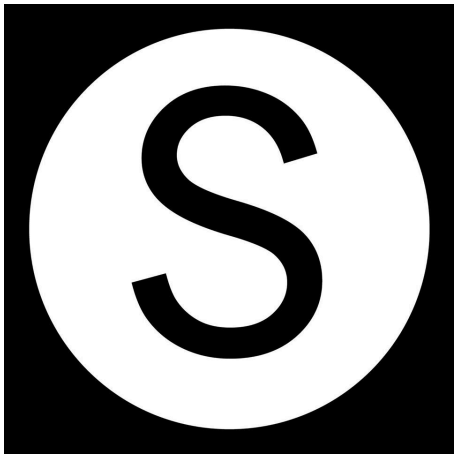


South Side Weekly Writer's Guide

http://bit.ly/SSWWritersGuide

Introduction

The South Side Weekly is a nonprofit newsmagazine that covers arts, culture, and politics on the South Side of Chicago, with a circulation of around 10,000 print copies. We publish coverage of local artists and arts events, as well as reporting in the public interest on subjects such as education, development, policing, and food; we also publish personal essays, poetry, and visual art.

Originally started as an alternative student newspaper at the University of Chicago, the Weekly became independent of the University in 2013. Our office is now located at the Experimental Station, in the Woodlawn neighborhood.

The Weekly is written, produced, and edited by a staff of almost all volunteers. We seek and publish contributions from writers and artists across the city.

This guide contains information about how the Weekly's staff is organized and how our editorial process is structured, as well as information and resources about how we write, edit, and report. It will be changed, expanded, and updated over time. *PLEASE NOTE: Due to the COVID-19 pandemic some of our processes have changed, we hope only temporarily. Changes are noted throughout but if you have questions please don't hesitate to ask.*

The Weekly's Editorial Structure

Editor-in-Chief: Leads the organization, oversees all editorial decisions and appointments, represents the paper to the public. The editor-in-chief is nominated by a hiring committee composed of staff and contributors and approved by the Board of Directors. As of January 2020, this position is full-time.

Staff Representative: The staff representative is elected by the staff to serve as the staff representative to the Board of Directors, and will also take another position on the masthead.

Managing Editor(s): Manages communications between editors and writing staff, maintains the weekly flow and storyboard, works with editor-in-chief to run meetings, assigns stories and primary editors. As of 2020, this position is a paid, part-time position.

~~**Deputy Editor:** Deputy editors are senior editors who, in addition to editing stories and other usual editorial responsibilities, take on projects to expand the paper's capabilities or enhance support for the staff. Past deputy editors have organized workshops, created a fact-checking team, focused on shepherding feature stories to publication, or worked on outreach.~~

Senior Editor: A longtime Weekly editor who is entrusted with important editing responsibilities, such as regularly editing longform features and cover stories, and who consults on the overall direction and future of the paper.

Visuals Editor(s): Assigns and organizes the photos, illustrations, and images that run in the paper each week, and coordinates the cover image. Seeks new contributors for the visuals team. This position is stipend.

Director of Fact-checking: The director of fact-checking manages the Weekly's team of volunteer fact-checkers and is responsible for making sure that everything published goes through the Weekly's fact-checking process in time for publication of each issue. They train new fact-checkers, delegate work to members of the fact-checking team, and fact-check articles themself when needed. This position is stipended.

Section Editors: There are currently section editors for the following beats: Politics, Education, Housing & Development, Immigration, Community Organizing, and the Arts. For each section, section editors curate our coverage for their respective beat and cultivate contacts with relevant leaders, activists, artists, or performers. They are expected to pitch at least two stories for their sections each month and create the weekly calendar for their section. They are also the primary

editor for stories in their section. As of 2021, this position is stipended. *(Note: Weekly calendar currently on hold due to COVID.)*

Data Editor: The Data Editor coordinates data reporting, visualization, and mapping for the Weekly. They serve as an editor for data-driven articles, and serve as a resource for the staff. The Data Editor is skilled in data analysis and cleaning in one programming language (e.g. Python, R), and can also have experience with mapping (e.g. QGIS, ArcGIS, MapBox) or visualization (e.g. JavaScript, Tableau, Adobe Illustrator). The data editor is in charge of pitching and assigning relevant stories, and is the point person for onboarding contributors interested in data journalism.

Contributing Editors: Contributing editors are often new members of the Weekly's editorial team. In this position, editors are generally learning the ropes of the paper and how our editorial process works. Their responsibilities increase over their time as contributing editors. They will generally be assigned to edit stories in different sections and may help out with other areas like writer development depending on their interests. The contributing editor position is also a good fit for experienced editors who prefer to edit pieces in a variety of sections.

Social Media Editor(s): The social media editors are in charge of public outreach for Weekly content and events. On top of promoting each issue's stories, social media editors curate the Weekly's social media feeds (Twitter, Facebook, etc.) to reflect the number of diverse voices writing from and about the South Side. Social media editors interact with our online readership by moderating our social feeds and comments sections and sending out a weekly newsletter. The goal of the social media team is to go further than simply promoting content into figuring out ways to better interact with and benefit our readership. This position is stipended.

Layout Editor(s): Determine the look and style of the issue each week. They are charged with placing all content during production nights and work with the editor-in-chief and managing editor to finalize each issue before it is sent to the printer. This position is stipended.

Web Editor: Uploads each issue to southsideweekly.com and maintains online content and layout. This position is stipended.

Webmaster: Handles the back end of the website. They design and update the site periodically.

Staff Writers: In order to be added to the masthead as a staff writer, writers must commit to pitching one story per month and writing one story per month. Staff writers will also be expected to attend monthly pitch meetings and stay in touch with editors about their writing projects. Staff writers are key and consistent members of the Weekly staff, and will be trusted and supported by editors as they work on their writing. They will be given a significant amount of leeway to explore their own reporting projects, and will often be offered pitches. If staff writers would like to take on a specific beat, they are encouraged to do so, but not required.

Staff Illustrators/Photographers/Data Visualisers: Create article-specific visuals for the paper, as well as cover images for feature stories, under the direction of the Visuals Editor.

Radio Executive Producer: Acts as a point of contact between the print and radio side of South Side Weekly. Oversees both long-term radio projects and short, timely pieces. Responsible for onboarding and training new radio reporters/producers. Manages the team of radio reporters and producers. Reports, records, scripts, and edits stories for South Side Weekly Radio. Collaborates with SSW writers to create cross-over radio content.

Managing Director: The managing director handles all matters related to the infrastructure and financial health of the paper. They manage the sale of advertisements and distribution services, organize the delivery routes, correspond with the printer about the physical specifications of each issue, and manage relationships with vendors and clients. The managing director is also responsible for structuring the budget of the organization as a whole, including the resources available to writers and editors.

Board of Directors: See the SSW board FAQ for information about the Weekly's board of directors.

The Process of Creating the Weekly

Joining the Weekly

All first-time staff members will have an in-person or phone meeting with a Weekly editor to learn more about the Weekly, tell the Weekly about their interests, and have the opportunity to ask questions.

