

Writer's Guidelines & Section Descriptions

EDITORIAL CONTENT *SEA KAYAKER*

NOTE: Articles that have appeared verbatim on any website will not be accepted. Stories that have been posted in another form online are considered previously published and will be paid at a lower rate than unpublished stories (to be determined by the editor based on overlapping content and exposure). We prefer contributions from experienced kayakers with some writing experience. We review articles and outlines on speculation, and you may contact our editorial department for feedback before you begin writing.

Submission Requirements

Contributions may be submitted via email with text pasted into the body of the email message or as an attachment using one of the following formats: Microsoft Word (.doc), rich-text (.rtf) or plain text (.txt). Please include complete contact info (name, address, phone number, alternate email address).

Submissions may also be sent via regular mail to our office on CD (previously listed file formats are acceptable). Clearly label all materials with your name, address, phone number and email address (if applicable).

FEATURES

We recommend submitting an outline of your proposed feature along with a short writing sample from the story (approx. 300-500 words) to give us an idea of your writing style, ability and story direction (see our Writer's Tips for additional suggestions).

Destination Articles

Destination articles provide our readers with information about interesting places to paddle. They are usually based in North America, as the majority of our readership resides in this area. The area described should be large enough to provide several paddling itineraries and numerous overnight options.

If you'd like to write a Destination piece, you should have long-standing experience with the area: numerous trips and experience throughout the location's paddling season. One or two trips to an area will not provide enough personal knowledge of the place.

Destination authors are required to provide information about launch sites, camping/overnight options, permits and other requirements for the area, along with tips on weather and water conditions to advise paddlers on paddling safely. Destination articles include a map of the area (original provided by the author) and a short "Trip Planner" sidebar listing contact information for outfitters and other resources that our readers would find useful. Word count for Destination articles should be in the range of 2,500-3,000 words. See our Photography Guidelines for information about Destination photography.

Journey Articles

These are narratives about kayaking trips that take place over a minimum of 4 or 5 days. (Articles about trips organized by a 3rd-party touring company pose some special challenges and should be discussed with the editorial department.) The focus and length of Journey articles vary, but you'll need to do more than recount your trip: You must create an experience for the reader.

To give a Journey continuity and a sense of progress, it helps to develop a theme or relate a personal goal or expectation specific to the trip. Whether your experience was a harrowing adventure, a trip to an exotic or unique setting, or a journey during which you experienced some transformation or learned something valuable, a theme will help drive your story.

Journey stories usually range from 2,500 to 4,000 words. See Photography Guidelines for information about Journey images.

Other Features

Other acceptable formats include short-format Journey stories (if the trip's duration is too short for a regular Journey), essays, race stories, event coverage (from a non-commercial standpoint), history articles and more. This category is flexible. Contact SK's editorial staff for feedback.

DEPARTMENTS

We recommend that all Department ideas are approved by the editor before articles are written. Regular Departments include:

- **Daytrippers**—These are "mini-Destinations" that provide information about one-day paddling itineraries in urban, densely populated, or frequently visited areas. Authors must be well-versed in the area and its full paddling season. Contact SK's editorial staff for complete guidelines.
- **Technique**—Technique articles cover a wide range of topics: paddle strokes and braces, rolling, navigation, group dynamics, rescues, etc. We prefer authors to be experienced paddlers or instructors. Articles should include: a brief intro explaining the technique's usefulness and, if relevant, history; instructions in an appropriate order; precautions about any risks; and images, usually photos, illustrating each step and demonstrating the technique in a "realistic" setting. Length varies from 500 words for a single technique to 3,000 words for a range of techniques.
- **Do-It-Yourself**—D-I-Y articles are complete sets of instructions for projects useful to kayakers. Supplied instructions must be clear and complete, and materials must be available from independent sources. Projects must be within an average skill range and require tools that readers are likely to own or can easily afford to purchase. We require photos of the finished project as well as photos or drawings of the parts and critical phases of the work in progress. A list of materials, sources and costs should be supplied. D-I-Y article lengths vary in relation to the complexity of the project.
- **Off the Water**—Short tips (200 words or less) for the workshop or on shore that enhance kayaking-related experiences or solve problems typically encountered while camping or maintaining kayaking equipment.
- **Gear Reviews**—Equipment reviews are usually assigned articles. Reviewers must be free of any relationship with the manufacturer that would compromise an objective review or suggest a conflict of interest. Authors must have experience or credentials to make a thorough and fair evaluation of the gear.
- **Safety**—Safety articles primarily cover kayaking accidents. Their main purpose is education: to enable readers to learn from and avoid the misfortunes of others. Safety articles have two sections: a description of the incident, and an analysis underscoring the significant factors and discussing how to better handle similar situations. We encourage readers to inform us about accidents they've heard of or been involved in, and we make every effort to be sensitive to the needs of those involved.
- **Paddler Profiles**—These are short biographical sketches (approx. 850-1,250 words) about paddlers, both well-known and unknown, who have significantly changed or been changed by sea kayaking. Profiles are usually assigned articles; suggestions about possible profile subjects are gladly accepted.

