

FAMILY READINESS GROUP (FRG) NEWSLETTER GUIDE

Writing for the Reader with Style and Purpose

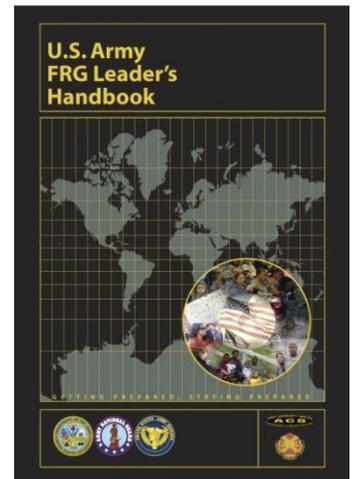
FRG newsletter chairs are advocates of "what's right" about serving in the military. It's our personal responsibility to celebrate and share all of the positive things happening around us. We serve to remind service members and their families why they choose to serve and why they continue to serve.

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U.S. Army FRG Newsletter Chair Responsibilities

The information in this section, U.S. Army FRG Newsletter Chair Responsibilities, was extracted from the [U.S. Army Family Readiness Group \(FRG\) Leader's Handbook](#) which is linked on the Army OneSource website under [Operation READY](#). Operation READY provides a myriad of training and informational resources developed from lessons learned after the Persian Gulf War. Since then, the materials were updated during the Operations of Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom. All trainings and informational resources linked on the Army OneSource page are intended for your benefit. As the FRG newsletter chair, you are encouraged to be familiar with these materials so you know where to access information as needed for yourself or to share with others.



GUIDELINES

The FRG newsletter is to relay information from the commander, highlight military and community resources, advertise upcoming FRG events, address issues of concern, and build camaraderie. Given that FRG newsletters relay information from the command, they are done under the direction of, and must be approved by, the company commander (or during deployment, the rear detachment commander (RDC)). The company commander decides how frequently the newsletter will be published. Further, according to [AR 608-1, Appendix J](#) (page 55), the FRG newsletter must be conducted according to the company's Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) on the preparation, printing, approval, and distribution of FRG newsletters.¹ (figure 1)

NEWSLETTER PREPARATION

While the company's SOP will address preparation of the FRG newsletter, here are some important things to know. If your company commander does not have an FRG Newsletter SOP, let them know they can get an [FRG Newsletter SOP](#) from the Operation READY webpage on Army OneSource. The company commander (or RDC) determines what official information can be included and they will provide this information. Some official information, such as training or deployment schedules though of interest to families may be classified; thus, the company commander (or RDC) will not allow this information to be included. When mailing the newsletter, the FRG will need to state whether the newsletter contains official, unofficial, or both types of information (figure 2). For this reason, figure 2 (guidelines for FRG newsletter preparation) is provided so FRG volunteers working on the FRG newsletter can be advised accordingly.¹

OFFICIAL APPROVAL OF NEWSLETTER

Each unit should have a Standard Operational Procedures (SOP) explaining how they want FRG newsletters conducted. The SOP should include details on the preparation, printing, approval, and distribution of FRG newsletters (figure 1). The company commander reviews official mail for mission-related purposes and approves newsletters before distribution to unit families.²

DISTRIBUTING NEWSLETTERS

FRG newsletter may be distributed by mail using the Army or installation Post Office, email, and/or posted on the company's page on the battalion vFRG web site. For those families who do not have access to a computer or internet connection, mailing the newsletter is essential. Each FRG has an informal fund that can be used to buy stamps to mail newsletters if needed.³



Printing Newsletters

Appropriated funds (APF) are allocated for FRG's to print their newsletters in a designed government facility. Government paper and printing supplies are authorized for use to publish FRG newsletters that relay information from command. Contact your designed Family Readiness Support Assistant (FRSA) to find out where you can print your newsletter.³

Mailing Newsletters

Army postal regulations limit how much unofficial information may be included in an FRG newsletter. As long as the inclusion of unofficial information does not increase the cost to the government in printing and mailing the FRG newsletter, does not exceed 20 percent of the printed space used for the official information (figure 2), and does not include personal wanted/for sale advertisements, some unofficial information may be included in an official FRG newsletter. The FRG newsletter must state whether it contains only official or both official and unofficial types of information. **If the newsletter contains both types of information, it should include the following statement: "The inclusion of some unofficial information in this FRG newsletter has not increased the costs to the Government, in accordance with DoD 4525.8-M, Official Mail Management Manual."** If the inclusion of unofficial information in the FRG newsletter has increased the costs to the government, the FRG must use the FRG's informal fund to cover the expense.³