The Weekly occasionally hosts dinner meetings to socialize and talk about projects people are working on. Keep an eye on the email listhost for info about the next meeting. *(On hold due to COVID.)* Contributors are encouraged to join the Weekly's Slack to discuss pitches and relevant news. (Here's a guide to using Slack for the Weekly.)

Pitching process

We have a pitch meeting once a month on a Monday night to discuss and workshop pitch ideas. *(Currently held via Zoom.)* All editors are welcome to submit pitches to the managing editors. Section editors are responsible for making sure there are enough pitches for their section, but all editors can pitch in all sections, and writers are encouraged to pitch, too. Pitches should be newsworthy and relevant to the South Side, and there should be an opportunity for the Weekly to take a fresh angle that hasn't been written about by other publications. As we are a biweekly paper, we are less interested in "breaking news" and more interested in second-day analysis and longform features.

We have transitioned over to using Airtable to manage all our pitches. Detailed guides to how to submit a pitch and how to claim a pitch can be found here. The password is weeklypitch.

The pitch doc will be circulated to all writers on the listhost and via Slack on a regular basis.

The Calendar & Bulletin

Every issue of the Weekly features a calendar of events, broken down by section. Each section editor (Visual Arts, Lit, Stage & Screen, Music) selects the events for that week's calendar and sends the pitches to the South Side Weekly listhost. The Politics Editors curates the Bulletin, which consists of events related to politics or community building. Selected events must take place between the issue's publication date and a week after publication. *(This section currently on hold due to COVID.)*

The Editing Process

Since many of our writers are not professionals, and since the Weekly is a paper committed not just to publishing journalism but to teaching it, the Weekly's editorial process is extremely thorough. All editing is meant not only to improve pieces but also to teach the writer about how to report and craft a story. Ideally, editing should not feel like being nitpicked but should feel like a constructive and even fun way to engage with the content of a story, with an end result that a writer can ultimately be very proud of. A detailed list of editor responsibilities, designed as a how-to for editors, is available **here.**

All articles go through three rounds of editing with three different editors before they are laid out in the print edition of the paper and uploaded to the website. The **primary editor** for an article is the main editor assigned to a piece and is responsible not only for editing the writer's first draft but also for guiding the writer through the reporting and writing process. It is frequently necessary for the primary editor and the writer to go back and forth with edits twice or three times on the first draft of a piece if the writer needs to do more reporting or to rewrite portions of the piece. (Sometimes, if a good deal more reporting needs to be done, the primary editor will "push" the piece back a week and begin edits again once the additional reportage is complete.)

The primary editor will get in touch with the writer within a day of when the piece is assigned to begin a dialogue on the angle and process of the piece and to set a deadline. Primary editors are encouraged to meet with the writer in person or have a discussion with the writer over the phone.

When working on drafts, writers should also include **all** the sources they used, to prepare for fact-checking. After each fact in the piece, writers should ideally include a footnote with either a link to a website where they found the information or the name of a source that told them in an interview. At the very least, they must include links to online sources they used and audio files of (or notes from) the interviews they conducted for a piece.

Once finished editing, the primary editor does two things: sends the article to the Weekly's fact-checking team for a detailed fact-check over the course of the following week, and sends it to the Weekly's editorial team for a second editor to pick up. Articles are edited for a second time over the week following primary edits, then proofread during production night.

The first round of edits, completed by the primary editor, focuses on content, structure, and language. For example, the primary editor might cut sections from the piece, make suggestions to restructure the piece, ask the writer to make a more engaging lead, ask the writer to get another quote or interview for the piece, fix awkward sentences, etc. The editor will make suggestions on a Google Doc that the writer is asked to approve and address. (The writer is always welcome to ask questions or express disagreement with edits.) The second-round editor also completes a thorough edit, leaving comments and suggestions for the primary editor and the writer. The third round, completed on paper at production night, is intended to focus more on grammar and style and catching last-minute mistakes.

Writers should be available by email during the week after they turn in their story to answer questions that editors and fact-checkers might have about the piece.

Adding Visuals to a Story
As soon as the primary editor and the writer start working together on a story, they should begin brainstorming what kind of visuals will go well with the story (such as photographs, press photos, illustrations, infographics), and should get in touch with a visuals editor about their ideas. Many visuals projects will require a writer to be proactive if they are to be completed in time. If a writer is going to an event and would like a photographer to accompany them, they should get in touch with the visuals editor as soon as possible. If the writer and primary editor would like an infographic done for the piece, they need to begin a discussion with the visuals editor and provide the statistics and data well in advance of the publication date.

Production Night
Production night takes place in the Weekly's office at the Experimental Station, on 61st Street and Blackstone Ave. *(During COVID, production night is happening remotely, via Slack.)* **The editorial deadline for all pieces in a given issue of the paper is midnight on that Monday night**. This means that the story must have been through three rounds of edits and been fact-checked,. Writers do not need to attend production nights, but they should be available for calls or emails during this time, in case last-minute questions arise during the editing process.

During production night, editors are working on the second and third rounds of editing. The process is tracked in a Airtable spreadsheet called the **Flow**. The Flow contains information on who wrote and edited an article, and where the article is in the process.

Layout editors work on Tuesday to design and lay out the issue. Once pages are set at least two editors must read and edit every page (known as "boards") to catch any errors made in the layout process, last minute typos, missing photo captions, etc.

Schedule
Every issue must be sent to the printer by early Wednesday morning. They are distributed throughout our distribution route over Thursday and Friday.

Print Distribution
See **here** for an updated map of our distribution locations.

Ten Rules of South Side Weekly Reporting

The following is a list of good practices for reporting. It isn't exhaustive or definitive, and no guide to reporting ever could be, because every reporter and every story are different. Think of these as advice from fellow travelers.

If you think something should be added or amended, email editor@southsideweekly.com, or leave a comment in this document.

1. Identify yourself as a journalist.

"Hi, my name is _____, and I'm writing a story for the South Side Weekly."

This can be helpful on a few levels. First, it gives you something automatic to say when you start a conversation with strangers, which is the hardest and most important part of reporting. It also makes it clear that you have your journalist hat on, and lets people respond with that in mind and on their own terms. People are generally interested in talking to reporters, which means introducing yourself will usually get things off on the right foot. But private citizens also have the right not to speak to reporters. This gives them that choice.

Making people aware of your role is also important is because it clarifies what you can and can't quote. Think of this statement as flipping a switch on. Once you've stated that you are a journalist in the act of reporting a story and someone has agreed to speak with you, the switch is on. What follows is on the record, meaning you can print what was said, and who said it. If someone tells you something is off the record the switch flips off. Information you get when the switch is off may be on background, meaning you can print what was said without revealing the identity of who said it.

Be very clear about flipping the switch, and if you have any doubt, confirm later what information you plan to quote or attribute and how. (Note: it isn't necessary to confirm how or what *you* will write about someone, only what statements you will attribute to them.)

2. Get the facts: who, what, when, where

Accurate reporting of information must be the foundation of everything you write. A piece that has accurate reporting may still be boring, or confusing, or flat. But a well-organized, sharply written piece with poor reporting is potentially harmful.

