

NEWSLETTER BASICS

What is a newsletter?

It can be anything from a one-page handwritten flier to a desktop published multiple page document complete with color photos—or variations anywhere in between.

What makes a newsletter different from other publications?

- It is produced regularly.
- It includes topical (“newsy”) information
- Language tends to be less formal than might be true of other publications.

What do newsletters do?

Every newsletter has a reason for being, maybe several. In general, newsletters are designed to:

- Inform
- Educate
- Entertain
- Announce events
- Communicate
- Sell something (a product or an idea)

Extension newsletters may also have secondary purposes, for instance:

- Get people interested or involved in Extension
- Target specific audiences
- Reach lots of people inexpensively
- Reach people who can’t take time to attend a workshop
- Fulfill a plan of work.
- Build or maintain relationships between face-to-face teachings.
- Reach people that we would not otherwise reach.

Where should we start in the development of a newsletter?

Before you decide to do a newsletter, it is important to analyze the idea in terms of your plan of work and WNEP outcomes. The Planning to Teach-Worksheet can help you think through the outcome, audience, and educational delivery options. Is a newsletter the best way to reach this audience with the information, in light of the available resources? If the answer is “Yes”, then proceed.

Then, before you start on the newsletter project (even if you have been doing the letter for many years), you need to be clear on **WHY** you are doing it. Begin with defining your purpose and objectives. Involve everyone with a vested interest in the newsletter. It may include: editor, contributors, support persons, and outside partners who might help fund or distribute the letter. *In the process, you may even find the newsletter is not the best way to do what you want to do. Another form of communication (i.e. meeting, video, telephone) may work better*

How do you establish the purpose and objectives for a newsletter?

The same steps that we would use in any program development process can apply to work with newsletters.

- **Step one: Define your audience.**

Then try to get to know them. *What are they thinking about? Who exactly are they? What might be their priority concerns related to your newsletter? Do they like to read? What might be a general reading level?*

- **Step 2: Create a purpose statement.**

The statement notes your audience and includes some action words that describe what your newsletter will do. (i.e. *“To communicate regularly with WNEP partners and other stakeholders so they are informed on all aspects of our project and find value to continued collaboration with WNEP.”*)

- **Step 3: Write newsletter objectives.**

These are the measurable statements of what will be achieved through the newsletter. They not only provide direction and information to help you measure for success, but also help in generating articles. They answer the question *“What will readers do differently after reading the newsletter?”* (There should be a connection to your plan of work). In addition, the objectives become the base for doing a newsletter evaluation.

What else should be considered in developing the newsletter?

- Remember WIIFT (What’s In It For Them? - Your readers)
- Determine frequency. (Key factors include: your team’s time, your readers’ time, the amount and type of material, money)
- Pick a name that S.M.I.L.E.S (Sells-inspires interest; Memorable-easy to remember; Informative; Lean-to the point; Entertaining-fun and engaging; and Short-as few words as possible)
- Work within a budget. (Plan for production and distribution strategies that help reduce cost)
- Plan for distribution. (Direct mailing is not the only strategy to consider)
WNEP colleagues use many innovative strategies for distributing newsletters they produce, including: www, through partners, at walk-bys, at laundromats and other community sites; grocery stores; home-visits and other one-on-one visits; with meals-on-wheels; through schools; and in connection with mailings by other agencies or businesses, including the newsletters of other Extension staff.
Rather than producing their own newsletter, many WNEP colleagues contribute articles to the newsletters being produced by other agencies, including: Unit on Aging; Schools; Food Pantries; Collaborative partnerships; power companies; SHARE; and many others.
- Include Extension logo and other information required on all Extension publications.

Adapted from: Creating Super Newsletters, University of Maine-Cooperative Extension (1997)

By: Carolyn M. Krueger, UW-Extension Family Living Program Specialist 5-23-01

RESOURCES TO HELP WITH WNEP NEWSLETTERS

PLANNING AND GENERAL INFORMATION:

- ◆ Planning a Teaching Event-Worksheet (for WNEP)
<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/wnep/files/tchwrks.pdf>
- ◆ Civil Rights compliance & documentation: <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/admin/crights/>
- ◆ Creating Super Newsletters: A Training Curriculum for Cooperative Extension Staff, University of Maine-Cooperative Extension (1997)
Loan copy:
Contact Ellen Henert (ellen.henert@ces.uwex.edu) or Gloria Green (gloria.green@ces.uwex.edu)
Ordering information: UMCE State Publications Office
5641 Libby Hal
Orono, Maine
207-581-3185
\$30 without binder, \$35 with binder

CONTENT:

- ◆ Cooperative Extension News Releases & Archives: <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/news/>
- ◆ Link to various food safety web sources (including Barb Ingham's newsletters):
<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/flp/food/safety.cfm>
- ◆ FL webography: <http://steenbock.library.wisc.edu/extension/nutrition.htm>
(includes links to several sources of recipes).
- ◆ Senior Communique.
- ◆ Nutrition for Family Living monthly newsletters (from the FLP Connection):
<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/wnep/specialist/nfl/>
- ◆ USDA Agric Library's Food and Nutrition Information Center: <http://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/>
- ◆ InfoSource scripts: <http://www.uwex.edu/disted/infosrce/family.html>
- ◆ Consumer Information-media packets on multiple topics (including food & money)
<http://www.pueblo.gsa.gov/pressroom.htm>
- ◆ Family economic security news articles & newsletters (University of Minnesota CES)
http://www.extension.umn.edu/listing_source.html?topic=5&subcat=29
- ◆ Weight and Health resources including a fact sheet and press release series on nutrition and activity
<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/flp/demographics/weight.cfm>