Figure 1

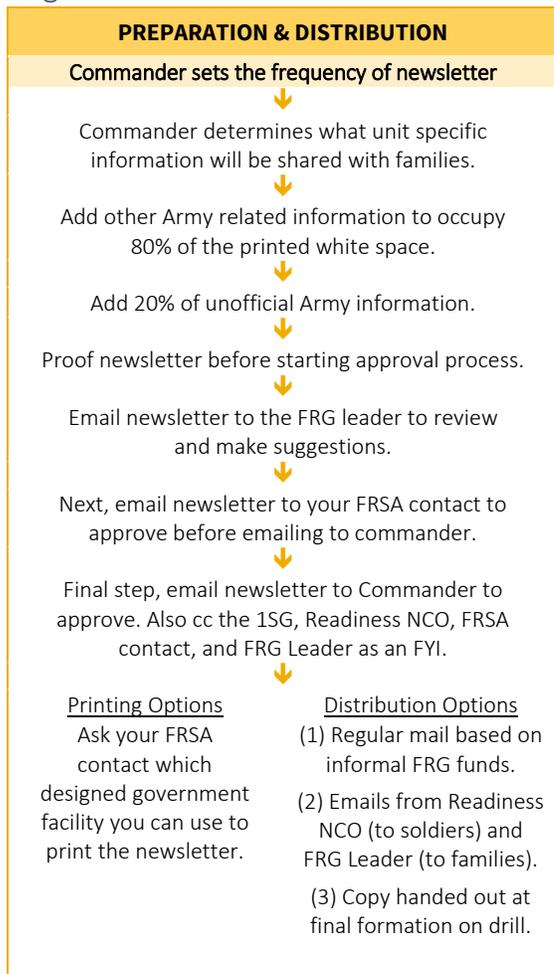


Figure 2

ARMY REGULATIONS & GUIDELINES FOR FRG NEWSLETTER PREPARATION	
Official Information	Unofficial Information
Definition: Relates to command and mission essential information that the commander believes families should have to be better informed. Official information relates to unit mission and readiness.	Definition: Non-mission related information.
Printed Space: 80% Must have 80% or more of the printed white space occupied with official information that is unit related (approved by company commander) or Army related.	Printed Space: 20% Do not exceed 20% of the printed white space in the newsletter with unofficial information.
Examples:	Examples:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Training schedule information* – Upcoming deployments or drill dates* – Unit point of contacts* – Upcoming garrison events for families – New Army programs or benefits for families – Educational information (e.g., information on military community websites, how to budget, where to find medical care or legal assistance, how to prepare for emergencies) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Personal information (e.g., phone numbers, birthdays, life events) – Accomplishments by Soldiers or Family members – FRG member position changes, promotions, and awards – FRG fundraisers – Recipes
* <i>Commander sets if this information is shared.</i>	
Information that CANNOT be included in an FRG newsletter:	
(1) Any funds such as Appropriated Funds (APF), Nonappropriated Funds (NAF) or the FRG informal fund.	
(2) Financial reports (FRG fund reports, fundraising reports, etc.).	
(3) Advertising of businesses (personal wanted items or advertisements) or casualty notification.	

Source: [U.S. Army FRG Leader's Handbook](#) (2010)

Source: [U.S. Army Family Readiness Group Leader's Handbook](#) (2010), page 39



WHY DOES THE ARMY WANT AN FRG NEWSLETTER?

The most important role of the FRG is to help service members and their families become mission ready and self-sufficient. The Army places a high value on both military and personal preparedness.⁴ The FRG newsletter is an essential part of instilling personal preparedness through communication that can assist everyone from the newest member to the oldest. Since the goal of a FRG is to support the military mission through provision of support, outreach, and informing family members prior to and during periods of family separations. This includes the publication and distribution of FRG newsletters.⁵

The FRG newsletter represents one aspect of the FRG outreach program and communication system.⁶ FRG newsletters not only distribute information but help families within the unit and community stay connected. A good newsletter can be a lifeline for service member and their families.

The most important advantage of a unit newsletter is how it can affect the morale of service members and their families. A well written and designed newsletter, especially during long deployments, can bring welcome news about the FRG and give families and service members a good feeling about themselves and serving in the Army National Guard.