Determining the basic facts is not easy, but it is usually pretty intuitive—dig around, ask around, check against multiple sources, and record where you got your information.

Some specific points are worth emphasizing.

• Notice and record as much detail as possible. You cannot know at the outset what small detail will become relevant later on, so record as much as you can.

• Have sources and interviewees spell their names for you, and read them back to confirm. Ex. “J-o-n S-m-y-t-h.”

* Be precise. “A couple of days later” may not be false, but it does not give the reader the confidence or verifiability of “two days later.”

* Whenever possible, confirm your basic narrative with each new source. Ex. *“I’m really interested to talk about your [election/album/basketball team/palletería/gallery show/petcoke allergy], but first I just want to make sure I have the basics right. Do you mind if I run this by you? Here’s what I know so far.”* This provides multiple checks on the accuracy of information. It also has the effect of showing your sources that you’ve done your homework, and that they don’t need to spend time telling you basics.

• Ask your sources for other sources. *“Can you think of a few people I could talk to about this?”* This can also be used to corroborate narratives sources give you that can’t easily be supported by documentation. Ex. *“You said you didn’t file a police report about the incident. Did you tell anyone about the incident right after it happened? Could I give them a call?”*

• Make your questions precise. Get an address or an intersection rather than just a neighborhood or a landmark. Ask for the time of day rather than the date. The stakes for this are particularly high in certain cases—relating the evidence in a criminal case, for example—but be consistent in your practice even when they are low. Even when everyone is telling the truth, precision can reveal details that are interesting and relevant.

• Get as much contact information as possible. *“Can I give you a call if I have more questions?”* If someone won’t share their contact information, find out why, and confirm that what they have told you so far is on the record and can be attributed to them.

3. ...why, how, or what about it?

Journalism textbooks typically have an early chapter with a list of reasons that a story could be considered newsworthy. It usually provides that a story is

1. Contested.
2. Urgent. What is at stake for readers? How would this manifest in their own lives?
3. Surprising. What is surprising?
4. Timely.
5. New.
6. Scandalous.

The list is reductive, but the point is important: the fact that something exists does not make it a story. The reader needs a connection to it. Reporting in turn is more than fact finding; it should distill what matters. Ask yourself often what is most interesting to you about your story, and make that the foundation of the questions you investigate.

4. Speak with sources who have diverse perspectives on an issue

Hearing from diverse stakeholders matters on every level. It gives you some assurance that what you think happened really happened—if sources with different perspectives on an issue affirm the basic facts of what happened, you have a strong indication that it's true. It helps you understand what the events mean to different people, and that will help you give a more nuanced picture of what is at stake in the conflict.

Two specific applications of sourcing are very important.

1. If you intend to publish allegations of wrongdoing by particular individuals or organizations, you *must* contact the accused for a response, and you *must* reference their response, or lack thereof, in your story. This is especially crucial for allegations of illegal activity.

2. Do not allow a source to remain off the record unless both of the following are true.
a. They are offering information that is urgent to the public
b. They have a legitimate reason for wishing to remain anonymous.

Exactly what satisfies the requirement of "urgent" and "legitimate" is a matter of interpretation, and should take into account all the facts of the situation. Always discuss anonymous sources with your editors.

(An exception: The Weekly publishes several genres of writing that record and present the testimony of individuals, including interviews, oral histories, and certain kinds of profiles. These may not need to be balanced by another perspective, because the frame of the story is clearly subjective.)

5. Record audio, keep notes, and take lots of pictures

“Do you mind if I record this?”

Your notes and pictures are the raw material that you can go back to again and again, and they give you opportunities to extend your reporting into the future by allowing you to notice new details in the things you saw.

It can be awkward to record, but awkwardness is very often the price of original reporting. Asking someone if you can record also reminds them that you are on the record, and that you are there first as a journalist.

6. Ask questions that are…

A) stupid

Stupid questions save you from stupid mistakes and bring out language from sources that you can use to explain complex issues to a general reader.

"What does _____ mean?" (Don't let your sources use words you don't know without defining them for you.)

“What does _____ mean to you?” "How does that make you feel?" (Even when it is obvious how someone felt, this will open space for them to say what would otherwise go unspoken, and thus for you to quote it.)

These may also be phrased in the third person. *“What would you say to someone who had never been to _____? What would you want them to take away?” "Could you explain this to me like you would explain it to a third-grade class?"*

B) smart

Educate yourself on the topic and come prepared with specific, concrete, and nuanced questions that will advance your story past the basics. A little bit of homework ahead of an interview can go a long way. Scan tweets, Instagram accounts, LinkedIn profiles, Yelp reviews, Wikipedia pages, and anything else you can think of to find a few footholds for interesting conversations. In consulting experts, read the introductions of a few books (on Google Books, for example), and work those perspectives into your questions. Academics and other expert sources will especially appreciate this, and it will lead to better interviews.

C) challenging

Make the opposition’s case. This may be done directly (*“The board’s recent budget shows an increase of $_____ in spending on _____, so what makes you think they’re cutting*

corners?") or indirectly ("*In my reporting I've heard from a lot of people who are concerned about _____. What would you say to them?")*

7. Follow the money,

Cliché or not, financial information is one of a journalist's best reporting tools.

The story that money tells will not always be shocking, or rife with intrigue, or even interesting—more often it will be just as expected, but it will be clearer and more certain. Money forces people to define their priorities.

Acquire a basic understanding of the financial mechanisms that underlie the issues you are covering, and then ask about it.

This applies even when money does not seem particularly relevant to your story. Arts writing is a common example. Though it may not be your central focus, a question or two about the way that people fund their creative activities under conditions of scarcity can often reveal rich parts of the story.

A few practical notes:

- With few exceptions, public entities are required to share their budgets, and government financial records are subject to Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests.
- Nonprofits are required to disclose their end of year tax filing (form 990), which includes their basic financial information and lists of their highest-paid employees, officers, and contractors.
- Publicly traded companies are required to make extensive filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission that are available online.
- Private businesses are not subject to FOIA and are not required to disclose any tax or financial information, but any business they do with a public entity may be visible by FOIAing the public entity.

8. Use documents of all kinds

Avoid taking sources at their word.

If a public official gives you a statistic, ask for documentation. If they don't give it to you, ask why, and consider filing a Freedom of Information Act request. (For more on FOIA, see the Writers' Resources page of our website or the Writers' Resources folder.) If they do give it to you, or once you obtain it, use it to check the accuracy of public statements.

There are other uses of documents. Unorthodox records may include: photographs, maps, recipes, songs, logos, outfits, street signs, architectural motifs, textiles, or monuments. Do the messages communicated in the material world match the stories that are being told?

These artifacts give you more reference points for reporting, and more options for narrative texture when you write.

9. As you begin to write, re-report for accuracy, precision, and context.

Writing is always a cycle of drafting and revising. Journalistic writing adds the third step of re-reporting.

Turning your notes into a cohesive narrative will often raise new questions. Narratives will conflict. New details will emerge. Use the contact information you collected to call, email, or text your sources. Do not think of this as overkill. Second interviews are often better than first ones.

