



Editorial Handbook

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Editorial Procedures

Reporting

Portions of the following are adapted from [The Narwhal's Guide to Bulletproofing Your Story](#).

Research

Search engines and social media can be useful research tools, but this information is not inherently reliable. Always seek out authentic, reliable and primary sources of information.

Examples of primary sources:

- **People.** Interview, or at least reach out to, everyone you've mentioned in the story. People can provide opinions and personal recollections. Contact everyone who could corroborate or confirm the accuracy of a factual claim, especially if it is controversial or potentially libelous. Verify any factual claims made in interviews with other sources wherever possible.
- **Experts.** Use credentialed experts to confirm the accuracy of a claim, when necessary, and to provide context on issues. Clearly state their affiliation in the story. Ask about potential conflicts of interest and ensure disclosure of any relevant conflicts.
- **Public documents.** Obtain or request any court documents, police reports, government reports, etc. related to material you've reported on in the story. Save reports obtained online, file freedom of information requests and use Internet Archive to search for deleted or updated government sites, particularly after a change in government. See the section on [public records](#).
- **Studies and reports.** Use peer-reviewed articles published in journals and reports from credible organizations. If a report is a preprint, note this. Ensure reports are up to date. Check for disclosures of conflicts of interest and ensure disclosure of any relevant conflicts. Do not rely on media reports about studies.
- **Spokespeople.** Ask for an interview. Submit accountability questions via email even if you know you will not receive a response. Consult with your editor when needed to discuss the wording of accountability questions or follow up questions. Verify any factual claims made in interviews/responses with other sources wherever possible. Send follow-up questions to get clarity on any responses that are confusing or incomplete.
- **Press releases or statements.** Obtain statements or press releases directly from the person or organization when possible, or link to publicly available statements.
- **Public meetings and press conferences.** Verify original audio of meetings or press conferences if you weren't in attendance, if possible.
- **Social media.** Official accounts can be primary sources in some situations. Extra efforts may be required for context or clarification. Be on alert or leery of any posts from an official account that appear to indicate hacking or phishing.

Verification

"The essence of journalism is a discipline of verification."

— Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel, *The Elements of Journalism*

Do not rely on the results of a web search for facts. For example, rather than searching “population of Athens County” and glancing at what Google brings up as a top result, look at [census records](#).

Always verify factual information provided by a source or supplied document. If a source says a project will cost \$3 million or a lawsuit has been filed or that it was raining last Sunday in Amesville, check that before reporting it — or quoting it. **Putting something in quotation marks does not relieve us of the duty to verify it.**

If it is not possible to verify, but the information or the nature of the source may make the information of public interest, you may consider reporting on it, while noting steps taken to verify the information and whether you were able to verify it.

Stories on other news sites also should not be reported as facts without verifying elsewhere. For example:

- If the Athens Messenger reports that a new project, a mine, is the “biggest in the county history” or “will bring 200 jobs to the region,” find the original source and check those facts.
- If The Post reports on what was said at a meeting, go back to check the video/transcript of that press conference, if available
- If WOUB reports on the details of a court case, obtain the relevant court documents and quote from those
- If a major source reports information of public interest that cannot be verified, you may include the information while identifying the source and noting what you were able to verify and what you were unable to confirm.

News sites can be useful as sources for exclusive reporting (i.e., a reporter covering what was said at an event they attended) or can be cited as the source for a comment obtained directly by the publication (i.e. “‘Quote quote quote,’ as the mayor told The Post in March”) — though in both instances you should generally name the publication in the piece (and link to it).

Be especially careful with media reports that may include defamatory statements about any person, group, company or organization. Quoting or linking to another press report with erroneous material is not a defense for libel and may trigger a lawsuit.

Information posted on company websites should be reported with the disclaimer that it is coming from the company website, not reported as pure fact (e.g. “According to the company’s website, the mine will bring 200 jobs to the region”). When relevant, this information should also be ground-truthed with other sources who might have a different take. Verify information found on websites with a company spokesperson if it might not be updated.

LinkedIn is not a sufficient source for a person's work history — verify it with them/the employer/other sources if possible. If you must rely on LinkedIn, make it clear that LinkedIn is the only source of the information.