The overarching goal of an FRG newsletter is to:

- Relay information from to command to families.
- Celebrate "What's Right" about being part of the Army National Guard.
- Improve morale among service members and their families.
- Build camaraderie among FRG members and promote strong family units.
- Encourage FRG participation and a diverse membership.
- Highlight Army family programs and community resources.
- Promote family readiness (financial, medical, legal, insurance, household, family, etc.).
- Promote the five dimensions of strength (physical, emotional, social, spiritual, and family).

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- Financial reports (FRG fund reports, fundraising reports, etc.).
- Advertising of businesses (personal wanted items or advertisements) or casualty notification.

ARMY DEFINITION FOR THE FRG NEWSLETTER CHAIR

The FRG newsletter chair coordinates the preparation, publishing, and distribution of the FRG newsletter. The FRG newsletter chair reports to the company commander or RDC and FRG leader. The FRG newsletter chair should keep the 1SG and the readiness NCO informed of newsletter details. The FRG newsletter chair also works closely with all other appointed FRG statutory volunteers to ensure FRG efforts are shared with families. In some cases, the newsletter may be handled at the battalion level.⁷





ARMY OPERATIONS SECURITY OR "OPSEC" IS A PRIORITY!

OPSEC is keeping potential adversaries from discovering critical Department of Defense information. As the name suggests, it protects U.S. operations — planned, in progress and those completed. Success depends on secrecy and surprise, so the military can accomplish the mission more quickly and with less risk. Enemies of freedom want this information, and they are not just after the service member to get it. They want our military families.

Anyone connected to the military is vulnerable so we must be mindful of what we share openly through the newsletter, social media and other forms of communication. Our world is extremely transparent and information might be shared unknowingly. Below are some general guidelines to keep our service members and their families safe.

Examples of critical information that must be kept secure:

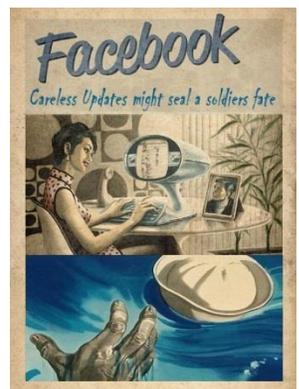
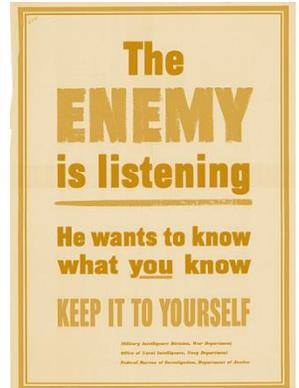
- Details on locations, times and dates of unit operations or events.
- Detailed information about the mission of assigned units.
- Personnel transactions that occur in large numbers (e.g. financial transactions, legal details, service details, etc.).
- Disclosing trends in unit morale or personnel problems.
- Disclosing security procedures.

OPSEC best practices for sharing military information:

- Share pride and support for service, units, specialties and service members. Never share specifics with anyone you don't trust, outside of the newsletter, your vFRG or private Facebook groups.
- Share generalizations about service or duty. Never share specifics with anyone you don't trust, outside of the newsletter, your vFRG or private Facebook groups.
- Share any information already in the public domain.
- Never disclose information from or share any internal Army documents.
- Never share the location of a unit or the unit's mission or unit gossip.

OPSEC best practices for sharing personal information:

- Never share information you don't want public.
- Be cautious with who you connect with on the internet and only connect with people you know personally.
- Remove geotags from photos taken with smartphones in the camera settings options. <http://goo.gl/DmJog>
- Set social media security options to share with "friends only" and disable location sharing.
- Never share sensitive information about military related schedules or events.
- Make family and friends aware of the military's social media guidelines to keep Soldiers and families safe.



Your Medal of Honor is Ethos

This is Sparta and it's time to seize your glory! Establishing your ethos or credibility with your audience is vital to maintaining readership. As you pull stories from various sources, ensure the story passes the CRAAP test to build your credibility. Overtime you will demonstrate to your readers you have the three G's.

The three G's are:

- **Good Sense:** Demonstrated competence and expertise.
- **Good Moral Character:** Demonstrated integrity and trustworthiness.
- **Good Will:** Established common ground and that you have the best interests of the audience at heart.