It bears repeating that certain facts are critical to confirm. If you are writing about allegations of wrongdoing, especially those of a sensitive or illegal nature, and issues of public accountability, you should make sure every single word you write is backed up by solid reporting.

10. Once you have done your groundwork, embrace the fact that you are writing a story and report accordingly.

This comes last for a reason. When writing in the public interest, literary technique is never a substitute for accurate reporting. But good stories are not discovered fully formed; good reporting draws them out. Once you have a solid foundation of reporting, do not be afraid to report along the arc of the story you want to tell.

Interviewing is often where this plays out. You must give sources space to present their ideas on their own terms. But once a source has shared their position, a skilled interviewer will get them to present it in a way that will be compelling for the reader in the context of the emerging story. You may go back to them and ask questions that will get them to say it in ways that are more clear or compelling.

Could you tell me again what happened with the...?
I realized I never asked you how you feel about that?
My notes were a little fuzzy here, could you remind me what you said about…?

It should be repeated: at no point is it acceptable to adjust facts to suit a narrative. Everything you write must be grounded in reporting. But good stories are woven together very intentionally,

by pulling particular strands in a particular order. Again, reporting distills what matters. Don’t shy away from that process.

Ten Rules of South Side Weekly Writing

On Process

1. Decide what to say.

A nutgraf is a paragraph near the top of an article that summarizes the basic point of the story and makes a case about its importance. The nutgraf boils down your reporting—the who, what, when, where—and why it matters—the why, how, or what about it—into a few sharp sentences. Once a reader has read them, they should have a basic understanding of what the article says, and a reason to continue reading. (The staff of The Philadelphia Inquirer aptly called the nutgraf "You may have wondered why we invited you to this party?" section.)

A good way to arrive at a nutgraf is to finish the following sentences:

"The purpose of this piece is to…"

"I'm excited about this story because…"

If you can't quite get there, figure out what's missing from your reporting, and go find it.

It's worth noting that not every piece will have a traditional nutgraf. You may decide, for example, to withhold key information from the reader in order to create a mystery that the reader must participate in solving.

Even in these cases it is worth writing a nutgraf. Having one that you don't use will ensure that you know what you mean to say, and that your innovations aren't detracting from the piece.

2. Work from an outline.

Using your nutgraf as your guide, list the basic narrative and analytical points you want to hit, and sketch out an order that might make sense.

Consider the basic form of the feature. The piece typically begins with a lead (first paragraph) that captures some essential dynamic of the story that is both engaging and unresolved, drawing the reader in to the story. The nutgraf sets the political and personal stakes of the story. The body of the piece should build on that basic tension through a logical sequence of steps.

Each section of your piece should serve a purpose that you have identified. *Ex. This third paragraph gives the reader some historical background on Bronzeville to give a sense of place and establish what's at stake in its changes.* In the case of longer and more complex pieces with multiple narrative threads, it may be helpful to color code paragraphs according to their role in the narrative.

Having the elements laid out in front of you from the beginning will make it much easier to see your piece as a whole, and make structural changes intentionally. Your outline should let you step back from the canvas.

3. Draft naturally.

Once you've identified the core insights of your original reporting and have written an outline that arranges the basic elements, it's time to start drafting.

Call a friend and tell them the story from start to finish, explaining what needs to be explained in an order that will make sense to your listener. The only difference between what you say in that phone call and what you say on the page comes from the opportunity to revise, and it is much easier to sharpen a conversational draft than to bring an overwrought one back to earth.

Write naturally, and write all the way through without distractions. If you get stuck, read aloud what you've written and feel for what should come next. If something you want to say is missing from your reporting, make a note to go find it.

And if you get really stuck, write TKTKTKTK and move on to the next certain step. The combination of a basic structure and a natural train of thought will be a great gift to your editor. Structure and flow are hard to edit in. "TK" is journalistic shorthand for "to come" (we know, it's not spelled with a "k"). TKTKTKTK is easy to search for and edit out.

<u>On Style</u>

4. Write with nouns and verbs.

Say what happened.

Replace general, abstract descriptions of relationships with specific examples that illustrate what you mean. Rather than calling a neighborhood blighted, or bustling, or boring, cite the number of businesses that have opened or closed, and why. Instead of calling a community working class or affluent, talk about the industries that exist there.

Writing with nouns and verbs leads to sharp, forceful writing, with built-in narrative movement, but it also keeps you from getting lost in your own impressions, assumptions, and biases. Nouns and verbs are much easier to fact-check than adjectives. They keep you accountable.

In writing physical descriptions, do not compete with your camera. Rather than trying to capture every detail of a person's manner, choose two or three that illustrate their significance to the story, and use nouns and verbs to connect them to the narrative.

Write descriptions that add to what a reader could discover from a photograph.

5. Be concise.

If a sentence can be shorter, it usually should be. Concise writing makes more out of less.

There are exceptions. You may want to take your time, or even use extra words to create space between two ideas. But do this on purpose. *The Elements of Style* puts it best: "Let every word tell."

Being concise is more of a disposition than a set of rules, but a few examples are worth considering.

- Beware phrases like "additionally," "moreover," and "furthermore." They are inherently redundant, and should only be used when they add clarity.
- Skip "that" when it isn't necessary for clarity. *Ex. "It was the same model ~~that~~ her mother drove."*
- Say "but" instead of "however." But is shorter, and nobody says however.
- "Too" and "also" are usually preferable to "as well as."

6. Use everyday language.

Being able to communicate complex, challenging ideas in everyday language will make you a better writer.

There are moments when a longer, more obscure word may be better than a shorter and more common one, but make that decision on purpose. Using uncommon language creates work for the reader. Make sure it has a payoff.

7. Avoid cliché, euphemism, and coded language. Be direct.

Avoiding cliché is obvious in principle, but slippery in practice.

At a fundamental level, a language is a set of symbols people have gotten used to, and there is no bright line test for how familiar is too familiar. Trying to rid a piece of writing of clichés becomes an infinite project.

But try. Make a concerted and consistent effort to find new, innovative, more substantive ways to say things. And never ever call anything "a hidden gem."

Be especially careful of clichés when discussing human beings. Linguistic shortcuts go hand in hand with shallow stereotypes. Don't take them. (Ex. Never use the phrase "rapid-fire Spanish." All languages sound fast when you don't speak them.)

When referring to a group of people by shared conditions of race, ethnicity, class, religion, gender identification, age, or any other categorization, be precise and intentional. Understand what has happened to make people into a group in the world, and understand what is at stake when you make them a group in language.

The process of writing past clichés is one place where the line between the skills of reporting and writing blurs. To write well, you should learn the specific histories of the people and places you write about, and that requires work. If you are confused about how someone is representing their story, do not guess. Go back and ask.

8. Start from zero, and unfold in an intentional order

One of the most important skills in journalistic writing is to suspend your own understanding and imagine what it would be like not to know anything about what you have just spent a lot of time reporting on.

If you can remove yourself from what you have just learned, you will be able to reconstruct it in a way that will be a compelling experience for others.

This is especially important for complex issues, or long, layered narratives. Your outline is important here. Use your early sections to tell a simple story that will immediately make sense to a novice reader, and then use that section as the foundation of something more complex. When discussing Tax Increment Financing, for example, you might start with the assumption that your reader understands what taxes are, but not what a tax district is.

