

HOW-TO GUIDE

CHAPTER NEWSLETTERS

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Creating a chapter newsletter can be a fun but difficult task. It takes time for a quality publication to come together so it is important to be organized. Identify what your vision is for the newsletter and follow the steps below to get started.

Build Your Newsletter Team

Identify members who have an interest in journalism, writing and communications. This group will be directly responsible for creating and editing the newsletter. Consider developing leadership roles for your chapter:

- Editor-in-Chief: Assigns duties, sets deadlines and edits all work
- Associate Editors: Helps the Editor-in-Chief to compile articles, photos and other content. Also helps to edit the newsletter.
- Writers/Photographers: Provides articles and other content.

Sample position descriptions with duties can be found in the chapter handbook at ASDAnet.org/leadership-toolbox.

Your newsletter team should agree to meet deadlines, attend brainstorming meetings and carry out other duties assigned by the Editor-in-Chief.

Questions to ask your team before you get started:

- How frequently will you publish your newsletter?
- How long will each issue be?
- How much time will it take to complete an issue?
- Will it be published online or printed?

Design Your Newsletter

The first task should be to decide on a name. Many schools incorporate dental puns into their newsletter titles. Some examples are “The Diastema,” “The Probe,” “The Houston Fill” and the “Tennesseealant.” Be sure to incorporate ASDA in the masthead. [Click here for ASDA logo files and guidelines](#).

The layout of a newsletter should be consistent from issue to issue. Try using the same fonts, colors and content structure in each issue. This will build a familiarity with your

readers. You can use your layout to establish reoccurring content themes and templates. There are many programs available to help you start the process. Newsletters can be made from scratch or started from pre-designed templates using:

- Microsoft Word
- Microsoft Publisher
- Apple Pages
- Adobe InDesign
- QuarkXpress

You can also hire someone to help design a layout. Check out Craigslist.com, freelance sites (e.g. fiverr.com), or the marketing/communications department of a local undergraduate university.

Don't forget photos! Ask members to help take photos or assign someone as photographer. Pictures should fit the content around them. Consider investing in a high quality camera. You can also put a small gallery in your newsletter and push readers to your social media sites to see the rest. Remember that the copyright of a photo belongs to the person who took it. Make sure you always have permission from the photographer to publish all photos. Never assume that photos saved from the Internet are free of copyright restrictions. When in doubt, leave it out.

Create a Content Plan

Your content plan not only outlines the structure of each issue, but it ensures continuity from issue to issue. By planning content in advance, you can look at the big picture and be strategic about your newsletter content. It's smart to create departments or features that are recurring from issue-to-issue. This will give your readers something to look forward to and expect from your newsletter.

Each issue should include contact information for your local ASDA officers, National ASDA EC and your chapter website, Facebook page, Twitter feed, etc. You may also want to include details on how to write for your newsletter.

Some ideas for recurring departments:

- Letter from the President
- Letter from the Editor
- Events:
 - Upcoming dates for national ASDA or chapter events, local dental events through your state association or other groups
 - Event recaps
- Trends in Dentistry
 - Technology
 - Advocacy & dental issues (like licensure and midlevel providers)
 - Research

- National ASDA article re-prints
 - If you use a published ASDA article, you must include the statement “This article was originally published in the ____ (name of ASDA publication, e.g.: “ASDA Mouth”), on ____ (Date), by ____ (Name of author).” If you have any questions about using an ASDA article please contact Kim Kelly, publications manager, at Kim@ASDAnet.org.
- Do not limit yourself to what has been listed here. A newsletter is a great source of information and you and your fellow officers should be creative in the type of content you include.

Content Dos and Don'ts

- Do keep your content current.
- Do ask different people to write. You never know who has great ideas for articles until you ask!
- Do remain neutral in your reporting. The article should act as a source of information and will reflect the ideas of your school and your ASDA team. Editorial content should be clearly labeled as opinion and focus on facts that support that opinion.
- Do not plagiarize. Do not copy articles or pictures without written permission from the copyright owner. Remember to add quotations around direct quotes.

Advertisements

Many vendors like to advertise in school newsletters. You can work with your team to decide the ad size (¼ page, ½ page or full page). Establish pricing and also remember to set a term for how long the advertisement will run (ex: only one issue, six months, one year).