WRITING FOR THE AUDIENCE:

- ◆ Nitzke, S., et al.; Writing for Reading--Guide for Developing Print Materials in Nutrition for Low Literacy Adults; UWEX Publication Number: (B3545)
Currently being revised.
- ◆ Brooks, D.A. (1998) Techniques for teaching ED patients with low literacy skills. *Journal of Emergency Nursing* 24(6):601-603.
Article gives scope of problems caused by low literacy, including inability to read written communication, difficulty in understanding verbal directions and video material; several factors that contribute to communication difficulties in individuals with low literacy skills; and suggestions for effective patient teaching.
- ◆ Doak, C.C., Doak, L.G., Friedell, G.H., Meade, C.D. (1998) Improving Comprehension for Cancer Patients with Low Literacy Skills: Strategies for Clinicians. *CA Cancer J Clin* 48(3):151-162.
This paper provides strategies to improve communication between clinicians and patients, particularly patients who are among the 44 million adult Americans with low literacy skills. Included are insights into the nature of the literacy problem and how it affects patient

comprehension of information across the continuum of cancer care. Practical strategies address how to help patients understand medical advice, reduce literacy levels of cancer information, and help patients remember the advice given. A summary of the strategies is included in the appendix for convenience reference.

- ◆ Doak, C.C., L.G. Doak and J.H. Root. (1996) Teaching Patients with Low Literacy Skills. 2nd edition. Philadelphia, Pa. J. D. Lippincott Co.

This paperback book has 171 pages of information on making health and nutrition education more effective for persons with low literacy skills. The information is targeted to clinical situations. Background information on literacy and comprehension theories are included along with tips and developing and evaluating written and audio materials. A chapter on visuals and a chapter on writing and rewriting text are included.

EVALUATION

- ◆ Cooperative Extension Program Development and Evaluation: <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/evaluation/>
- ◆ Penn State Program Evaluation Example: Mail Survey for Newsletter: Nutrition Notes <http://www.extension.psu.edu/evaluation/pdf-others/NutritionNotes.pdf>
- ◆ Search the Journal of Extension web site for “newsletter evaluations” to find a number of relevant articles. <http://www.joe.org>
- ◆ Lutz, Ammerman, Atwood, Campbell, DeVellis, and Rosamond (1999) Innovative Newsletter Interventions Improve Fruit and Vegetable Consumption in Healthy Adults. Journal of the American Dietetic Association. Vol. 99/6.
- ◆ Hosig, Rodibaugh (1998) Parent Newsletters to Strengthen a School-based Community Nutrition Education Program in the Rural Arkansas Delta. Journal of Nutrition Education. 30:340B
- ◆ Struempfer, Marshall (1999) Using Low-Literacy Newsletters to Provide Nutrition Education for Limited-Resource Individuals. Journal of Nutrition Education. 31:60C

LAYOUT, DESIGN & PRODUCTION:

- ◆ Copyright issues: <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/copyright/>
- ◆ Extension logo, font and required statements guidelines: <http://www.uwex.edu/logo/>
- ◆ CES Photo Permission policy: <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/admin/policies/photo.cfm>
- ◆ Guidelines for WNEP Identification on Resource Materials: <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/wnep/teach/idgdlns.cfm>
- ◆ WNEP Graphics Collection: contact Amy Rettammel arettamm@wisc.edu
- ◆ Dover Clip Art Books; web site: <http://store.doverpublications.com/> look under “Art” for “Dover Electronic Clip Art Series” and “Clip Art Series.”
- ◆ Williams, R.; The Non-Designer’s Design Book, Peachpit Press, 1994. \$14.95. ISBN 1-56609-159-4. The Peachpit Press Web Site (<http://www.peachpit.com>) has a number of resources on design that can be viewed on line.

WNEP NEWSLETTER EVALUATION CHECKLIST

FOCUSING YOUR EVALUATION

1. What is the purpose of your evaluation?
 - Improve the effectiveness of your newsletter
 - Determine if it is cost effective
2. What aspects of your newsletter do you wish to evaluate?
 - Content
 - Impact of content on nutrition knowledge
 - Impact of content on nutrition behavior practices
 - Layout and design
 - Is the layout appealing - clean and not too busy?
 - Readability
 - Is the language simple and direct?
 - Do the graphics reinforce the newsletter message?
3. Who is your evaluation for?
 - Your own critique
 - County Board Members
 - Extension Administrators

PLANNING YOUR STRATEGY

1. What information is already available to you?
2. What resources are available to assist you?

COLLECTING DATA

1. What questions will help you to learn what you want to find out?
2. What methods make the most sense in light of the questions you want answered?
 - Personal critique
 - Written survey
 - Telephone survey
 - Interviews
 - Focus groups
3. Have someone review your questions for 'face validity' (i.e., make sure that the someone else understands your question is the same way that you do and in the way that you intended).

ANALYZING DATA AND INTERPRET

1. How will your data be organized and summarized?
2. Begin to look for trends in the data?
3. How will you interpret the data? Discuss with colleagues, compare to other professional judgements, existing research, your own opinions.
4. Strategize about what you want to do differently as a result of what you discovered. Be as specific as possible.

COMMUNICATING TO OTHERS

1. How are you going to present your results? (i.e., written report, videotape, media release, pictures, etc.)
2. How can you present your findings to those who participated in your evaluation?