Along with making your piece clear, moving in a logical order can also create suspense, intrigue, and revelation. By design, the reader never knows what is coming next.

This holds true on the level of sentences and paragraphs, too. On a structural level, end your sections with something unresolved that compels the reader to read further. Even the structure of a single sentence can be structured to draw the reader in.

Ex. "Phillip Jackson has lived this moment before."

The sentence above is the first sentence of a piece about the response of black police officers in Chicago to protests around race and policing. The sentence is designed such that every step requires the reader to take the next one.

Phillip Jackson
[Who's he?]
has lived
[Has lived what?]
this moment
[What moment?]
before.
[How is that even possible?! Tell me!]

9. Use your voice to tell and others to show

Your reporting should tell you how and why something happened. Let the people most affected tell you how it feels.

A common mistake is to put lengthy narratives in quotes that could more easily be summarized by the narrator's' voice. Explaining is your job, and because you have the opportunity to revise, you should be better at it than your sources.

The same problem can happen in reverse. Do not report on a person's internal life. Common examples include:

_____ *felt that…*
From _____*'s perspective…*

These are usually an indication that the reporter neglected to ask "how do you feel?" or "what's your take on _____?"

Let your sources describe their own feelings in their own words. It is respectful, but it is also more fun to read. The unique language of characters is usually more compelling than the voice of the narrator, so give your subjects the best lines.

10. Avoid even-handed nonsense

Do not end a piece with anything resembling this sentence:

"The solution to [moral dilemma] of [difficult situation] may not be fully clear, but what is clear is that [moral dilemma] will be a serious issue for a long time to come."

As a journalist, you have a responsibility to seek out and accurately present diverse perspectives on an issue. But that does not mean you cannot say anything.

To finish a piece, return to the stakes that were set in your nutgraf. Remember what your reporting was intended to do for the reader, and bring it home.

End with a line that matters. A choice quote from a stakeholder, though somewhat boring, is a reliable option.

Principles and Ethics of Journalism

A Weekly-specific code of ethics is in the works! But for now, we generally abide by the principles outlined in these documents:

- Society for Professional Journalists Code of Ethics
- Principles of Journalism from the American Press Association
- SPJ Journalist's Toolbox (Links to various web resources for journalists)

[Work In Progress] Some common ethical questions for our reporting include:

- **Fairness:** Is every person or group discussed in the story given the opportunity to speak? If a group or person is accused of any wrongdoing, the reporter *must* reach out to request comment from them.
- **Reporting on vulnerable groups:**
    - Minors: If anyone you interview, photograph, or film for a story is under the age of 18, they and their parent or guardian must fill out the Minor Consent & Release form and be provided with a copy. If at all possible, do this before the interview.
        - Alternatively, obtain a copy of the media consent and release form from the child's school, organization, after-school program, etc. if that is where the interview will take place. At minimum, get written assurance that such forms were filled out.
        - If you're ever working on a story where you're having trouble reaching the parents, or you can't get a form to them, the editor should talk with the EIC and managing editors.
        - See further reading: Education Writers Association Guide for Interviewing Children
    - Undocumented sources
    - Anyone who might not understand the consequences of their information becoming public.
- **Anonymous sources**: If there are anonymous sources, is their use justified? Is their identity properly protected?

(Have a suggestion for what the Weekly should do differently, or in addition, to these principles? Comment and let us know!)

Pitching for the Weekly

What makes a good Weekly pitch?

There's no one formula for a good Weekly pitch, but in general, you can consider the following "checklist" when coming up with a pitch.

Is your pitch...

Relevant? Since we are the South Side Weekly, your pitch should be somehow about or related to life on the South Side of Chicago, which we roughly define as south of Roosevelt Rd. (Talk to us if you are unsure about boundaries.) This includes stories about people who are from or who live on the South Side (for example, covering work by a musician or author from the South Side). This often means looking for local stories that aren't covered by other publications. It's also possible to take national, state, or citywide news and find an angle that's relevant to the South Side. For example, a story about how the Trump presidency is affecting South Side immigrants, or how a state education bill will affect South Side schools.

Newsworthy? In general, there should be a reason that you are pitching this story *now.* If there's a news item that happened a year ago, we shouldn't cover it unless there has been more related news recently. Just because something exists doesn't mean that you should write a story about it, unless there's something newsworthy to cover. However, it's usually easy to find a newsworthy angle. For example, if you find out about a cool arts center that's been around for a while, you shouldn't just pitch a story about the center itself. But you can call them up and find out about what new exhibits or programs they have going on, and frame the story around that.

Unique? The pitch shouldn't be a repeat of a story that another publication has already covered in-depth. If another publication has already written about it, your pitch should find a unique way to approach the topic that adds to what has already been done and asks different questions than the original article. For example, if Block Club Chicago publishes a quick news update on planned changes to a bus line, you could pitch a story about how it will affect residents in a certain neighborhood. If another publication briefly mentions an artist's work in an article, you could pitch an in-depth interview with the artist. In addition, your pitch shouldn't be something the Weekly has already covered in the same way. You can search through our website to see if there have already been articles about the topic.

How do I find out about things to pitch?

- **Read the news**
    - Outlets like Block Club Chicago often provide quick news updates that can be developed into longer pitches

    - Read various Chicago news sources with an eye towards finding an angle appropriate for the South Side Weekly
- **Twitter is your friend**
    - Following Chicago politicians/artists/organizations/etc. can help you stay up to date with what's going on in the city and lead to inspiration
    - If you have a specific beat or are editing for a certain section, make sure to follow the major players related to that topic. For example, the Education Editor should be following CPS, the CTU, etc. to stay up to date on education news.
    - An app called TweetDeck can help you stay up to date on what the people you follow are doing on Twitter and can help you see what people are talking about when you search certain keywords
- **Check Slack regularly**
    - In addition to email, the Weekly staff communicates via Slack, a workplace communication app. There is a guide to using Slack here (http://bit.ly/SSWSlackGuide)
    - On Slack, we regularly post related articles in the #news channel. Pay attention to these articles and to Slack conversations and you might get inspiration for a pitch. You can discuss pitches with other Weekly staff in the #pitches channel, and get the first look at new pitches in the #claim-a-pitch channel.

Follow neighborhood groups, discussions, and calendars online

- Certain neighborhoods have Facebook groups you can join
- You can also use sites like EveryBlock to keep up with neighborhood news and events
- You can subscribe to emails for various community groups, like Resident Association of Greater Englewood for example, and get updates on events. (However, make sure that you aren't just favoring certain neighborhoods when you're looking into stories.)

- **Show up**
    - If you have some time on your hands, go to community meetings and events even if you aren't covering them for the Weekly! You can meet people and get inspired for future pitches. (Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, most of these meetings are being held online.)
- **Move through the world as a journalist**
    - When you're just walking around the South Side or on public transit, be receptive to people you meet and stories you encounter
    - Form relationships with people you meet and call them up to see what they're thinking about these days. Let them know they can always get in touch with you with pitch suggestions. This includes sources for previous stories you've written—stay in touch if you can!
- **A general note**
    - Think broadly about the kind of issues or stories that you think are important, and about creative ways to cover them—don't get stuck in only thinking about pieces based on the news of the week or events you know are upcoming.