Your ethos or credibility will significantly influence your audience in the short-term and long-term. Identifying quality sources and doing your homework will build your credibility and preserve your ethos with your audience. Without credibility, it is much harder to influence your audience or maintain a readership. Specifically, establishing and maintaining your ethos is even more relevant in a military environment.

CRAAP Test ~ At-A-Glance

Is it **C**urrent?

When was it published? Are their references current? Is currency relevant to my audience?

Is it **R**elevant?

Does the information relate to the topic? What audience is it written for? Is it at an appropriate level for my audience?

Is it **A**uthoritative?

Who is the author/organization? Are they qualified? Is it edited or peer-reviewed? If a website, does the URL tell you anything (.mil or .gov)?

Is it **A**ccurate?

Where does the information come from? Are there references? Are there errors, broken sentences, etc.?

What is its **P**urpose?

What's the purpose of the information? Advertising? Scholarly work? Opinion based? Is there bias?

See [Addendum 1](#) to get the complete CRAAP test.

Crush Writers Block and Barriers

SQUASH THE PESKY THING CALLED WRITERS ANXIETY

Every writer has a fear of writing and they even experience writers block. Writers may even believe their creativity has been tapped out and as a result, they often want to throw in the towel. What's more, every writer struggles to get the first few words on the page.

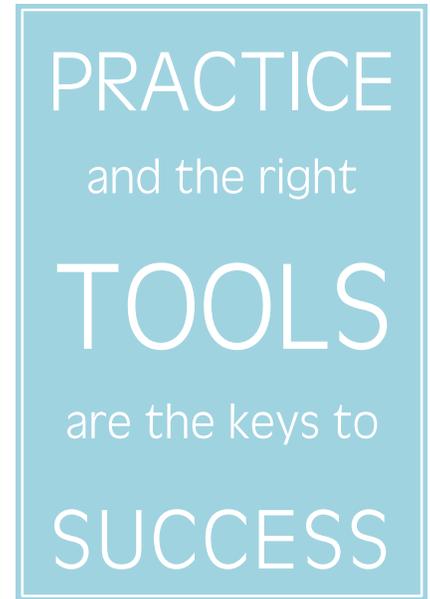
Some of the common causes of writer's anxiety are:

- **Fear:** Writers struggle with their fear of putting their ideas (and themselves) out there for everyone to see and critique. Fear of making grammatical errors, leaving words out or misspellings. These fears are the major reasons many writers never become writers and it's understandable.
- **Timing:** You may feel it's simply not the right time to write. You may feel your ideas need to stew a little longer before writing them down.
- **Perfectionism:** You may feel a desire to have everything just right before striking one key on your keyboard. You may even feel you need to get the story perfect in your head to write the story, so you never begin.

Even the best writers struggle with these barriers and each victory to overcome these barriers looked different. Writing is an art, not a science, and should be approached as such. There's no exact formula to writing. Writing is very personal and emotional. The only way to become a writer is to practice, use the right tools and in time you'll find your writing style and voice.

Solutions to set you up for success:

- Bookmark Grammarly to help you identify and fix grammar mistakes. www.grammarly.com
- Bookmark HemingwayApp to highlight complex sentences and fix writing errors. www.hemingwayapp.com
- Bookmark a thesaurus to always find the perfect word. www.thesaurus.com
- Bookmark a dictionary to avoid misspellings. www.dictionary.reference.com
- Always, always, always use the built in spellcheck when finalizing your newsletter.
- Always proofread your newsletter one to three times before finalizing your newsletter. You may even want to enlist a trusted friend to be your editor.
- Eliminate distractions. Change your environment. Clean your workspace.
- Create a routine, take mental breaks and perhaps listen to music.
- Just type whatever comes to mind. Do not correct as you type. Correct after you're done typing your thought.
- Jot ideas down or brainstorm ideas into bullet points.
- Call a friend or another FRG newsletter chair to brainstorm ideas.
- Conduct a Google search to find inspiration. Also conduct research to get informed and organized.
- Read inspiring quotes to get you motivated.
- Be open, experiment and learn it is ok to make mistakes. ☺
- Practice, practice, practice. Don't give up! Have fun!



Once you start experimenting with your writing style and voice you will build confidence and find a style and techniques that works for you.

