

What the heck is *The Ubyyssey*? A contributor's guide to UBC's student newspaper

The basics

The Ubyyssey is an independent, student-run newspaper at the University of British Columbia.

We're a nonprofit, run by eleven elected student editors, a board of directors and hundreds of student volunteers. We produce a bi-weekly print paper covering what's going on at UBC and the surrounding areas and on topics of interest to students and the community. We also publish daily online.

How we work

The Ubyyssey is intended to be an educational space for students interested in journalism to try it out and get something published! We're also the de facto community newspaper for UBC and the neighbourhoods around. We aim to produce timely, accurate articles and visuals about what's going on around here and on topics UBC students care about.

We're funded by a \$7 student levy, that anyone can opt out of. However, to be a contributor to *The Ubyyssey*, you must be a member of the Ubyyssey Publications Society. So if you want to get involved, don't opt out!

How you can get involved

There are a few tiers of involvement here at the Ubyyssey.

1. **Contributor.** These are folks that write maybe one article, and decide journalism isn't for them. Or they contribute a couple times a year, and that's that. We love contributors because they bring new voices and perspectives into our newspaper.
2. **Staff member.** To become a staff member, you need to contribute to the paper three times and attend three staff meetings. At your third staff meeting, you'll be voted in as a staff member! As a staff member, you'll get a *ubyssey.ca* email address, you'll get to customize your author page on our website and you'll get to vote in various things going forward — that includes voting in other staff members and voting for our editorial each spring.

3. **Senior staff members.** These are talented, competent staff members that have shown a commitment to *The Ubysey*. Each section has the ability to hire a few senior staff members each year, and typically, there will be a requirement of how much you have to contribute a month, and a small payment for your work. If you're interested in becoming a senior staff member, reach out to your editor.
4. **Editors.** Editors are elected in April every year. Any staff member can put their name forward to be an editor. Interested candidates have to create a poster indicating their desire to run for election, complete a knowledge test and participate in an interview with the chief electoral officer and/or the sitting editor-in-chief — the interview is open to all staff to attend. If elected, editors have 11-month terms — from May to April — and are paid an hourly minimum wage.

Finding a pitch

Find a pitch by signing up for our pitchlists, joining our Facebook groups and joining our [Discord](#). You can also ask an editor for a pitch directly through their emails (listed below) or by showing up to a meeting (meeting times listed at the bottom of this document).

To sign up for the pitchlists, [fill out this form](#). If you don't get an email in a couple weeks, email feedback@ubyssey.ca.

To join our Discord, use this link: <https://discord.gg/5uHK8Q9rGX>

To join our Facebook groups, a list of all the links is at the end of this document.

You can also pitch your own story! Email a pitch to the relevant editor (contact info at the end of this document). You should include a general summary of the story you want to write, some potential sources, an idea for an image to go along with it, a word count and a deadline.

Taking a pitch

The easiest way to get involved in *The Ubysey* is to pick up a pitch. Here's how it generally works.

1. You see a written or visual pitch in a pitchlist/on Facebook/on Discord that looks interesting.
2. You reply to the email or post and say you're interested in writing that article.
3. If the pitch is free, the editor will send an email that outlines who you should talk to, what research you should do, how long the article should be, and what your deadline is. Pitches are assigned on a first-come, first-served basis.
4. You do all of that and turn it in on time, like the wonderful contributor you are.

It's that simple! If you have questions, you can ask the editor you're writing for.

Interviewing your sources

Interviewing can be a bit scary when you do it for the first time, but it gets easier with time. Lots of us find it fun to interview people, because you get to talk to people you probably would never talk to if you weren't writing for us.

1. **Send the email.** Use a clear subject line: 'Ubysey article — request for interview' is an easy one. In your email, include your name, a summary of the article you're writing, why you want to talk to this specific source, and your deadline. If it's someone who isn't often interviewed by us, consider attaching [a link to our Source Guide](#), which outlines what it means to be a source for us. Some editors have a handy template you can use.
2. **Let your editor know if they don't respond.** Do this a couple days before the deadline so we can help you get in contact with that source, or find an alternate source. Make sure you send a follow up email 48 hours after you contact someone if they don't respond.
3. **Set up a time and place.** Meet in person if possible, but phone and Zoom are also okay. Stay away from email interviews unless absolutely necessary.
4. **Make sure you can record them.** [Otter.ai](#) is what editors swear by, because it transcribes the interview for you (albeit, not perfectly, so you'll have to listen and correct it).
5. **Research.** Don't ask things you can find out on Google. Come into the interview informed on the topic. Editors are also happy to proofread any questions you might be unsure about.
6. **Write down your questions.** Make sure you're asking enough to get the WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, WHY and HOW.
7. **Do the interview.** Ask to record before you begin. Always start with asking them to state their full name and pronouns, and if they're a student, their year level and faculty. Let them talk, and ask follow up questions so they can expand on interesting things. Don't be afraid to deviate from the questions you wrote down ahead of time, but don't let the source pull you off course.
8. **Ask them if there's anything they'd like to add.** This is a great question to ask at the end of an interview so you've gotten everything they want to say on the topic.
9. **Thank them for their time.**
10. **Transcribe.** Either do this by hand, or for a timesaver, hop back on your Otter.ai file and clean up the transcript. (Pro tip: Or just skim the transcript Otter made for you, pick quotes from there and clean up only those quotes. It will save you a lot of time.)

