

# Article



## An article on articles: How to write articles

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## **Article**

Currently, in this article, I deal with the art of article-writing. It is neither difficult nor pain staking. In our office, everyone is a writer, and most people have had articles published at several places. This article provides some very easy and practical tips to article writing.

I have mentioned before, and I can say this with full conviction as I have lived this truth all along: if you want to get depth on any subject, you need to read it, write it and speak it. And it is in this sequence. As you read, you are acquiring knowledge. As you write, you build on what you read – so you create knowledge. As you speak, you perfect knowledge. The famous couplet says it beautifully:

सरस्वती के भंडार की बड़ी अपूरब बात

ज्यों खर्चे त्यों त्यों बढ़े बिन खर्चे घट जात

Yes, that is indeed true – the amount of clarity and perfection that you will get on a subject while speaking on it is just unimaginable for some who has not done it. Do it realize it. The kind of questions you will face from the audience when you deliver a speech on a subject will never occur to the best expert while self-studying.

Hence, I strongly recommend the read-write-speak combo solution to learning.

A quick point as regards speed of article writing – some people believe I must first read a subject, understand it, master it, and then think of writing on it. I don't agree. I believe understanding a subject is a process, and writing is only a step towards it. If I were to first master a subject and then write on it, I would never reach that stage. I have personally learnt while writing. I must also add here another point – thanks to the wonderful word processing tools, you don't have to finish reading a subject and then start writing on it. You may keep scribbling notes or thoughts as you read. Word processors allow you enough liberty to cut, insert, edit your text. So, you may save a plenty of time by writing as you read.

### **Style of article:**

Decide your style of article based on what is it intended to be. For example, it may be intended to be published on a website that is generally critical of government policy. Your article, therefore, needs to maintain a critical tone. No point in writing a simple report on what is happening around – you need to add what is good, or what is bad, about what is happening. In another case, your article may be meant for a professional journal – such as Chartered Accountant or Company Secretary. In such a case, your article has a long shelf life and needs to deal with a subject in a structured manner. Yet another example is that of scholarly journals which are usually published like 2 times a year, or 4 times a year. These articles have very long shelf lives – these are essentially research articles which have their own style.



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So the style of the article is fixed by what you need to do with it. You may, for example, simply be writing about a recent legal development. This is a note explaining what has happened. The tone of the article is explanatory rather than critical.

### **Title of the article:**

Think of an appropriate caption for the article. The title should reflect the content of the article – what is the article about? Remember that readers may be driven to read your article based on the caption – it is like a few words invitation to read your article.

At the same time, the caption cannot be one meter long – the caption is not a sentence, or details of your article. It is only a few words.

If the article is a comprehensive guide on a topic, then use caption like “guide to ---“ or “manual on –“. If the article is a critical analysis of some issue, then use the words “critical analysis” as a part of the caption, and so on.

### **The prefatory paragraph:**

The opening paragraph or two of the article provide a quick shot view of what your article is all about. A reader decides to read ahead after reading the first one or two paras. Ideally, the opening para should say what your article is all about.

You may use some dramatic language, some good expressions or phrases if you are good at the same. However, that is not very important. The first para must, nevertheless, always give a macroscopic view of the content of the entire article.

### **Use headings and sub headings:**

I strongly suggest you must always use headings and sub headings. They serve several purposes.

First, a heading breaks the monotony of the article. The reader is not reading through a huge chunk of material – the headings provide breaks to your text. The headings provide an excellent guide to a reader as to what do the paras below the heading contain – so, he may not even read the whole of the article, and simply move to headings. Sometimes it is possible to get an idea of what is there in the article by simply reading the headings.

Second, for the writer also, heading serve a great value. Headings keep the article structured. Since we know we are moving from a heading to a heading, there is a logical sequence in the article. The headings control the text below them – so the author is not



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shunting from one idea to another non-sequentially. The headings sequentialise the thought process.

I don't have to say something obvious – as you from one idea to another, change the heading. Some people put headings that are simply dramatic and have no connection with the text below – I think these headings only serve a cosmetic value.

### **Content of the article:**

Assume you are writing an article about a recent regulatory initiative.

First of all, do understand – your article is not the press release of the regulatory authority, which is simply talking, usually in a listless manner, what is the regulatory change that has happened. Your article has to be more than a mere report of the new regulation. So, here is how you add value.

Always make the context of the topic fit into a larger canvas. I hope I am able to explain, as this is a very important point, and lots of experts/authors fail to observe this very simple point. For example, if SEBI has changed a rule about mergers, and I am writing about it, I should first say – SEBI has brought in a new merger regulation that will affect listed companies proposing schemes of amalgamation under sec 391/393 of the Companies Act. This immediately connects your article to a larger theme – schemes u/s 391/393 of the Companies Act. If I am adding another line – saying, listed companies commonly opt for schemes under sections 391/393 for corporate restructuring, mergers and business combinations, that puts the topic into even a larger theme. What is meant is your topic, looked at from a macroscopic view, is like a dot on google maps. Give it a zoomed-out view. Let the viewer see where you are in India, where you are in Maharashtra, before you come to where you are in Mumbai. So, give a zoomed out view before you give a zoomed in view.

Every article on regulatory change must say – what was the regulation, and what the regulation now is. So, in essence, it focuses on the change. The reader is not expected to sit with the old text, and the new text, and make comparison. This is what is expected of the author. Clearly and crisply talk about the scenario before and scenario now. Nothing works as well as a comparative table will. You will yourself get to understand quite a few things when you draw up a comparative table.

When you are talking about a regulatory change, always give your comments about what good, or what bad will the regulatory change do. If you are a subject expert, you may give critical views. If you are not a subject expert, refrain from criticising – because being critical requires enough depth about the subject.



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Finally, always talk about the scope and applicability of the regulatory change. Scope refers to who all are affected by the change. Applicability refers to the applicable date. When does it apply? Is it prospective, retrospective or retroactive, and so on.

Can you add a graph? if your discussion has graphic possibilities, a graph says much more than several pages of text will. For example, if there is a sequence of steps, some steps leading to multiple options, the best thing is to draw a flow chart. If there are several types, which break into several types again, the best thing is to draw a tree diagram or organisation chart. If there is a series of steps, sequential graph can be drawn. If there is a process of evolution you are talking about, think of drawing a time line.

In essence, if there is any possibility of a graph, add it. It does wonders.

### **Concluding para:**

And finally, every article must end with your concluding thoughts. You may give your final macroscopic view once again. You may be optimistic, you may be pessimistic, you may be cautionary, and so on.

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