Source for this section: www.writerslife.org⁸

CONFIDENCE IS BUILT UPON KNOW-HOW AND AN AWESOME TOOLKIT

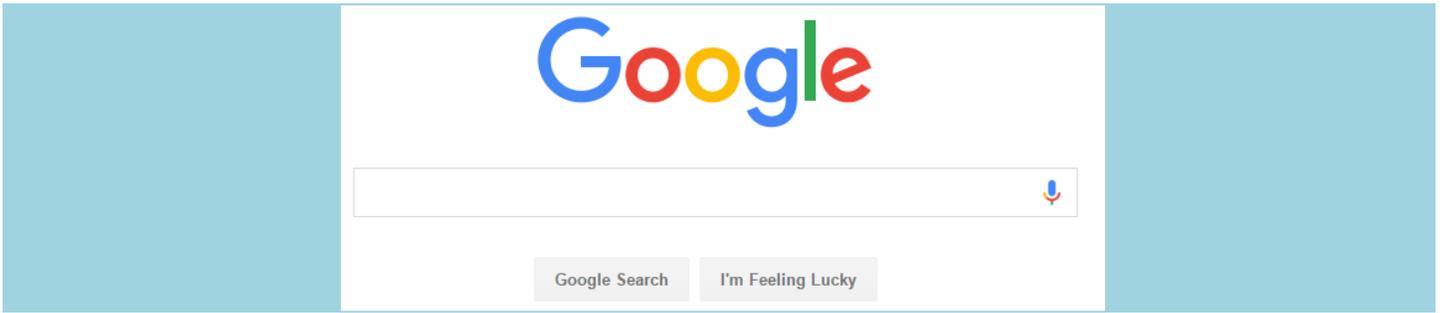
Research Builds Confidence and Knowledge

Pre-planning and doing research before writing your story is always a smart idea. Conducting research and reading additional materials makes you an informed writer. This also helps you write with confidence. After doing your homework, getting the idea out of your head and onto the screen is easier.

When conducting internet research, utilize the CRAAP test, the "5 W's" of journalism and ask yourself "how" so you can continue to build your credibility.

Keep in mind, no matter how much research you conduct or how detailed you brainstorm an idea; you will ALWAYS make revisions to your story. Quite possibly several revisions before you are satisfied with your final story. So just go with it and enjoy the experience!





Use Google Like a Techy

You may use Google every day and still may not know its features. Here are a few tips to retrieve better search results:

- Use quotes to search for an exact phrase. [Example: "family readiness"](#)



- Use the minus sign to eliminate results containing certain words. [Example: family readiness –checklist](#)



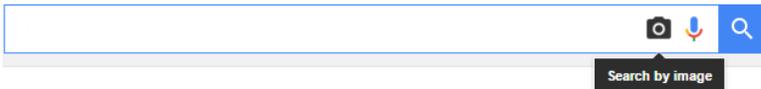
- Use "site:" to search websites for keywords. [Example: military onsource site: family readiness](#)



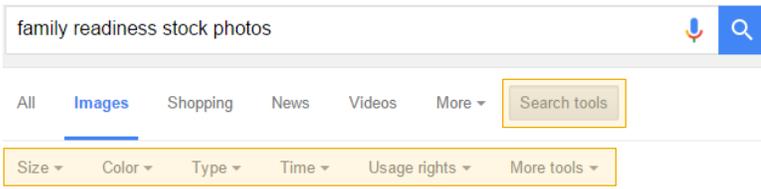
- Use "DEFINE:" to learn the meaning of words—slang included. [Example: DEFINE: family readiness](#)



- Upload an image to find similar images.



- Play with Google's image "search tools"



Time Saving "Word Search" Shortcut

Another handy tip is using the shortcut Ctrl + F to search any webpage or pdf for a word. After using the shortcut, a little dropdown will appear in the upper right corner of your web browser. Type the word you want to search and hit the 'enter' key.



Now the window will display the number of results (1 of 1). Next use the arrow up button or the arrow down button to navigate quickly through the information to find each use of the word you searched.

Your Awesome Toolkit

The best writers rely heavily on a toolkit to write all kinds communication. Below is a short list of free tools that can be access from a computer or mobile device to help get you started.