Always be on the lookout for more up-to-date information. If information is several years old but nothing newer is available, make this clear in your reporting (e.g., “the most recent data available from the Ohio Department of Education”).

Working with sources

Fair comment and accountability

Respect is one of the Independent's [main values](#), and we adhere to the [Society of Professional Journalists'](#) ethics guideline to minimize harm.

All sources — especially those mentioned by name in a story — should have an opportunity to comment on information being reported in our stories. Whenever possible, ensure that sources have ample time and the necessary information to provide fair comment on the substantial details being reported.

ACI reporters are expected to maintain professionalism in their interactions with sources and take care not to include any assumptions, opinions or innuendo in these interactions.

Source diversity

The Athens County Independent is committed to producing thoughtful, inclusive journalism. Reporters should actively seek out diverse sources in their reporting, including sources who represent Black, LGBTQ+, people with disabilities and people living in poverty. We also eager to improve our representation of communities outside the cities of Athens and Nelsonville and of varying political and religious views.

Do not assume pronouns for anyone referenced in a story. Ask the source what pronouns they prefer.

Be aware of and avoid stereotypes when reporting involves any marginalized groups who are under-represented in the media. Don't talk with members of marginalized groups or feature them repeatedly in stories only when the topic relates to their community or their role. Seek sources who help break stereotypes.

You are expected to find a range of sources who represent diverse experiences and views. Avoid overusing or relying on the same source or sources in multiple stories disproportionately.

Anonymity

We name our sources because readers need to know where information comes from. Knowing who told us what lets readers decide if the information is valid and credible.

Sometimes, though, naming a source can jeopardize that person's job or their emotional or physical safety. If a source requests anonymity, ask them to explain their concern. **Do not guarantee anonymity without speaking with an editor first.** The decision to grant anonymity must balance the value of the information against potential harm to the source, as well as the source's reliability and knowledge of the topic.

If a source is granted anonymity, try to confirm the information with a second (and third!) source. Any information from an anonymous source must include an explanation of why the individual(s) are not named.

Off the record/on background

As the reporter, you are responsible for controlling an interview — even if the source is older, smarter, an authority, more distinguished or more accomplished. You must explicitly agree (or disagree) to allow the status of any information given.

From the Associated Press Statement of News Values and Principles:

Not everyone understands “off the record” or “on background” to mean the same things. Before any interview in which any degree of anonymity is expected, there should be a discussion in which the ground rules are set explicitly. These are the AP's definitions:

- **On the record.** The information can be used with no caveats, quoting the source by name.
- **Off the record.** The information cannot be used for publication.
- **Background.** The information can be published but only under conditions negotiated with the source. Generally, the sources do not want their names published but will agree to a description of their position. AP reporters should object vigorously when a source wants to brief a group of reporters on background and try to persuade the source to put the briefing on the record.
- **Deep background.** The information can be used but without attribution. The source does not want to be identified in any way, even on condition of anonymity.

In general, information obtained under any of these circumstances can be pursued with other sources to be placed on the record.

Interviewing

- Live interviews (in person, by phone or virtual) are preferred, especially for more complex stories where the ability to ask follow-up questions on the fly is important. Email is acceptable for quick questions, fact-checking and clarifications. When in doubt, ask the editor.
- Record all interviews. If you can't record audio, take detailed notes during your conversation.
- If you are unable to record the interview, write up notes or record a voice memo on your phone with your recollections as soon as possible.

- Label and save all audio files (use the format “YYYYMMDD–source’s name and title-audio.mp3”). Keep a copy for your own records and store one on the shared Google Drive.
- All editorial staff — including interns — have access to Otter.ai to transcribe recordings. Label and save all transcripts/notes (use the format “YYYYMMDD–source’s name and title-transcript.doc”)
- In file names, note if audio is “off record” or “background.”
- Keep all emails, text messages, social media communications, notebooks and photos taken when in the field, etc.
- Upload public records and other materials for linking within a story to [DocumentCloud](#) in the Athens County Independent’s Documents. If the story involves multiple files, create a Project and upload documents to it.

Record deletion schedule

Pre-publication review

Sources may not review story drafts before publication. If a source requests a review, offer to arrange a call to verbally fact-check specific details to ensure accuracy.

