ensure that you understand the parameters for using a photo.



## Common places to find photos

- [www.freeimages.com](http://www.freeimages.com)  
(Royalty-free)
- [www.morguefile.com](http://www.morguefile.com)  
(Royalty-free)
- <http://commons.wikimedia.org>  
(Public Domain and Creative Commons)
- [www.compfight.com](http://www.compfight.com)  
(Flickr search with easy Creative Commons filter)
- <https://www.pexels.com/>  
(Royalty-free)
- <https://stocksnap.io/>  
(Public Domain)
- <http://www.ipmimages.org/>  
(Royalty-free)
- <https://pixabay.com/>  
(Royalty-free)



# Evergreen and event articles

## What are evergreen articles?

“Evergreen” describes any article with content that is useful and applicable from one year to the next. Examples include articles about recurring events and seasonal topics such as safe summer grilling practices or health tips for Thanksgiving.

It is important to think about how we create and manage evergreen articles so that we avoid duplicating content and get the most value out of the current body of content that we have all worked so hard to produce.

## Updating evergreen articles

MSU Extension requires that authors submit new content, not articles that closely mirror a previously submitted article. This can be challenging for educators who have authored a previously well-written evergreen article or an article on a topic that becomes of particular importance again year(s) later. One solution is to update the original article rather than create a new one from scratch. Think of it as changing some spokes on the wheel rather than reinventing it.

For example, if an educator wrote an article in 2013 titled “Biosecurity tips to keep your fair project safe,” that issue may arise again in the future, prompting an educator to write another article on the same topic in the same way. However, if the information in the original article is potentially still relevant and reflects current best practice, the 2013 article should be reviewed, updated if needed and shared, rather than an entirely new article created.

In instances such as this, the guidelines allow for the original article to be updated and republished. The communications staff will republish the article, updating the original published date to reflect the current date.

### KEY POINTS WHEN UPDATING AN ARTICLE:

- Review the original version of the article online to verify that all links, references and information are still accurate and useful.
- Once updated, the article needs to be reviewed again by another educator.
- Submit the article using the current article template to the [news.msue@anr.msu.edu](mailto:news.msue@anr.msu.edu) inbox. Be sure to indicate within the word document that the submission is an updated article, and include the original article URL.

Please note that this practice should be used sparingly. Adding new, original content to the website is incredibly important to generating traffic to the MSU Extension website.

# Incorporating recipes

## When to use recipes and how to cite them

Recipes work great at the end of an article as a way to enhance stories and engage the audience. A recipe should not be the primary focus of your article but add additional value. For example, if writing an article on the importance of low-carbohydrate vegetables for diabetics, you could include a recipe for a dish that uses low-carbohydrate vegetables as the main ingredients.

When including a recipe, be sure to give credit to the person, book or website where you found the recipe. The best way to do this is to include a hyperlink to the source.

So, if you found a recipe called “Autumn Spiced Butternut Squash Bread” on [allrecipes.com](http://allrecipes.com), you would say something like:

*Try this delicious Autumn Spiced Butternut Squash Bread from [allrecipes.com](http://allrecipes.com):*

By citing where you found a recipe, you give credit to the author and give your readers a new place to look for recipes in the future.

## How to format recipes for articles

- Capitalize the title of the recipe.
- Include the start to finish time immediately below the title, noting the active time in parentheses.
- Place the number of servings directly under start to finish time.
- Be specific with salt! Savory recipes that call for salt should always refer to kosher salt. Recipes for baked goods should refer to table salt, written simply as “salt.” However, in recipes that do not call for volume, you can just write “salt,” such as “salt and ground black pepper.”
- Spell out teaspoon, tablespoon and other units of measure. Use numerals for all measurements, times and oven temperatures. However, when two numbers follow one another, write out the first one for clarity, such as “two 15-ounce cans.”
- Write instructions in short paragraphs. Begin sentences with equipment and technique, not ingredients.
- If nutritional information is available, put it after the instructions.
- If the recipe came from someone other than the author, include that information in parentheses at the bottom.



## Formatted recipe example

### Spoonbread Corn Pudding

**Start to finish:** 55 minutes (20 minutes active)

**Servings:** 8

#### Ingredients

- 4 tablespoons ( $\frac{1}{2}$  stick) unsalted butter
- 3  $\frac{1}{4}$  cups whole milk, divided
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 cup cornmeal
- 2 cups corn kernels (from 3 to 4 ears of corn or frozen kernels)
- Large pinch cayenne pepper
- 4 large eggs, separated and at room temperature
- $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon cream of tartar

Heat oven to 400 degrees F. Butter a shallow 1  $\frac{1}{2}$ - or 2-quart baking dish.

#### Directions

In a medium saucepan over medium-high heat, combine the butter, 3 cups of the milk, the sugar and salt. Bring to a simmer. When the butter has melted, reduce the heat to medium-low. Whisking constantly, add the cornmeal in a slow, steady drizzle. Whisk in the corn kernels and cayenne and continue whisking for another 4 or 5 minutes, or until the mixture is thick. Remove from the heat and transfer the mixture to a large bowl. Set aside.

In a small bowl, whisk together the egg yolks and remaining  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of milk. Set aside.

In a medium bowl, use an electric mixer to beat the egg whites and cream of tartar until stiff peaks form.

Add about  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of the cornmeal mixture to the bowl with the egg yolks and stir quickly to combine. Turn the yolk mixture into the bowl with the rest of the cornmeal mixture and whisk to combine. Fold about  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the egg white mixture into the cornmeal mixture, which will lighten the batter, then gently fold in the rest of the egg whites so that they are almost incorporated. You will see a white streak or two, which is fine.

Transfer the batter to the prepared baking dish and bake for 30 to 35 minutes, or until the top is browned and puffy. When you shake the pan the spoonbread should jiggle slightly, though not so much that it looks liquidy in the middle. Remove pan from oven and cool slightly on a wire rack. Serve warm.

# Writing an article series

## Choose your series topic carefully

Series can be a great way to take readers on an in-depth exploration of a topic. However, not all articles on the same topic should be made into a series.

To help you determine what article(s) should be presented as a series, keep the following key points in mind.

### KEY POINTS:

- A series requires a minimum of two articles and aims for a maximum of four.
- Each article in a series should build on the information covered in the previous article(s).
- The topic explored in an article series should be specific. A series on dietary fiber would be appropriate, but a series on a broader topic, such as healthy eating, would not.
- With the exception of introductions and/or conclusions that outline the nature of the series and connect the reader to previous articles within it, do not repeat entire paragraphs of text from previous articles in the series.

## How to title a series

The title of the article should be the name of your series combined with which part in the series it is. The subtitle should include information describing the focus of that particular article.

### Example:

*Preventing diabetes: Part 1*

*Preventing diabetes: Part 2*

**Title:** Preventing diabetes: Part 1

**Subtitle:** Exploring the role of healthy eating in preventing diabetes.

**Title:** Preventing diabetes: Part 2

**Subtitle:** How a structured exercise plan can help stop diabetes before it starts.

