



Airstream Club International Newsletter Planning Guide

This Guide was prepared by the Airstream Club International's Publications Committee as a resource for Club newsletter editors who are either new to the position of editor or who are looking for ideas.

How you use this information is totally up to you. If you are comfortable with what you are doing and it pleases others, then keep up the good work. If you have suggestions for improving or "growing" this document, please send them to publications@wbcci.org.

The guide is divided into three parts:

1. Best Practices
2. Showcase of Club Newsletters
3. Tools and Resources

Part 1. Best Practices

*"A **best practice** is a method or technique that has been generally accepted as superior to any alternatives because it produces results that are superior to those achieved by other means or because it has become a standard way of doing things, e.g., a standard way of complying with legal or ethical requirements."*

Best Practices. (n.d.). In *Wikipedia*. Retrieved March 22, 2021, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/best_practice

For the purposes of this guide, the term "best practice" is more of a reference to techniques and principles known to produce effective and pleasing newsletters. The best practices are derived from a wide range of resources related to publishing and writing. They have been compiled into an easy-to-remember set of steps on which to build your newsletter:

1. Name it
2. Frame it
3. Fill it
4. Frill it
5. Pare it
6. Share it

Name it:

A newsletter's name should be distinctive, reflecting the history, culture, location, and/or the personality of your Airstream Club. It could also reflect the purpose, i.e., sharing news. Some examples of newsletter names are Bell Ringer, Peach State Caravanner, Mich-I-Gram, Newstream, Pelican Briefs, Tahoe Breeze, and Urban Update.

Newsletter Name	Airstream Club	Name reflects
Bell Ringer	Palmetto State	Palmetto Cove RV Park, near Table Rock, SC, was originally built as an Airstream park and, in the shelter, there hangs a bell (still there today) and they would ring it every time an Airstream pulled in . . . thus the name of the newsletter.
Peach State Caravanner	Top of Georgia	Georgia is the Peach State. Club members take caravans.
Mich-I-Gram	Michigan	Play on words – a mash-up of “Michigan” and “telegram”
Newstream	South Eastern Michigan	Play on words – a mash-up of “news” and “airstream”
Pelican Briefs	Louisiana	The Pelican is Louisiana's state bird. As a noun, “brief” commonly means a short, written item.
Tahoe Breeze	Lake Tahoe	It's often windy at Tahoe (even white caps sometimes). Thus, Breeze. Also, the news “breezes” to your home via email.
Yankee Quipper	New England	Play on words – Historically, “Yankee” has referred to citizens of the New England states. “Clipper” is something that moves swiftly.

Frame it:

Overall design / layout: A template gives structure to the document. Consider a standard format for each page that includes a header, footer, and page numbers. If you haven't inherited a Club newsletter template or you want to switch it up, there are lots of ready-to-go templates available for Word and Pages users. Do an internet search using “free newsletter templates” to see a surprising number of examples. To see examples of different layouts, check out [Part 2. Showcase of Club Newsletters](#) on page 7 and click on links to various Club newsletters.

Identity: The front page gives a lasting first impression and can set the tone for the reader. Repeating front page components from issue to issue helps solidify the newsletter's identity.

Front page components should include the name of your newsletter prominently displayed, perhaps highlighted in a distinctive banner or attached to a Club photo. Along with your own Club's logo, include one of

the official International Club logos - ACI logo (as shown above), the WBAC logo, or the WBCCI Heritage logo. (These can be retrieved from the Airstream Club International website under member resources airstreamclub.org/member-resources-page/club-branding-information.)

Including a table of contents on the front page will help your reader find what he/she wants without having to search the entire publication. The front page could include your local President's message (with a catchy title like "Cathy's Corner" or "Sam Sounds Off). Some Clubs include their list of club officers and contact information on the front page. If not placed there, the list should be included somewhere in every issue. (Note that several clubs use generic Club email addresses, such as 124President@airstreamclub.net or alias e-mail addresses that can be programmed to forward messages to a personal e-mail address). Include a note about the frequency of publication and deadlines for submission of articles. Several newsletters have an editor's corner.