Avoid reading back verbatim quotes, unless your audio is unreliable. Check to ensure you’ve captured the substance and proper context of any quotes you intend to use.

If the concern comes from a vulnerable source (e.g., not an eager and fastidious academic), speak with an editor about how to proceed.

Public records

The Freedom of Information Act applies only to federal offices and agencies. Access to public information in Ohio is governed by The Ohio Public Records Act, [ORC 149.43](#).

The state attorney general’s office publishes an annual guide to Ohio’s sunshine laws. The most recent version is kept in Editorial Operations > Reference > [Ohio Sunshine Laws](#).

Public records online:

- [Athens County](#), including
 - [County Commissioners](#): Agendas and meeting minutes
 - [County Auditor](#): Information about taxes and tax rates, property ownership and sales data, historical audits of county offices and agencies
 - [Board of Elections](#): Lists of elected officials, lists of candidates and issues approved for the ballot, historical election results, precincts and polling information, voter registration information
- [City of Athens](#), including
 - [City code of ordinances](#)
 - [City Council](#): meeting agendas and minutes, approved ordinances, wards map
- [City of Nelsonville](#)
 - [City Council](#): meeting agendas and minutes, approved ordinances

- Courts
 - [Athens Municipal Court](#) (CourtView)
 - [Athens County Court of Common Pleas](#) (CourtView)
 - [Ohio Court of Appeals, Fourth District](#)
 - [Ohio Supreme Court](#)
 - [U.S. District Court, Southern District of Ohio](#) (PACER — fee)

Records not available online must be requested from the appropriate body. Several entities offer guides and request templates, including

- [Ohio Bar Association](#)
- [Ohio Coalition for Open Government](#)
- [Ohio Court of Claims](#) — includes information on appealing denied requests

Document records requests in the [Outstanding records requests](#) spreadsheet in the Editorial Operations folder on Google Drive.

Documentation

Reporting materials are important resources for editing and fact-checking, as well as in case of legal action. For this reason, the Independent established protocols for saving recordings, transcriptions, interview notes, correspondence and other materials used in reporting a given story.

Each staff writer and intern has a designated archive folder on the shared Google Drive (Editorial Operations > Coverage > [Reporter Archive](#)). Store all your reporting materials here, with individual folders for each story.

Materials you need to store here may include, but are not limited to:

- Audio recordings of interviews
- Transcripts of interviews
- PDFs of emails quoted in your piece (full correspondence)
- Public records and other official documents
- Screenshots of texts with a source

If you're working on a large investigation, further archiving discussions may need to be had with your editor.

Writing

The Indy voice

Our mission is to empower community engagement through accessible public service journalism. Accessibility includes language.

- **Keep it simple and friendly.** Our voice is informal and straightforward: no big words, no euphemisms. Use “said” or “stated” in attributions — don’t waste energy finding synonyms for a word that most readers gloss over.
- **Keep it neutral.** Avoid flowery language and unnecessary adjectives and adverbs. Our job is to present facts and allow readers to draw their own conclusions. Overly descriptive language manipulates the reader’s perception (and needlessly lengthens the copy).
- **Keep sentences short.** In general, sentences should be no more than 22 words. Edit your copy ruthlessly to hone sentences to the essentials.
- **Remember who you’re writing for.** The Independent’s readers know and love Athens County; they don’t need you to tell them where Buchtel is or that Coolville is a small village in Athens County. Remember: Just because it’s new to you doesn’t necessarily mean that it’s new to our readers.

Story template

When you’re ready to write your story, make a copy of the [Story Template](#) in the Coverage folder. The template begins with a standard block of the following information:

- **Hed:** In 70 characters or less, describe the gist of your story. Use a complete sentence, with a subject and a verb, preferably in active voice.
- **Dek:** In 130 characters or less, summarize your story. Expand on the headline, without repeating information from the hed.
- **Category:** The category determines where your story will appear on the website.
- **Tags:** Keywords that help search engines find information. Avoid overly general tags (e.g., “news,” “local,” etc.).
- **Byline:** Your name.
- **Art:** Link to the image(s) to be used. **Do not embed images in the draft.** Follow the standard naming conventions for media.
- **Cutline:** If not using stock images, briefly describe the image, including the date on which it was produced. Credit or describe the source at the end of the cutline:
 - Athens City Council members Jessica Thomas, left and Alan Swank, right, exchanged barbs at the Feb. 10, 2025, meeting. Screen shot of meeting live stream.
 - Athens Fire Department headquarters on Stimson Avenue. Photo by Eric Boll.
- **Materials:** Link to your reporting archive for the story

Dateline

Begin your story with a dateline including the town/area and state, followed by an [em dash](#). Use all caps for the town or area.