- Ways to do that might include setting aside time to consider the Weekly's coverage in a particular section and what might be missing there, or writing down a few topics that you'd like to read more about or think are important for people to know about (whether that's public defense, gentrification, urban wildlife, or the DIY scene) and then workshopping ways to approach them.

How do I write up a pitch?

Give the pitch a title and then write a paragraph describing the story and the potential angle that the writer could take. Include suggestions for what kind of story it might be, such as a feature, review, interview, etc (for info on types of articles and examples, see the next section of the Writer's Guide). You can include links to articles or information about the subject. Try to list some potential sources as well. It's okay if you don't know exactly how the story should be approached, but you should give some suggestions or thoughts for the writer to start with. If possible, provide a suggested word count and due date. Put your name in parentheses at the end of the pitch in case people need to contact you for more information.

Here are some examples:

eta Magic Box
eta Creative Arts' Magic Box series is returning for a second year, lasting from January 13th to January 29th (http://www.etacreativearts.org/magic_box_2017/). This year has several more events than last year's inaugural series, and seems to bring more interdisciplinary performance and less straight theatre into the fold—a choice that seems to me perhaps part of the director's effort to serve the younger generations of its community, as she noted in a recent Weekly piece about eta. I'm interested in the curation/selection process for this year's series—were the playwrights and performers for this year found through the established eta community, or through new connections? How old are these playwrights/performers, and what do they think eta can do for them? This would be less a review of the series (though that aspect would probably still be necessary), since there are so many events within it, but rather a look into what this year's Magic Box installment says about eta right now, by focusing on a few specific events/artists. (Julia)

Universities under Trump
With the Trump inauguration looming, groups advocating for everything from police reform to a continued DACA program are unlikely to find much federal support for the next few years. In that context, I'm interested in the question of what's possible on a local level. One specific area where we could look at this is universities. At the University of Chicago, the provost emailed the entire campus reaffiriming support for international and undocumented students after Trump was elected. Then UofC president Robert Zimmer joined over 300 college presidents in signing a statement in support of DACA. Professors, however, called on Zimmer to do more, and there's been a flurry of further activity from students etc. on

that front (see 12/2/16, 12/12/16, and 1/3/17 Maroon articles). The point is, this is at least one university where students are taking action, and administrators are taking action, to secure support for undocumented students on a smaller level. Let's look into how other Chicago universities' administrations are responding, and being pressured to respond, to the changes they expect to see under Trump, and write up a semi-comprehensive overview. (Olivia)

Flying Gardens of Maybe
Andrew Yang is a scientist and artist focused on the intersection of art and nature. He's had an ongoing project with the Field Museum since 2012 called Flying Gardens of Maybe focused on collecting the seeds from the bodies of birds who die via colliding with mirrored glass buildings (ie buildings in the International style, ie like Trump Tower, as he says). Remnants of the birds' stomachs are planted in the spring in an act of "eco-engineering." Could be interesting to interview Yang and touch on the role of artists in visualizing the effects of buildings/urban development especially in light of development projects happening across the South Side. And then maybe talk with the Field Museum about their role, beyond education, in impacting the city's relationship to nature. (Corinne)

How do I submit a pitch?

If you are an editor or staff writer, you submit your pitches through the Airtable form. Or you can just can email pitches to the managing editor(s) anytime at editor@southsideweekly.com.

Can I pitch something to write myself?

Absolutely! When you email in a pitch, just specify whether you'd like to write it yourself or whether you want to have it offered to the whole staff.

I have an idea, but I'm not sure how to turn it into a pitch.

No problem! We workshop pitches and collaborate all the time. If you have an idea but you don't know what kind of article it should be or what angle to suggest, feel free to get in touch with Weekly editors or other contributors to talk it out. You can send an editor an email, start a discussion about it on the Weekly's Slack channel, or talk to us in person at a workshop or meeting. We often develop our best pitches working together.

South Side Weekly Article Formats and Examples

This list should give you more information about the various types of articles the Weekly publishes and some good examples of each. This list is not exhaustive or exclusive, and we're always open to finding new ways of presenting information to our readers.

Word counts are general guidelines, not strict requirements. Your editor will help you get the word count to the appropriate amount for the piece.

Features (800+ words)
Many of the articles that the Weekly publishes are features. Features can come in a variety of types, from "investigative feature" to "human interest feature," but in general features tell the story of a newsworthy issue, topic, or event. The Weekly does not usually publish short "hard news" stories, which are the stories that outlets like Block Club Chicago, the Sun-Times, or the Tribune write as soon as news becomes available. Because the Weekly is a biweekly and not daily publication, we publish features, since our writers have more time to work on them and solicit a variety of opinions and perspectives.

Features can cover all sections and subject matter, and what they have in common is their structure. Feature stories have a "narrative arc." They begin with the "lede," a beginning that hooks the reader's attention and gets the reader invested in the content. Soon after the lede comes the "nutgraf," a section (often just one paragraph, but sometimes more) that lays out the central issues covered in the story and suggests what will be discussed in the rest of the article. The nutgraf should answer the question "what is this article about?" After the nutgraf, the writer can proceed with the rest of the story, often weaving in sources' direct quotes with the writer's description, analysis, and recounting of facts. The article should end with some kind of resolution of the narrative, though the resolution does not have to be positive or comforting. Strong quotes often make a good ending; it can also be useful to leave the reader with a final image or a look at what's ahead. Try to avoid cliché and melodrama.

Feature writers should consult a variety of sources directly involved in the issue and expert opinions (such as academics or researchers) when necessary. Writing should always remain as clear and concise as possible, without the use of unnecessary jargon, and with explanations for any concepts that may not be immediately clear to the reader. Descriptive language, to describe people or places, can sometimes be appropriate in a feature story.

Remember that our readers are likely looking to other publications (like online daily publications) for immediate quick-and-dirty news coverage, so give readers a reason to also find your article useful with additional background information, strong interviews with key sources, and/or reporting on a little-known issue.

Examples:

- Bob Fioretti is Running for Mayor (politics)
- Renewing the Rosenwald (development)
- Bringing Back the Bus (politics)
- When the Gates Swing Open (music)
- If It Bleeds it Leads (reporting, crime)
- Now is the Time (visual arts)
- A Radical Imagination (visual arts)
- Be Aggressive! B-E Aggressive! (education)
- Youth Activists Challenge State Disciplinary Policies (education)
- The Shrine of Christ the King (activism)

Longform Feature (2000-4000 words)

Longform features are what they sound like: feature articles that are long. These are often a deep investigation into a certain subject. They present facts and analysis while approaching the subject from multiple angles. Writing such a feature requires a long period of sustained reporting, and the story should draw on interviews with a variety of sources. The use of numerical data and/or in-person reporting at events is also often appropriate. (It all depends on the topic, of course; a music reporter likely won't be contacting the government for data, though the story might include a reference to a number of albums sold or attendance at a concert.)