Fill it:

The most important thing about a Club newsletter is that it meets your members' needs and that it is enjoyable for them to read. Find out what information is important to your members. You can do this through informal conversation and feedback or through a more formal survey.

It is important that other members contribute to the newsletter – after all, it's not the Editor's job to supply all the content or write the articles. Invite members to submit articles and/or information. Provide some prompts such as "The best thing I've bought or made for my Airstream" or "What did you name your Airstream and why?" If you hear a member talking about something Airstream-related that you think others would like to hear about, issue a special invitation to write about it. Remind them of the format you prefer and your deadline, along with your contact information.

Here are some other ideas for content:

- Acknowledgements of birthdays and anniversaries
- A "Sunshine" column written by a member to share information about other members (with their permission, of course). That information could include members' health situations, special family occasions, death of a member or their family, etc.
- Notices of future events with contact information
- Glowing accounts of past events
- Ask your Region President to write a short update to keep members informed of goings on in the Region.
- Recipes
- Spotlight on membership, such as an interview of a new member, a long-time member, or an incoming officer
- A "newby" corner with questions and answers to orientate new members
- Technical or trouble-shooting tips
- Members' travel blogs
- Encourage contributors and event attendees to take and send photos. Find clever clip art on the Internet or in your word processing program. Include live links to e-mail addresses, event registration forms, and websites.

- Make sure you give recognition to whoever contributes to the newsletter. Include a byline and credit photos.

In the old days, when we relied on print copies, the number of pages in a newsletter was a cost consideration. Now most Clubs distribute their newsletters electronically making it unnecessary to compress your content to suit your budget! At the same time, you don't want to have something so huge that people won't read it!

Frill it:

And now for some fun! "Frill it" is another term for "formatting" or "giving it eye appeal". Some find this aspect daunting, so it's helpful to get a few ideas from other Club newsletters and from flipping through magazines. Pick out design elements that you think will give your newsletter a look that invites readers in and makes the newsletter easy to navigate. Here are some things to think about as you "frill" your newsletter.

Amount of white space: Too little "white space" makes a document appear text-heavy and crowded. It is difficult to read, impairs comprehension and can overwhelm a reader. Too much white space makes words appear to float. Their placement seems random and a reader's eyes get lost on the page. The right amount of white space is easy on the eyes, easy to read and comprehend and lends a clean and light feel to the document. Adding white space is fairly simple. When formatting, adjust the line and paragraph spacing. Using columns is an easy way to add white space to an article. When using columns, experiment with margins and space between margins to see what impact it has on the overall appearance of the article.

Here are some examples of how the spacing between lines affects a paragraph's appearance and readability: (in all 3 examples, the font is Times New Roman font size 11.)

Too little:

As you'll recall, it's been a long, wet spring this year. The rain finally relented Wednesday night. The cloud cover hung on for the next day. However, we were treated to an incredible sunset that attracted a lot of budding photographers until they attracted the attention of the local marauding mosquito gang. The first day of summer appeared perfect. Our host wanted everyone to know we should realize the perfect summer weather was thanks to her. She must have a direct line because we've had nothing but beautiful weather since.

Too much:

As you'll recall, it's been a long, wet spring this year. The rain finally relented Wednesday night. The cloud cover hung on for the next day. However, we were treated to an incredible sunset that attracted a lot of budding photographers until they attracted the attention of the local marauding mosquito gang. The first day of summer appeared perfect. Our host wanted everyone to know we should realize the perfect summer weather was thanks to her. She must have a direct line because we've had nothing but beautiful weather since.

The right amount:

As you'll recall, it's been a long, wet spring this year. The rain finally relented Wednesday night. The cloud cover hung on for the next day. However, we were treated to an incredible sunset that attracted a lot of budding photographers until they attracted the attention of the local marauding mosquito gang.