- **Google Search or Google Image Search** is the easiest way to conduct research and find inspiration. www.google.com
- **Google Drive** gives you access to files from anywhere. Also you can share and collaborate files easily. www.google.com/drive
- **Wunderlist** helps you organize, plan and get things done. Also lets you share ideas. www.wunderlist.com
- **Pinterest** is a wonderful tool to find inspiration and organized ideas for anything FRG. www.pinterest.com
- **Templates** and inspiration can be found by searching "best" newsletter templates, flyers, brochures, etc. in Google to find new inspiration.
- **Feedly** is an RSS feeder that organizes stories from various sources. www.feedly.com
- **Pocket** lets you save articles, videos, infographics and more to recall later. www.getpocket.com
- **Grammarly** will help you identify and fix grammar mistakes. www.grammarly.com
- **HemingwayApp** highlights long complex sentences and common writing errors. Then suggests how to shorten the sentence or how to split the sentence correctly. www.hemingwayapp.com
- **Dictionary** helps you avoid misspellings. www.dictionary.reference.com
- **Thesaurus** helps you find the perfect word. www.thesaurus.com
- **Photos** must be sourced to credit the work of the photographer and website. These photos are also royalty free.
 - flickr - Utah National Guard's at www.flickr.com/photos/utahnationalguard/
 - **Military Stock Photography** at <http://www.stockfreeimages.com/p1/military.html>
 - **Other free images** sources from Dustin.tv <http://dustn.tv/find-free-images>
- **Flaticon** is a free royalty free website to find vector images. Recommend using png images. www.flaticon.com



Overtime, you'll discover new tools.

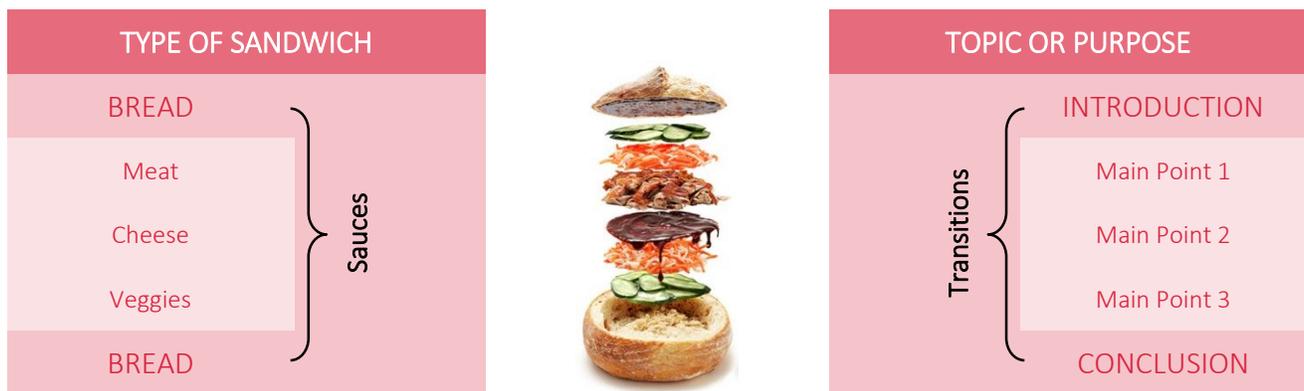
Make a note of them here and share with others.

Key Writing Aspects

WRITE WITH 100% CLARITY

Writing a story for your newsletter is just like making a most delicious sandwich. First you decide what kind of sandwich you want to make. Then you add a piece of bread to the top and bottom. Lastly you fill the sandwich with savory meat, cheese, veggies and mix in the sauces. Well, writing your story is much like making the most delicious sandwich.

First you choose your topic which is the specific purpose or goal of your story. Then you start with your introduction, add a few main points, mix in the transitions ([addendum 3](#)) and then you close your masterpiece with a conclusion. It really is just that easy.



Photograph: J. Kenji Lopez-Alt, Infographic: Tracie Lee and Paul Cline

FOCUS ON YOUR AUDIENCES NEEDS

Military families are unique and our units are melting pots with people from all walks of life. They grow up with different religious beliefs, political backgrounds and cultural differences. They come from different educational backgrounds and have different levels of education. They also have had many different experiences that shape who they are and what they believe in.

Our military families might be dealing with a roller-coaster of challenges that could be stirring emotional turmoil. Our community is resilient but the challenges of military life can take a toll on the most resilient warrior and their tribe. Not all wounds are visible. A service member could smile at us today and be gone tomorrow. While we have no control over the decisions our military families make, we can be a positive force in their life.