NELSONVILLE, Ohio —
 Canaan Township, Ohio —
 Athens County, Ohio —

Writing the lede

Attribution

The origins of all facts, conclusions, allegations, characterizations, etc. in the story must be explicitly stated and abundantly clear. Always add “according to XX source” even if it isn’t a direct quote or figure (exceptions can be made for nut grafs or repetition).

Do not add attribution for common knowledge (e.g., the date Ohio University was founded) or incontrovertible facts (e.g., the Hocking River is 102 miles long).

Vague statements like “according to proponents” are only acceptable if this is clarified elsewhere in the piece. Don’t make claims of multiple “proponents” if you only spoke to one “proponent” or fewer than three proponents.

Hyperlinking

Linking to sources of information is the equivalent of naming a human source. It not only supports our accountability to readers, but also makes the editing process easier and boosts the story’s SEO performance.

Link to all reports, studies, press conferences, government pages, census records, legal documents and so on that you mention or rely on in your reporting.

If you have any doubt whether a source link may include libelous material, consult the editor before linking to it.

You don’t have to add a hyperlink to every piece of information from a particular source, but the information’s origin should be clear.

Do not hyperlink long sections of text. Choose the most appropriate keywords in the sentence and link those.

For example, in the sentence, “The proposed project would cover an area of 10,000 hectares, producing 100,000 barrels per day of bitumen — its reserves are estimated to be in the neighborhood of 3.2 billion barrels,” the best option for the hyperlink is “proposed project” — if it leads to a source that conveys all of the rest of the information in the sentence.

Things to remember:

- When hyperlinking to an online PDF, hyperlink directly to the relevant page number if applicable, by adding #page=TK at the end of the link
- Upload PDFs to DocumentCloud if a source document is not available online. If a PDF is extremely large or cumbersome, save a copy to the Google Drive and talk with the editor about how to proceed.

- Link to the specific source of the information. For example, if the information comes from a report on a company website, link directly to the report — not the company’s home page.
- If the source is a journal article behind a paywall, link to a publicly available abstract of that article. Save the article to [reporting records](#) and make available to an editor if needed.
- If the information was obtained through a search query (e.g., search engine, database), either explain the source in the story (e.g., “a search for X on the government’s lobbying records database revealed that...”) or create a PDF or screenshot of the search results to upload to DocumentCloud.
- Do not link to social media posts — posts can be edited or deleted, and not all readers have/want social media accounts. Take a screenshot of the post, being sure to capture the date and time it was posted, and include the image in your story at the appropriate place.
- Do not link text to Independent reporting. Use the Recirculation block feature in WordPress for relevant stories.

Do link to:

- News stories for information that is exclusive
- Video of public meetings and press conferences
- PDFs that are available online
- PDFs that we can upload to DocumentCloud
- Wayback Machine/Internet Archive records if websites have been updated (i.e. gov pages)
- Reports, studies, court documents, etc.

Don’t link to:

- News stories for facts that could be verified independently
- Wikipedia, online encyclopedias
- The first page of a PDF when the relevant information is on page 246 (or even if it’s on page 3)
- A page that may include libelous statements or content or any other inappropriate content

Editing

When your draft is complete, post the link to it in the #edit-me channel on Slack.

Continue to verify and check details as the story goes through edits. If an editor makes a change, double-check it. Check not just facts but context and implications.

When a hed/dek is suggested, verify that they are 100% accurate, as well as their implications — for example, tell the editor if a suggested hed or dek overly editorializes the story, or is catchy but too bombastic.

Check to make sure captions are accurate too, if you have the chance.

Always report concerns to editors, post publication, about new information that requires an update, potential inaccuracies and requests for corrections.