The first day of summer appeared perfect. Our host wanted everyone to know we should realize the perfect summer weather was thanks to her. She must have a direct line because we’ve had nothing but beautiful weather since.

Choice of font: With so many fonts to choose from, it’s easy to go overboard. This gives the newsletter a cluttered or busy appearance. Stick with two or three to use throughout your newsletter. While that may seem limiting, you can “switch it up” by using the **bold** and *italic* features and/or changing the [font color](#).

There are two types of fonts. A “serif” font is characterized by little lines and strokes that extend from the letters. A “sans serif” font is plainer. Here are examples of fonts thought to be the most pleasing in each type:

Serif (font size)

Times New Roman (11)

Georgia (11)

Palatino (11)

Garamond (12)

Sans serif (font size)

Arial (10)

Calibri (11)

Tahoma (10)

Commonly, one type of font is used for headlines or titles throughout the newsletter and another for the body of the articles. In this document, Revolution Gothic ExtraBold font is used for titles and **Calibri** font is used for subtitles and the paragraphs (body).

Adding color: Adding color in a document adds a lot of punch. Again, it’s easy to go overboard, so you’ll need to exercise discipline and stick with two or three colors throughout. Adding texture, gradient, shading or tint in your color scheme to structural elements (see below) will also “switch it up”. Here are a couple of suggestions for color schemes:

- Those identified in the [Airstream International Club’s branding guidelines](#)
- Colors from your logo.

Incorporating structural elements: Structural elements include shapes, graphics, photos, text boxes, call-out boxes and borders. They add interest o your document. They are a great way to break up a text-heavy article or to separate one article from another. By drawing your eye, they can add emphasis to an important point. Again, be careful to not overdo it – otherwise you’ll end up with a document that looks too busy and distracts your reader from what’s important.

Example:
*Using color
and a text
box to set off
a paragraph.*

As you’ll recall, it’s been a long, wet spring this year. The rain finally relented Wednesday night. The cloud cover hung on for the next day. However, we were treated to an incredible sunset that attracted a lot of budding photographers until they attracted the attention of the local marauding mosquito gang. The first day of summer appeared perfect. Our host wanted everyone to know we should realize the perfect summer weather was thanks to her. She must have a direct line because we’ve had nothing but beautiful weather since.

Including hyperlinks: Many contributors will refer to websites in their articles. Your reader will appreciate the convenience of having embedded hyperlinks. If the contributor doesn't include the hyperlinks, take a minute or so to find the websites and insert the hyperlinks on or next to the reference. There's more than one approach:

1. Insert the hyperlink right on the reference, e.g., [Airstream International Club's branding guidelines](#)
2. Include the website address and insert the hyperlink on the address, e.g., Airstream International Club's branding guidelines (<https://airstreamclub.org/member-resources-page/club-branding-information>).

Some readers prefer the second approach as they can copy and paste the address directly into their browser without clicking on the link. (Clicking on a link is not always the safest approach.)

Pare it:

This is also known as "editing". Sometimes it's uncomfortable to edit someone else's work, but good editing turns an okay document into a better read. Here are a few tips:

- Find those spelling errors, including spelling of names, before that one person in your club finds them for you!! Spell-check is a great feature to use each and every time.
- Shorten sentences when possible – they are easier to follow than long run-on sentences.
- Use the active voice wherever possible. Sentences written in the active voice are more powerful than those written in the passive voice.
- Check the page numbers to make sure those listed in table of contents actually match up with the articles.
- Test any hyperlinks you've embedded to make sure they work.
- Check headlines, photos and photo captions for completeness and placement.
- Read your copy aloud to yourself, a pet, or a tree outside your Airstream to see if it flows and makes sense. You can catch a surprising number of needed fixes with this simple technique.
- Proofread your document in pdf or print format as a final review. It's much easier to spot what needs to be fixed.
- Ask another person to proofread it before you publish. It's surprising what another set of eyes can pick up!
- Keep in mind that "perfect" is the enemy of good.