A longform feature should begin with an interesting, well-written "lede" to hook the reader. One type of lede that often works well for a feature story is the "micro lede," which begins by describing a specific anecdote, moment, or person, and then zooms out to explain the larger issue at hand.

Longform features can come from any section, from Education and Politics to Books and Food, and the Weekly encourages longform features on a variety of subjects. The Weekly's cover stories are often longform features.

Examples:

- The Numbers Game (politics, police)
- A Broken Shield (politics, criminal justice)
- A Hole in the World (social services)
- In the Middle of It (politics, journalism)
- What's in Store (development, politics, food)
- The Vice and Virtue of Todd Diederich (photography)
- Wyatt's Wall (music)
- Slow Burn (visual arts, stage & screen)
- How Do you Score a School? (education)

Interviews

An “interview” is an edited transcript of an interview with a person (or multiple people) of interest. The writer usually writes a short intro to the piece, but otherwise the transcript stands on its own.

Many interviews in the Weekly are presented in the style of Studs Terkel, who often extensively edited interview transcripts, cutting out his questions so as to present the interview as essentially a long speech by the subject. This should always be done with caution: interviews can be trimmed, stitched together, and reorganized, but not in a way that misrepresents or significantly alters what the subject was trying to express.

Examples:

- Breaking Down the Electric Fence (Studs Terkel style)
- When I Was a Kid (Studs Terkel style)
- The Poetry of Everyday Language
- QTIPOC to the Front

Profile

A profile is a type of feature that focuses specifically on one person or even on one place/organization. However, when you are writing a profile, you often will not only interview the person you’re profiling. Instead, you’ll want to talk to a variety of people who have interacted with the subject, so you can better tell the story of the person or place you’re profiling. If you only want to talk in-depth with one person, and the person is a particularly interesting or eloquent speaker, the piece might be a better fit for an interview.

Examples:
Production Value
Nnamdi’s Sooper Dooper Secret Story
Soul Survivor
Rage (Softly) Against the Machine
Chuy Garcia Navigates the Past in the Racial Politics of the Present

Review (Theater/Film, Book, Music, Food) (700-1200)

A review is what it sounds like: the writer gives an assessment of a restaurant, book, movie, album, play, concert, etc. Reviews often help readers decide whether they want to try out the thing being reviewed. But it’s not as simple as “I liked it” or “I didn’t like it”: reviews also engage in a dialogue with the art, offering their own analysis and interpretation. A review should be an

enjoyable and interesting piece of writing to read, even if the reader doesn't plan to ever actually see the exhibit/film/concert. Many readers like to read a review after they've seen the art, so they can reflect on their own thoughts about the work.

Sometimes, it may be prudent for reviews to include quotes from people involved in the work. For example, at an art gallery opening, you may want to interview the artist or curator, and at a restaurant, you might want to interview the owner or chef. The difference between a review and an arts feature is usually that a review includes more evaluation of the art; however, the lines can get blurry! Some arts pieces combine elements of features and reviews.

When writing a review, it is often appropriate to obtain press photos for publication or to bring a staff photographer with you to the event. The Weekly can help you obtain press tickets or a press copy of a book, or reimburse you for tickets if those things are not possible (talk to your editors about submitting a reimbursement form).

Food Review Examples

- This Side of Kingston
- In Praise of Mac & Cheese Eggrolls

Music Review Examples

- In Her Own Words
- Unforseen Circumstances

Lit Review/Book Review Examples

- The First Lady is From Chicago
- Beat Poetry
- Spectacle in the Windy City

Stage and Screen Review Examples

- Revival on 55th Street
- Rotten Memory
- The Bible's Body and Soul
- The Uneven Playing Field

Visual Arts Review Examples

- Remembering Radicals
- Political Clay
- A City of DJs
- Banking on a Bank

Opinion

The Weekly invites different writers from around the South Side to contribute op-eds that put forth their own opinion on an issue, or to highlight the voices of others on an issue they are interested in.

Examples:

- Bringing Chicago Home in a Time of Crisis
- Lori Lightfoot's Dark Promises

Comics

The Weekly sometimes publishes journalism in the form of comics. Reporting for a comic should follow the same procedures and ethics as all other reporting, but a reporter and an artist work closely together to tell the story in visual and verbal form. These comics usually illustrate a specific event or interview.

Sometimes the Weekly publishes comics that don't depict a specific event but transmit general information, or that recount a personal experience.

Examples:

- Sketches from the UCPD Community Forum
- Huelguistas and Abuelitas
- Queering Black History
- Resistance Remembered
- Lakeshore Ride
- Welcome to Bridgeport

News Analysis/News Explainer

Sometimes, the Weekly will publish a piece that gives context behind important information in the news. This might be an explanation of data, an annotation of a document, or a "who's who" describing the people involved in a certain issue. When approaching a news explainer piece, make sure you are providing important information that might not already be widely available to readers, and that your writing is clear and accessible.

Examples:

- A Reader's Guide to the City's Laquan MacDonald Emails (annotations)
- Who's Who in Police Accountability (who's who)
- Mayoral Face Off (annotations)
- Budget Cuts by the Numbers (data analysis)

Personal Essay

While most of the Weekly's articles are published from a third-person perspective, with the occasional first-person insight, we sometimes publish articles that are organized around a personal experience or perspective. These are often an in-depth retelling of a personal experience and sometimes broaden into a larger discussion of the topic.

Examples:

- The Call You Might Regret
- Home on the State Street Corridor

Articles With Annotations

Weekly editors and writers have used tools from Genius.com to annotate articles they've written for the Weekly. These annotations are intended to give the background behind the decisions the writer made in an article, and to give a real-life example of article structure and the reporting process. This page contains a list of all annotated articles, and will be updated when new annotations are available. Go to the following links and click on the yellow highlighted text to see the annotations.

- What's in Store, annotated by Mari Cohen

Using Slack for the Weekly

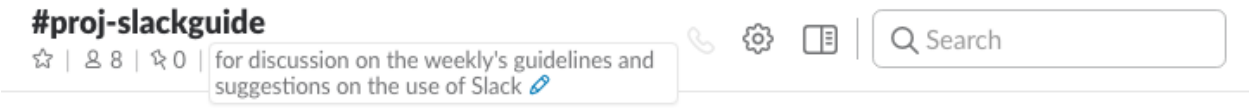
Why Slack?

Slack is a useful tool that allows for searchable, real-time group communication between our staff. Many news organizations and companies use Slack as their primary means of team communication. For the Weekly, it provides a central digital space anyone regularly involved in the organization can access. Reaching out via Slack is more professional than sending a Facebook message or text, but doesn't require the same time or formality as writing an email. This document will go over some basic Slack functionalities, as well as explain some guidelines specific to the Weekly's team.