Newsletter Distribution

Share your newsletter with classmates, professors and colleagues. Here are some ideas for distribution:

- E-mail a PDF
- Post a link to the e-version to your chapter or dental school website and your chapter's Facebook, Twitter or blog
 - Use sites like Issuu or Scribd to create a digital version for easy sharing.
- Pass out hard copies at your next ASDA meeting, after a lecture or during a lunch & learn
- Print copies and have them available at common areas around the school

10 Tips from Past Gold Crown Award Winners

- 1. Get organized early**

Have an idea of when you would like to distribute your newsletter, and make an outline several months beforehand with ideas for articles. This allows you to start assigning authors to topics early and prevents you from scrambling in the end. *Alexandra M. Lindauer, Colorado '17*
- 2. Assemble a team**

Believe it or not, writing often happens best when it's the work of many people putting their thoughts together. Create a board of people to chase down articles edit and design. When every person has a very specific duty, it makes the job less stressful, and the outcome much more seamless. *Alexandra M. Lindauer, Colorado '17*
- 3. Recognize strengths and split up the work load.**

No one should be doing this alone. People may be great editors, but use Comic Sans for everything they do. Let the editors edit, the designers design and identify a leader who can see the big picture. A newsletter, when delegated properly, will always add up to be greater than the sum of its parts. *Stephen Rogers, Buffalo '18*
- 4. Don't be afraid to delegate**

Just because people haven't offered to write anything doesn't mean they're not interested. Not everyone was born a writer, and people may be self-conscious and afraid of what people might think. Approach people individually and ask them to write. Stress a *rough* draft and tell them you'll be there for guidance every step of the way. *Alexandra M. Lindauer, Colorado '17*
- 5. Communicate clearly**

Students often want to contribute, but don't know how. Give potential contributors topics to choose, a guideline for how long articles should be, and a clear deadline that allows proper editing and formatting. *Will Burnard, Ohio '15*
- 6. Content**

Generally students are drawn to specific themes, so create a theme for the issue. But make the articles within diverse and cover a wide variety of perspectives within that theme. *Mabroor Khan, Arizona '19*
- 7. Use the authorship to connect to the different classes**

Finding authors from all four classes is helpful in promoting all groups at your school to read the issue. When people hear that someone they know published an article, they will open the newsletter and come across the other articles and give them a read. *Erik Klintmalm, Arizona '18*
- 8. Get faculty involved**

Rather than just interviewing a faculty member, have them work with a student to contribute a joint article. You can ask them for their input on a certain article in the newsletter. Oftentimes faculty members will contribute a great, fresh

perspective on an aspect of the newsletter that had not been previously considered. It is very beneficial to learn from their experience. *Erik Balinghasay, Los Angeles '16 and Jeremy Chau, Los Angeles '16*

9. Build a style guide

(ASDA's is a good place to start: <http://www.asdanet.org/styleguide/>). Standardize logos, colors and fonts before you do anything else. These components of your publication must remain consistent. Otherwise you run the risk of creating a Pinterest board where your newsletter should be. *Stephen Rogers, Buffalo '18*

10. Be your own "hype man"

Whenever you get the chance and it's appropriate, engage your audience and get them excited about the upcoming issue. This is especially important for first years that don't know what the newsletter is about. Make announcements before lectures, use social media and hand-deliver the newsletters. This gets everyone excited and interested, and ultimately, helps attract new writers to contribute. *Erik Balinghasay, Los Angeles '16 and Jeremy Chau, Los Angeles '16*

Newsletter Inspiration

National ASDA awards chapters for outstanding publications. The following chapters have won Gold Crown Awards for their newsletters. [Click here to view winning applications and newsletters.](#)

- Best Newsletter in Competition
 - 2016: Los Angeles
 - 2015: Los Angeles
 - 2014: Los Angeles
 - 2013: San Francisco
- Most Improved Newsletter
 - 2016: Buffalo
 - 2015: Columbia
 - 2014: Ohio
 - 2013: Oklahoma
- Quality of Newsletter Information
 - 2016: Arizona
 - 2015: Marquette
 - 2014: Boston
 - 2013: Virginia
- Newsletter Design and Layout
 - 2016: Colorado
 - 2015: Colorado
 - 2014: Oklahoma
 - 2013: Tennessee

Gold Crown Award applications are due in January each year. Details can be found online at ASDAnet.org/awards/gc. We encourage all chapters to apply.