

Writing Guide for *Waltham Forest Echo*

The following guide provides some general tips and advice for article contributions. It is intended to help maintain a consistent format and quality to submitted articles.

Pitching an article: Before you write an article, email WFEcho@socialspider.com to pitch your article proposal. Once you receive confirmation that the article is suitable for the *Echo*, you will be given a word count and deadline for submitting the article.

Types of article: Before you make your article pitch, decide what type of article you would like to write. If you are writing about a local project you are involved with, an experience you have had, or a place you have visited, you should pitch a **feature**. If you are writing about your opinion on a subject for which you have a unique perspective, you should pitch a **comment** piece. If you are writing about an arts or cultural event that is taking place in the borough, you should pitch either a **preview** or a **review** (check the deadline to find out if the next edition goes to print before or after the event). If you would like to raise awareness of an issue that you think is newsworthy, and you are impartial to the issue concerned, you should pitch a **news** story. If you are writing solely about a local person and you intend to speak to them, you should pitch an **interview**.

News: Unlike other types of article, news stories must be written from an impartial standpoint, and be balanced. If a person or organisation is criticised in a news story, they have a right to reply and must be given a chance to respond.

Introduction: The introduction to your article is the most important paragraph you will write. If the reader's attention is not grabbed after the introduction, they will likely skip to the next article. Think about your introduction carefully, and try to keep it brief (ideally it should be under 25 words long, except for large features or interviews). Save unimportant or boring details for lower down in the article, and instead focus on what it is that would intrigue the reader and encourage them to read more.

Example of a bad introduction: *On Saturday 25th June I visited Dave's Veg Market, 355 High Street, Walthamstow, to find out why the shop owner is hosting a charity fundraising event at the Rose & Crown pub following the Nepal earthquake in May.*

Example of a good introduction: *When my local greengrocer found out about the Nepal earthquake he decided he couldn't just stand by - he wanted to help save lives.*

Quotes: Unless writing a comment piece or feature recounting a personal experience, include quotes in your article. Quotes can be obtained in person, on the phone, or via email. You must make it clear when approaching someone that you intend to quote them in the *Echo*. If you speak to someone on the phone or in person, ensure you write a transcript of what they said to you. Quotes may also be taken from public statements, such as those on social media (only quote from private posts if you approach the person via this method). Choose the most interesting and relevant quotes for your article. Introduce them with the full name of the person and reason they are being quoted.

Example of a bad quote: *Dave said: "Sing for Nepal is on 20th July. Please come to it."*

Example of a good quote: *Dave Scorer, owner of Dave's Veg Market and organiser of Sing for Nepal, said: "We're incredibly excited about the fundraiser, we're going to put on a great show and we hope the people of Walthamstow will come out in force to support us and help raise vital funds for the Nepal Earthquake Appeal."*

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Background: Relevant background information should be included. Always assume the person reading your article has no prior knowledge of the subject, and they therefore need to be introduced to it. You can either do this at the point where you first mention the subject, or further down in the article, but everything must always be explained.

Facts: It is often useful to provide relevant facts in an article. If doing so, clearly state the source in the article. Do not use a bibliography or reference mark.

Example of a fact: *According to the UN, 8,959 people died in the Nepal earthquake.*

Cliches: Avoid using them. Cliches often hinder a reader understanding the article, particularly those for whom English is a second language.

Example of a cliché: *Dave admitted the money he was aiming to raise from the Sing for Nepal fundraiser was a drop in the ocean, but that it was still important to contribute.*

What you could write instead: *Dave admitted the money he was aiming to raise from the fundraiser would only have a small impact, but that it was still important to contribute.*

Jargon: Avoid it. Jargon is language typically used within a group of people, but which can be confusing to outsiders. Organisations use it to mask their true intentions.

Example of jargon: *The council wants to find savings by merging two branches of its library service and creating a central learning hub for the community.*

What you could write instead: *The council is closing the library.*

Waffle: Avoid extraneous words.

Example of waffle: *I went along to the shop that is run by my friend Dave because I wanted to ask him all about the upcoming fundraising event that he is planning to hold next month for the tragic victims of the earthquake in Nepal.*

What you could write instead: *I asked Dave why he's hosting a Nepal earthquake fundraiser.*

Information box: If your article concerns an event, campaign, project, or you simply want to help readers find out more information about the subject matter, include an information box. Details such as a contact phone number, email address, or web link, should always be contained in the information box at the end of the article, rather than in the body of the article.

Style: The use and application of punctuation, capital letters and abbreviations, when they have many potential executions, is governed by the [Echo Style Guide](#). For unambiguous spelling and grammar usage, refer to the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

Images: Articles should whenever possible be accompanied by strong images. If you're taking your own photos, provide a small selection (three or four). The best images are high resolution (1MB or higher); in focus; well lit; and clearly show a person, group of people, or scene, that is relevant to the article. If you are submitting images not taken by yourself, make sure you obtain permission to use them from the copyright holder. For a fuller guide on how to use images see the [Echo Image Guide](#).