How it works

Channels:

The app allows you to access, browse, and participate in several channels. Each channel is dedicated to a specific topic or includes a specific group of people. You can find out what a channel is about first by checking the name, and then--if that isn't specific enough--looking at its description. This information is available on the top bar of every channel:



The Weekly's channel structure mostly follows our staff structure. Some channels are open to all staff, others only include members of certain teams or sections, some are devoted to specific projects. Here's a list of some currently active channels on Slack:

General:

#announcements: *Calls to action - go to the public newsroom, leftover pitches, meeting announcements*
#general: *SSW-related talk, e.g. Mari asking for ideas for Stylebook Sunday, someone needs immediate help with something, someone wants to make social media aware of an event, etc.*
#random: *Non-work banter and water cooler conversation*
#minutes: *Editorial meeting minutes posted here for transparency and access*
#headline-storming: *Editors brainstorm headlines for various pieces*
#pitches: *A casual space to propose and workshop pitches and pitch ideas*
#hot-tips: *Tips submitted to our website automatically appear here.*
#dataviz-mapping: *Anything related to data visualization or map visuals*
#website: *Discussion of website changes, proposals, and issues (e.g. broken links)*

Sections (for the discussion of ideas, news, and pitches relating to each section):

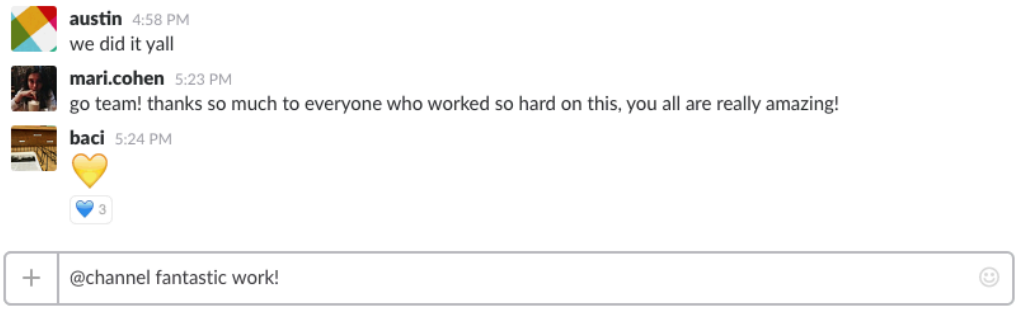
#sec-visualarts
#sec-stagescreen
#sec-music
#sec-lit
#sec-politics
#sec-education

Teams:

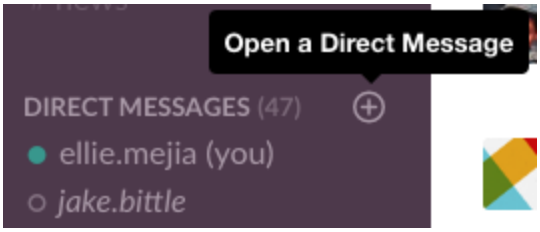
#editorial: *private channel for the editorial team to discuss the Weekly's structure and organizational changes, to plan events, to go over logistics, etc*
#staff_writers
#visuals: *Discussion of illustration and photography*
#socialstrategy: *Discussion of social media analytics, strategy, etc. Also a place for other editors/staffers to make requests of the social media team*
#video
#radio
#factchecking *Discuss fact-checking tips, policies. A place to get second opinions on your FCs.*

Messaging:

Slack also supports private group chats and private direct messages. Notifications occur when someone's name is mentioned, or they received a direct message. To tag someone in a channel, ping their username. If you want to make sure everyone on the channel sees your message, you can also ping the entire channel by typing "@channel" anywhere in your message:



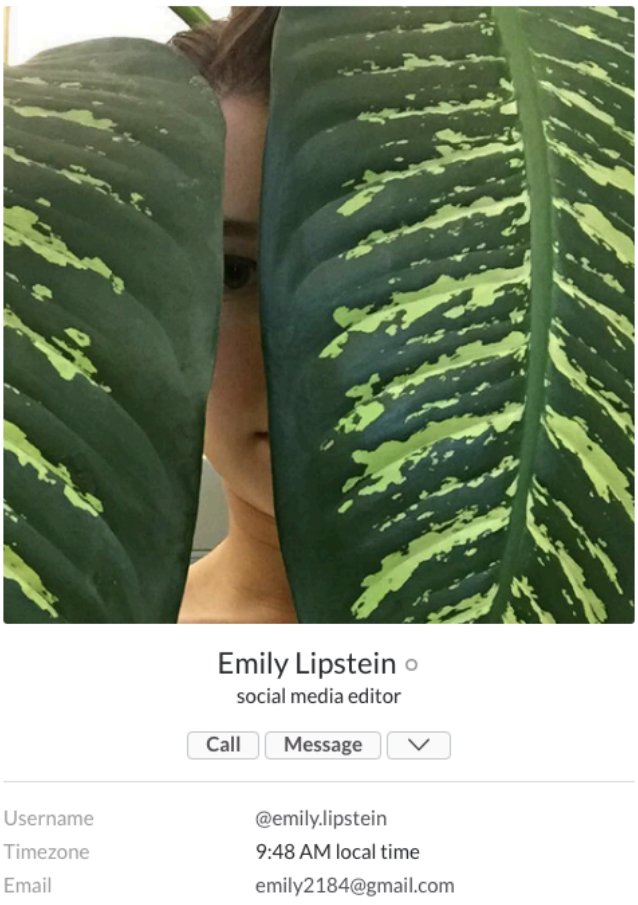
To start a private chat with someone, look them up by clicking the plus sign next to "Direct Messages" on the left of the screen.



What not to put on Slack:

We do ask that you keep some communication to email. You can attach documents to private messages or channels, but Slack will not save documents the way email will. If you are working on an illustration, photograph, data visualization, podcast, or video for the Weekly please make sure you send those image, audio, video, etc files over email as well. Pitches and visuals will continue to be assigned over email.

Please also refrain from using Slack's private message functionality as a substitute for texting, Facebook, WhatsApp, or other social messaging services. Remember that although often informal, interactions at the Weekly should remain professional and respectful. Additionally, anything that is obscene, hurtful, bigoted, or gossip is not tolerated.



Setting up your profile

Setting up a profile is fairly straightforward, but we ask you to adhere to certain formalities:

- Make sure your username follows the format **firstname.lastname** (i.e. jane.doe). This way, if you know the first and last names of a staff member, you already know their username.
- Also make sure your profile details include your **email address**, so that team members can send you files or documents or get in touch with you via email if necessary.
- Your picture can be anything that isn't lewd or offensive, but you should change it from Slack's default abstracted colorful squares. A

channel with icons that are all the same is not as legible as a channel with distinct icons for each user.
- Please make sure to fill out the section “What I Do.” If you don’t have a formal title at the Weekly, feel free to write “contributor.”

Lastly, although this isn’t a profile requirement, we do recommend you download Slack’s desktop and/or mobile app. You can always visit the Weekly’s team on southsideweekly.slack.com, but having the app ensures you get notifications as they come in, which makes communication quicker and more efficient.

Additional Weekly Resources

- Using Slack for the Weekly (http://bit.ly/SSWSlackGuide)
- Editor Responsibilities (http://bit.ly/sswediting)
- Writer's Resources Folder (http://bit.ly/SSWResourcesFolder)
- Boards Checklist (for editors copy-editing printed pages) (http://bit.ly/SSWBoardsChecklist) (If that link doesn't work for you, try this version)