Photograph: Utah National Guard flickr stream, [2011 Governors Day](#)

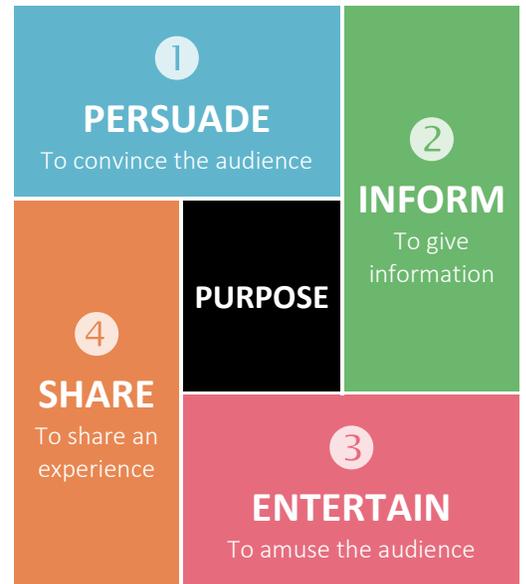
Be sensitive to our audience's needs. Speak to their intelligence and experiences. Use a conversational tone in your stories instead of a formal tone. Keep stories friendly and light. Cultivate a "you" attitude by using a positive emphasis, politeness, and bias-free language. Most importantly, always promote "What's Right" about serving in the military, serving as FRG, our military families, and the Army National Guard.

YOUR PURPOSE IS EASY AS PIES

Before putting your first word on a page you need to determine the purpose of your story. Knowing the purpose or goal of your story will positively impact all of the writing you will ever do. Think PIES. There are four purposes that all writing falls into and they are to persuade, inform, entertain or share. Occasionally you'll write a story that has a mixture of purposes.

So what slice of pie will you dish up?

- **Persuade:** To convince another to change their thinking, support a cause, or offer a solution to a problem.
Example: Persuade families to become an FRG volunteer.
- **Inform:** To give new or old information or to inform with facts and reasons.
Example: Inform families about the services the American Red Cross offers to military families.
- **Entertain:** To appeal to the reader's interest or emotions.
Example: Entertain readers with a story about how much the children loved the games at an FRG event.
- **Share:** To tell a reader what you're thinking or to share feelings.
Example: Share a volunteer's experience by participating in an FRG event.



With this, you can see the basic foundation of your writing has to have a purpose so you can create the tone, language and information necessary to communicate your message. Get the purpose of your story set and the rest of the details will fall into place!

Writing Content is Extremely Easy

GET READY TO FIND YOUR INSPIRATION

Visit Army websites or Army related websites to be inspired and find content. Refer to the list of [recommended resources](#) shared in this guide to conduct Army specific research. Conducting research is essential to being an informed writer. Being informed on the subject matter will help you write about the topic more easily.

As you read articles, take notes and save the article and your notes to pull from later. Refer to the list of [tools](#) shared in this guide to organize ideas and articles.

- Tools to keep your ideas organized are [Google Drive](#), [Pinterest](#) and [Wunderlist](#).
- Tools to keep articles organized are [Freedly](#), [Google Drive](#), [Pinterest](#) and [Pocket](#).

When you get ready to write your story, you have done your homework so you are informed and you know where to pull the facts from. As you write your story, you'll venture down little rabbit holes. Rabbit holes are fun and lead to new information and might even change the direction of your story.

- The best tool to venture down a rabbit hole is a simple [Google Search](#) or Google image search.

Have fun with your stories and don't be afraid to expand on the idea in the original story. As you get more comfortable with writing, you'll find this exercise even more fun!

USE POSITIVE LANGUAGE TO GIVE YOUR FRG A MORAL BOOST

Four emotions are in action when we read our social media feeds. They are anger, happiness, relaxation and sadness. Two emotions directly influence our decision to read and share something on social media. Those emotions are anger and happiness. As FRG volunteers, we are advocates of "what's right" about serving and stewards of sharing FRG happiness.

It's our personal responsibility to celebrate and share all the positive things happening around us. Don't sell rainbows. After all, this is the military and we know the reality. Rather remind us why we chose a military lifestyle. Remind us why we continue to serve. Furthermore, the FRG leader and FRG newsletter chair are responsible for marketing the FRG in a way that gives families the feeling they're part of something amazing!!

Let's turn negative statements or stories into a positive or neutral communication through "calmly" saying "what to do" rather than "what not to do." Let's look at stories that use positive and negative language.