Publishing

Category

Tags

Tags help search engines

Slug

Keep slugs short — between 3 and 5 words. The slug should

Slug conventions for specific types of posts make it easier to sort entries for metrics. In most cases, YYMMDD = publication date. Use the date of the meeting for public meetings coverage.

- Letters to the editor: *LTE-YYMMDD-writer's name*
- Op-eds: *opinion-topic-writer's name*
- Obituaries: *obit-name*
- Columns: *column name-YYMMDD-topic*
 - Tips for Tenants = tips
 - Table for Tara = table
 - Inside Courts = courts
 - Bites, Camera, Fashion = bites
 - Home, Cooking = cooking
 - Wellness Watch = wellness
- Dog of the Week: *dog-YYMMDD*
- Cat of the Week: *cat-YYMMDD*
- Public meetings: *entity-meeting date-main point*
 - Example: *nelsonville-241014-ballot initiative*

Excerpt

The excerpt should be no more than 130 characters.

Media

To facilitate searching for images, give all images a brief, descriptive title.

Use the Caption function to add a cutline to your story, including image credit. *Italicize the caption.* Photo by *FirstName LastName*. Write captions in present tense, and roughly date them.

The building stands crumbling as of June 2025. Photo by Scoop the Possum.

Use “Masonry gallery” instead of “gallery” blocks for multiple images.

Add alt text to images (describe them and their purpose), title files appropriately and clearly, and add keywords to the description in order to search for them on WordPress later.

SEO

Before publishing, check the SEO indicators at the bottom of the post.

Add a focus keyphrase — the search term you want search engines to use to rank the post. Keyphrases should be no more than four words long.

To learn more, see [Yoast's guide to SEO](#).

Last steps

When your story is published:

1. Add the headline, summary and *read more* link to the draft for the upcoming issue of The Indy.
2. In Airtable, mark the article as published, check the “online” box, and add the story URL.

Editorial process chart

Goo



Policies

Using AI

Corrections

Conflicts of Interest

House Style

Other reference works

- General style: [AP Stylebook](#) (Corinne has a subscription)
- Dictionary: [Merriam-Webster Online](#) (free).
- Usage: Garner's Modern English Usage (Corinne owns)

Specific style guides

- [Association of LGBTQ+ Journalists Stylebook](#)
- [Trans Journalists Association Style Guide](#)
- [Indigenous Journalists Association](#)

In general, the Athens County Independent follows AP Style — with some exceptions.

Treatment of frequently used words

floodplain (one word, not two)

Baileys Trail

Academic degrees

associate degree (not possessive)

bachelor's degree

master's degree

doctoral degree; doctorate; PhD (no periods)

Do not capitalize degree names.

One *earns* a degree *at* an institution; one *holds* a degree *from* an institution.

She earned an associate degree in recreation and wildlife management at Hocking College.

Agriculture

Use the term “pig” for a young/small swine under 120 pounds. “Hog” is the term for an adult/larger swine over 120 pounds.

Acronyms and initialisms/abbreviations

Per AP Style:

A few universally recognized abbreviations are required in some circumstances. Some others are acceptable, depending on the context. But in general, **avoid alphabet soup**. Do not use abbreviations or acronyms that the reader would not quickly recognize.

See entries for Street and highway names

Street and highway names

Frequently confused roads

- *Hooper Ridge Road* comes off SR 550 in Ames Township.
- *Hooper Street* runs from Longview Heights Road to Richland Avenue.
- *Hooper Road* runs between S. Blackburn Road and U.S. 50 west of the city.

Per AP Style:

- **Use the abbreviations Ave., Blvd. and St. only with a numbered address:** 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. Spell them out and capitalize when part of a formal street name without a number: Pennsylvania Avenue. Lowercase and spell out when used alone or with more than one street name: Massachusetts and Pennsylvania avenues.
 - All similar words (alley, drive, road, terrace, etc.) always are spelled out. Capitalize them when part of a formal name without a number; lowercase when used alone or with two or more names.
- Always use figures for an address number: 9 Morningside Circle.
- Spell out and capitalize First through Ninth when used as street names; use figures for 10th and above: 7 Fifth Ave., 100 21st St.
- Abbreviate compass points used to indicate directional ends of a street or quadrants of a city in a numbered address: 222 E. 42nd St., 562 W. 43rd St., 600 K St. NW. Do not abbreviate if the number is omitted: East 42nd Street, West 43rd Street, K Street Northwest. No periods in quadrant abbreviations NW, SE unless customary locally.
- Use these forms, as appropriate in the context, for highways identified by number:
 - Federal highways:
 - U.S. 50, U.S. 33
 - Interstate 77 (first reference), I-77 (subsequent reference)
 - State highways:
 - SR 691, SR 550
 - For local highways, use the road name followed by its official designation in parentheses: Mansfield Road (CR 90), Bethel Ridge Road (Bern Twp. I30).
 - NOTE: Some township roads cross township lines, gaining a new number designation. Check the address or location to ensure you are giving the correct designation.
 - View Athens County Engineer's Office maps
 - [here](#) (county overview, index of county roads by number and alphabetical order, beginning of township road index) and
 - [here](#) (specific communities and end of township road index)
 - When a letter is appended to a number, capitalize it but do not use a hyphen: *Route 1A*.

Dates, Days of the week

Holidays and observances

Pride Month

Black History Month

People and identities

Capitalize Black, i.e. “Mt. Zion celebrates Black history.”

Use Native American or Indigenous, or precisely how the source identifies/prefers. Capitalize Native American and Indigenous in reference to people.

Avoid using “native of” in reference to someone’s hometown area. Reserve “Native” for people and “native” for endemic plants and animals.

Use singular “they” pronouns for people who use them; Do not point out this preference, simply use their pronouns.

Do not refer to groups of people as “the Blacks” or “the Chinese.” Be specific and be humane.

In general, use people-first language but *always ask sources* how they would like to be described, i.e. “disabled” vs. “a person who experiences a disability,” or “blind” vs. “visually impaired,” etc.

Suicide

Avoid sensationalizing any death. Do not say “committed suicide” (suicide is not a crime). Rather, “death by suicide,” or “died by suicide,” or be more specific.

Punctuation

No comma between time and day/date; insert a comma between the day of the week and the date and between the date and year.

3 p.m. Friday, April 4, 2025

The meeting will be held at 6 p.m. Tuesday, March 18, 2025, at Amesville Elementary School.

The meeting will be held on March 18.

Show a range of time or date using an [en dash](#).

Federal Hocking Board of Education meeting: 6–8 p.m. Tuesday, March 18, 2025.

Athens County Fair, Aug. 1–9, 2025

When referring to a range of time using “from” and “to,” include the morning/afternoon designation with each time unit, even if they’re the same.

The Federal Hocking Board of Education will meet from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. Tuesday, March 18.

Refer to 12 p.m. as “noon” and 12 a.m. as “midnight.” If the time is not 12:00 a.m. or p.m. exactly, be specific and use numerals.

The meeting is at noon.

The meeting began at 12:07 p.m.

Abbreviations

Abbreviate months only when part of a full date:

Wednesday, Feb. 24

BUT

The next meeting is in February.

Never abbreviate April, May, June or July.

Spell out all days of the week: Wednesday, Feb. 24.

Numerals

Do not use ordinal numbers for dates:

NO: Wednesday, Feb 24th

YES: Wednesday, Feb. 24

Titles (persons)

member

Board member and council member and should not be capitalized when used before a person's name. NOTE: This is a departure from AP Style.

NO: Board Member Charlie Smith voted in favor of the resolution.

YES: Board member Charlie Smith voted in favor of the resolution.

council member

two words, lowercase

Local organizations and projects

- Baileys Trail System – no apostrophe
- Ohio University – spell out on first reference; OU or the university (lowercase) on second reference
- Hocking College – spell out on first reference; Hocking or the college (lowercase) on second reference
- Athens County Public Libraries — plural, not singular. On second reference, *the library* is fine, depending on context. BUT If your story encompasses both the library system as a whole as well as individual library branches, use *the libraries* to refer to the county system.. Avoid the acronym ACPL.

Locations

southeast Ohio

For our purposes, southeast Ohio encompasses Athens County and the contiguous counties of Perry, Morgan, Washington, Meigs, Vinton and Hocking, plus Jackson and Gallia counties.

Cities

Athens County has two cities, Athens and Nelsonville.

