WHAT MAKES A GOOD CHAPTER NEWSLETTER?

Basics

Write shorter sentences.
Break up long sentences. People have been known to fall asleep in the middle of long sentences. Don't let that happen to your readers. If necessary, change long, complicated sentences connected with semicolons to two sentences.

Use short words instead of long words.
Instead of accomplish or achieve, do; instead of affirmative, yes; instead of utilize, use; instead of locate, find; instead of obtain, get; instead of presently, now; instead of numerous, many (this list goes on and on).

Use contrasting typefaces for headings.

Use a typeface that contrasts with the body text of your document to make the document more visually interesting. Headings break up the page into smaller sections and make it easier to read. Leave more space above the heading than below it to help set it off from the surrounding text.

Use a minimum number of type sizes.

Change type sizes for a reason. Use different type sizes and weights to indicate the different page elements such as captions, headings, and pull quotes. Use type size to indicate the hierarchy of importance. Be consistent in your use of typefaces and sizes to keep readers from being confused.

Use the size and placement of graphics appropriately.
Fit a graphic into the layout. If you break the layout do it intentionally for emphasis. For example, cop photos so that they focus on the important element in the photo.

Use white space in your design.

Use white space as a part of your design. Negative visual space is as important as positive. Use a consistent amount of white space at the edge of the page to help the reader focus on the important text. Use white space around headings to help make them stand out. Squint at the design to see the contrasting elements. If the whole thing looks gray, you have not used white space to your advantage.

Use an appropriate typeface.

Use a typeface that is right for the document you are creating. Think about how the document will be used and what is most important. For example, wedding invitations use different fonts than billboards. If elegance is most important, you might choose script display font, whereas if **readability** is most important you might choose a bold san-serif font. Think about where, why and how the document will be used.

Use common sense.

If it looks strange, don't do it. Everyone sees examples of design every day. You know what looks good and what doesn't. For example, lots of "award-winning" *design* is unreadable. The primary purpose of your document is to communicate an idea. If you find your document pleasing to look at, others probably will too. If no one can read the document, your idea is lost and your design has failed.

Make your newsletter accessible.

Make your newsletter something people want to read. Put yourself in your reader's shoes. What are they interested in? What do they want to read about? Put the most interesting and preferably short articles on the front. Use a minimum of jump lines (i.e., "continued on page xx"). People hate flipping through pages to find the end of an article. Also, as you get more experienced, use elements like sidebars and pull quotes to make articles more accessible.

Use graphic design to lead readers to the most important elements first.

Use design elements such as headings, subheads, and drop caps to emphasize parts of the page. Readers use these visual cues to help them navigate the newsletter. Also try using icons or graphic elements to indicate departments or repeating elements.

Keep your visual elements and editorial consistent.

For consistency, use the same terms throughout the document. Continuity is comforting, so make sure the newsletter editorial and design is consistent from one article to the next. Don't overdo it.

Good design is often the design you don't notice.

Remember that the reason a newsletter exists is to be read, so don't overdo it and include every font, icon, and graphic device you find. Make your newsletter **reader-friendly**. The design should enhance the material you are presenting, not detract from it. You can have the best content in the world, but if it's impossible to read, people won't. No one wants to work to read something, so make sure you don't make any page difficult to decipher. Any page that isn't readable won't be read.

Newsletters can be extremely simple, extremely complex, or anyplace in between. Get answers to these questions before you start. What will the newsletter be?

- Short or long?
- Color or black and white?
- Printed by a printer or run from your own printer?