Share it:

Distribute your document according to the make-up of your Airstream group. Some Clubs print and send newsletters by surface mail. Most Clubs distribute theirs electronically. Many send a PDF from the editor's e-mail. Some refer readers to the Club's website where the newsletter is posted. Remember to include newsletters@wbcci.org in your distribution list. Your newsletter will go to the Executive Committee of WBCCI, the Publications Standing Committee, and the staff at Jackson Center. In recent years, Club newsletter stories have appeared in the Blue Beret. With your permission, content may appear in other platforms.

Regardless of how the newsletter is distributed, be mindful of members' privacy. In these days of identity theft, sharing too much personal information could pose issues. Consider having two versions of the

newsletter – a complete and protected member version for members only and one with personal information redacted for public viewing for posting on the website.

Part 2. Showcase of Club Newsletters

“Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery that mediocrity can pay to greatness.” *Oscar Wilde*

Sometimes, the best way to get started or grow as an Editor is to see what others are doing. It’s a form of “picking someone’s brain”. The “Showcase” is a sampling of different Clubs’ newsletters for you to read and scope out for ideas. You might see something that could work for you and your Club and “steal it”. (Remember that if you want to reprint an article that appears in another Club’s newsletter, it’s best to ask permission and, of course, acknowledge the source.) Similarly, you might see something that you don’t even want to consider.

Clicking on the Club’s hyperlink or entering their website address will take you to their newsletter.

Airstream Club	Newsletter	Region	Webpage or contact
DelMarva	Beacon	2	Airstreamclub.org/delmarva
Florida	Good Life News	3	Airstreamclub.org/florida
Greater Los Angeles	Urban Update	12	Airstreamclub.org/greater-los-angeles
Missouri-Kansas	Gopher News	8	airstreamclub.org/missouri-kansas
Northern California	Poppy	12	airstreamclub.org/northern-california
Northern Virginia	NORVA News	3	airstreamclub.org/northern-virginia
Ontario Canada	The Online Trillium (public version)	2	airstreamclub.org/ontario-canada
Oregon	Streamer	10	airstreamclub.org/oregon
Watchung New Jersey	The Hillbilly	2	airstreamclub.org/watchung-nj

Part 3. Tools and Resources

Parts 1 and 2 included techniques and principles for producing effective and attractive newsletters. There are many other tools and resources available at low or no cost that can Editors of all levels of experience can use. Consider these:

Editor job descriptions: Examples from within the Airstream Club International are posted on airstreamclub.org on the individual Club’s page. Click on the link to view the description.

- [Northern California Airstream Club](#)
- [Ontario Canada Airstream Club](#)

Software help: Basic resources are those that help an editor become familiar with the software being used.

- Use the “help” function within the software will answer many “how do I” questions.
- If you are new to Pages or Word, consider purchasing a book such as *Pages for Dummies* or *Microsoft Word for Dummies*. They include step-by-step and easy-to-understand instructions, along with illustrations.

Readability tools: “Readability” refers to the ease a reader has in reading and understanding what is written. Some tips to improve readability were included in Part 1 in the Pare It section. Most sources cite a readability level of Grade 7 to 8 suits most readers. You can run your text through a readability score chart to see where and how you can make your articles more readable. Once you’ve used the score chart(s) a few times, you’ll get the hang of how to write a more readable document. Here are some websites to check out:

- <https://www.grammarly.com/blog/readability/>
- <https://www.ahrq.gov/talkingquality/resources/writing/tip6.html>
- <https://readabilityformulas.com/free-readability-formula-tests.php>

International Publications Committee: If you’d like in-person help, contact publications@wbcci.org. Members of this Committee are happy to support you.