City of Athens; the city; Athens city

Villages

Athens County has eight villages: Albany, Amesville, Buchtel, Chauncey, Coolville, Glouster, Jacksonville and Trimble. Buchtel is pronounced *BOOK-tul*; Chauncey is pronounced *CHANCE-y*

Amesville; the village; Amesville village

BUT

the Village of Amesville (when referring to a village as a government entity)

Townships

Athens County comprises 14 townships: Alexander, Ames, Athens, Bern, Canaan, Carthage, Dover, Lee, Lodi, Rome, Trimble, Troy, Waterloo, York

Alexander Township; the township

Census-designated places

“Unincorporated communities that do not have a legally defined boundary or an active, functioning governmental structure.” Athens County has five CDPs:

- **Hockingport:**
- **Millfield:** North of Chauncey just off SR 13.
- **New Marshfield:** West of Athens on SR 56
- **Stewart:**
- **The Plains:** North of Athens along SR 682. This is the largest of the five CDPs, with a shopping center and numerous small businesses. Athens High School is in The Plains on Johnson Road.

Note: Always *The Plains*, not *the Plains*

Historic communities

Although these are not recognized municipalities, they are distinct communities with long histories. Some have

- **Canaanville**
- **Carbondale**
- **Doanville**
- **Frost**
- **Guysville:** East of Athens in Rome Township, at the intersection of US 50E and SR 329.
- **Hebbardsville**

- **Kilvert:** North of Stewart in Canaan Township, on SR 329. The area was originally known as [Tablertown](#).
- **Lottridge**
- **Mineral**
- **New England**
- **Shade:** Southeast of Athens in Lodi Township, on Old US 33. The former Shade Elementary is now the Shade Community Center.
- **Sharpsburg**
- **Sugar Creek** is located along SR 550 northeast of Athens. Note: No local calls it Augustine.
- **Torch**

Punctuation

Hyphen

Do not hyphenate –ly compounds:

Dashes

Em dash (—)

Indicates an interruption in a sentence for

- parenthetical information
- new, but related information
- a break in thought or speech

Enter one space before and after an em dash.

Keyboard shortcuts:

- Mac: Option + Shift + hyphen
- Windows: Alt + CTRL + minus
- On either: ALT + 0151

En dash (–)

Indicates a range of dates or numbers, such as

- Athens City Council meeting, 7–9 p.m.
- County expenditures, 2020–2022
- Ages 6–12

Do not add spaces on either side.

Do not use an en dash

- for ranges of time or date within in a sentence
 - NO: The event runs 7–9 p.m.
 - YES: The event runs from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.
- indicate movement or tension (use a hyphen)

- Cincinnati–Columbus–Cleveland corridor
- the Albany–Athens game

Keyboard shortcuts:

- Mac: Option + hyphen
- Windows: ALT + minus
- On either: ALT + 0150

Quotation marks

Unfamiliar terms

If a word or phrase is likely to be unfamiliar to readers, italicize it on first reference and add a definition or description. **NOTE:** This is a departure from AP Style, which calls for quotation marks around such terms. However, quotation marks could imply that the word/term is not valid (i.e., scare quotes or irony/sarcasm). For clarity and precision, italics are more appropriate.

- Long tables were adorned with Filipino dishes like *adobo* (Filipino-style chicken) and *lumpia* (a Filipino-style egg roll).
- The Prakrit word *majjiao*, “the tomcat,” may be a dialect version of either of two Sanskrit words.

Technical Guide

Using the shared Google Drive

Folder organization

All editorial files are kept in the Editorial Operations folder. Subfolders that most editorial staff will use are:

- **Art:** Standing art, including staff headshots, column logos, etc.
- **Reference:** General reference information, including the master contact list, maps, Ohio Sunshine Laws, and data files from government agencies and NGOs.
- **Coverage:** All information related to actual reporting are kept here.

File naming conventions

Consistent conventions for naming files makes it easier to find things on the shared Google Drive – especially for new staff members.

Editorial files

- Newsletter drafts: YYYY-MM-DD [newsletter name]
 - Example: 2024-08-06 *The Scoop*
- Story drafts:

Financial files

- All files: FYXX-MM-[document type] or FYXX-QX-[document type]
 - Example: FY24-06-*Reconciliation*
 - Example: FY24-Q3-*Statement of Financial Position*