Submitting Content to *Sea Kayaker*

Content submitted should be previously unpublished unless special permission is given from *Sea Kayaker's* editor. For examples of acceptable writing style, see our current issue, available through many bookstores and newsstands, and review our "Top 10 Tips for Writers." To obtain a current or back issue, visit our website at www.seakayakermag.com or phone 206-789-9536

Please contact *Sea Kayaker's* editorial department with questions or for more information at 206-789-1326. Materials can be emailed to editorial@seakayakermag.com or sent via USPS to: *Sea Kayaker* Editorial Dept.; P.O. Box 17029; Seattle, WA, 98127 (if a physical address is needed, send to: 6012 Seaview Ave. NW; Seattle, WA 98107).

Sea Kayaker magazine is not responsible for any unsolicited materials received. To ensure return of your materials, enclose self-addressed packaging materials with correct postage.

1. Appeal to the senses.

During your paddling experience, the world around you came to you through your eyes and ears. To put the reader in that same place, focus the writing on the same sensory information. For example, "The wind was blowing very hard," doesn't describe the scene, it only analyzes it. Write vividly, describing what you saw in enough detail for the reader to picture the same image: "The waves crested in white streaks of foam, and the spray coming over the bow stung my skin and eyes. I shouted to John, who was no more than a boat length ahead of me, but he never even turned his head." The readers can feel that they are a part of the scene and will come to the same conclusion: It's blowing hard.

2. Avoid unnecessary language.

Avoid vague descriptors: Words like "glorious," "incredible," "awesome" and "magnificent" have no real content. What is an enormous wave? Is it as big as a boxcar? A split-level house? What color is the "colorful" fish?

Avoid words you wouldn't use in conversation: An "ursine interloper" is still just a bear that wandered into your camp. If you interrupt the flow of the story to send a reader to the dictionary, the word should be worth the trip.

Avoid pathetic fallacy/anthropomorphism: The sea may seem cruel, but it's just a bunch of waves, none of them malicious. In describing animal behavior, focus on what you see and hear, and steer clear of what you think the animal is thinking or feeling.

3. Write economically and selectively.

William Faulkner said, "Writing consists of killing your little darlings." In other words, be your own editor, and be ruthless. The writing should not draw undue attention to the writer. We want articles filled with great description, yet short enough to be read in one sitting. Eliminate extraneous words and passages.

4. Develop a theme.

It helps to develop a theme or relate a personal goal or expectation specific to your paddling experience. Whether your story was a harrowing adventure, a trip to an exotic or unique setting, or a journey during which you experienced some transformation or learned something valuable, a theme will help drive your story.

5. Cover the important stuff.

Focus on the highlights and the most significant moments of your story. We can include section breaks in the article to signify gaps in time. If it's important to describe regular routines, pick a specific representative instance. Describe events as they unfold, not as you are looking back on them.

6. Keep to the point.

Tangents must take readers somewhere worth going. If you need to take a detour to bring some interesting information to readers, make sure you bring them back to the story. Don't lead them down a dead end, only to pick up the narrative again where you left off.

7. Maintain flow.

Read your story aloud. Better yet, have someone read it aloud to you. You'll get winded if your sentences are consistently too long and hyperventilate if they're too short. Vary the length and structure of sentences as the content dictates to keep the pace of the story lively.

8. Use the appropriate tense.

Although there are exceptions, the past tense is the best choice for most narrative stories. Don't confuse readers by switching back and forth between present and past tense.

9. Create an interesting chronology.

Nothing puts readers to sleep faster than a story that starts at Day One of a trip and trudges on through Day Two, Day Three, etc. If your story is a harrowing adventure, you may want to start with the most harrowing moment, whether it's in the middle or at the end of your trip, then take the reader back through the events leading up to that point. If your story is more reflective, lead off with your central theme and follow it through to the end.

10. Be clear.

Put yourself in the reader's seat. Be aware that others will not be as familiar with your subject as you are, and write accordingly. Develop a sense of continuity throughout. We (editors and readers) don't want to work too hard at deciphering your meaning.