The do's and don'ts

Do

- Record your interview
- Double check all the quotes in your story (no misquoting please!)
- Be polite

- Dig for the facts
- Let your editor know if you can't complete an article well before a deadline
- Read through some recent pieces on our website to get an idea how to structure a piece

Don't

- Engage with anything on social media that you or the paper reports on
- Accept gifts or favours from sources
- Interview your friends
- Report on something you have a personal investment in, no matter how small
- Send a source a rough draft of an article
- Send sources questions you'll ask beforehand.
- **Promise anonymity to a source without checking with your editor**

Breaking the rules

Beyond journalism, *The Ubyyssey* is a social space where everyone is welcome. Read our [Respectful Environment Policy](#) to get a sense of what we value here, and what can get you kicked out of our space.

Removal from a section. Section editors have the autonomy to remove any volunteer from their section at any time, for any reason.

Removal from the paper. In rare circumstances, a volunteer may be barred from contributing to *The Ubyyssey*. Editors will make every effort to let you know why you've been removed, but are not required to do so.

If you have an issue

Talk to:

Your editor. This is your first stop, as your editor probably has the most knowledge of your situation.

Editor-in-chief. If you're not comfortable speaking to your section editor, the editor-in-chief is always free to hear your concerns. This year, that's Iman Janmohamed. You can reach her at eic@ubyssey.ca.

Staff rep: If you don't feel comfortable talking to any editor, speak with our elected staff representatives. This year's staff reps are Stella Griffin and Bernice Wong.

President: The head of our Board of Directors is removed from editorial decisions, but they oversee our budget and operations. This year, it's Ian Caguiat. You can reach him at president@ubyssey.ca.

Policies/resources to know

- [Unpublishing Policy](#)
- [Anonymity Policy](#)
- [Opinions Policy](#)
- [Conflict of Interest Policy](#)
- [Respectful Environment Policy](#)
- [Source guide](#)

Contact info

Editorial office phone: (604) 283-2023

Business office phone: (604) 283-2024

Editorial office

Editor-in-Chief: Aisha Chaudhry, eic@ubyssey.ca or feedback@ubyssey.ca

Managing Editor: Saumya Kamra, managing@ubyssey.ca

News Editors: Colin Angell & Stephen Kosar, news@ubyssey.ca

Culture Editor: Julian Coyle Forst, culture@ubyssey.ca

Features Editor: Elena Massing, features@ubyssey.ca

Opinion Editor: Spencer Izen, opinion@ubyssey.ca

Humour Editor: Kyla Flynn, humour@ubyssey.ca

Sports + Rec Editor: Caleb Peterson, sports@ubyssey.ca

Science Editor: Elita Menezes, science@ubyssey.ca

Photo Editor: Sidney Shaw, photo@ubyssey.ca

Illustration Editor: Ayala Cilliers, illustration@ubyssey.ca

Business office

Business Manager: Douglas Baird, business@ubyssey.ca

Sales Manager: Scott Atkinson, advertising@ubyssey.ca

Board of Directors President: Ferdinand Rother, president@ubyssey.ca

Web Developers: Sam Low, samuellow@ubyssey.ca and Nishim Singhi, nishimsinghi@ubyssey.ca

Staff Representatives: Bernice Wong (treasurer) and Stella Griffin, staff@ubyssey.ca

Section-specific new contributor's guides

Culture:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1I9WDANcvjlkUvVvVjf0tsk-EyAR7CfSvZ87Z9-FFDQIq/>

News:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1i1V2yKz6SHYI70k4cLL1Flx2vPL3SjDsv6zPPooxvlo/>

Photo:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1PJVYErAepxZGGvShjJFkn1br4ufcGTRpI9VQI2zrmSA>

Science:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1bjGJ6V4GqyFyb_G8dZpfw-k_g5hUGE5aaCbG7kxwy7I/

Visuals:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1oM7uyNDPIZzOnzvzJDSf9udMXCsVWcXOaNskgAVC2zQ/>

Humour:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1dSpUq7ZsUZuQE36BubqI2o10ZwPiFWTYtL5ZXvf2Vi0/>

Facebook group links

News: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/978933812175188>

Features: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/165361434015715>

Science: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/182667339537859>

Culture: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/806489826073886>

Sports + Rec: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1464441513591359>

Blog: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1139106002838778>

Visuals: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1699935976941936>

Photos: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/319219785726382>

Video: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/679432180196628>