Positive headline and opening

This Is Your Military Spouse Word for 2016



POSTED BY: AMY BUSHATZ JANUARY 1, 2016

We've got a word for the military spouse community for 2016, and you're going to love it.

Negative headline and opening REWORED

~~I Blame the FRG~~ **Creating Strong FRG Bonds**



POSTED BY: JACEY ECKHART SEPTEMBER 25, 2014

Family Readiness Groups have the power to bring people together like no other organization.
~~When I go to the Family Readiness Group and no one even says hello to me, — I blame the FRG. —~~

Using positive language will only increase your FRG membership because people want to be part of a positive experience. Switching from negative speech to positive speech takes practice and may come naturally. If not, just play with your level of optimism until you reach a formula that fits your writing style. With experience, you'll discover your voice, writing style and how to create a positive experience for your readers.

WRITE AN OPTIMISTIC HEADLINE THAT SAYS "YEAH!"

We see emotional headlines at work every day in headlines used by sites like [Upworthy](#) and [Buzzfeed](#) who are known for using overly-sensational (emotional) headlines to gain a huge number of shares and virility. Sites like this are constantly appealing to our intellectual, empathetic, and spiritual senses by emotionally persuading us to click and share. You can do this as well with experience.

Writing emotional headlines is similar to an old game called Mad Libs. Mad Libs is the silly game of filling in the blanks to be the funniest person in the room. In this case, you're filling in the blanks to be the most relatable person in the room. Instead of generating headlines that scare the readers, use headlines that generate positive feelings. Below are some examples of how the headline Mad Lib game works:

- [Powerful Ideas](#) Your Family can Use to Get More [Connected](#)
- [Meaningful Lessons](#) I [Learned](#) from [Volunteering](#)
- The [Impact](#) of FRG [Friendships](#)

To help you generate optimistic headlines, refer to [Addendum 2](#) in the guide to get a list of power words to help create positive headlines.

NAIL THE OPENING AND BODY OF YOUR STORY

Short and meaningful stories are a must as most of us suffer from information fatigue and we simply do not have the time to read lengthy stories. After learning how to generate an emotional headline, you'll need to learn how to nail your opening paragraph and the body of your story. Most importantly keep it simple. Keep each paragraph to around five sentences each. Explain one point before moving to the next point.

- **In the first paragraph or opening, state your business.** Identify the purpose or the reason why people want to read your story. Highlight what they will take away from the information you are sharing.
- **In the following paragraphs or the body, share the specifics.** Share the main points of your story in the paragraphs following your opening. Keep your main points to no more than three points. You can keep your three main points in the same paragraph or write a paragraph for each main point. Keep your main points organized or separate the main points with transitional words so your reader can easily follow your story.
- **Throw in some personality or your secret sauce.** Use transitional words like sign posts to navigate the reader through your story. As you experiment with discovering your voice, you'll learn to enhance your stories with your personality. Keep in mind the tone of the story when adding personality. If the story is light hearted, you can be witty. If the story is serious, keep the voice gentle and neutral as you add your personal touch. Always, always, always consider your reader and what their take away or experience will be from reading your story.

If possible, avoid sharing specific information or military jargon in your story. Remember you have a broad audience. You have new military spouses, seasoned members as well as members of various ages and experiences. As you write your story, explain the details as if the reader had never heard of the topic before. With that, explain the details as if you're talking to an adult. Your readers will appreciate that you speak to their intelligence.

Here's an example a brief article that uses these practices:

<p>Positive Headline and it's Action Oriented →</p>	
<p>Business Stated →</p>	<p>Family readiness is a critical task military families must tackle. Plus it just makes sense to ensure all aspects of life are discussed with immediate family and plans are established. The Utah National Guard Servicemember and Family Support Services offices have developed a "readiness checklist" to help our families improve their readiness. The checklist addresses</p>
<p>Take Away →</p>	<p>personal, legal, financial and practical matters. For now, let's focus on securing our financial affairs which might be the most critical.</p>
<p>Acknowledged Audience (not necessary) →</p>	<p>Whether you are single or in a relationship, getting your financial affairs in order simply makes life less complicated. Don't be afraid to discuss</p>
<p>Main Point 1 →</p>	<p>financial matters with loved ones especially if you are experiencing a hardship. Setting a sustainable budget and involving the family is vital to living within your means and achieving financial success.</p>
<p>Main Point 2 →</p>	<p>Keep a ledger to log all vital information such as life insurance, health insurance, monthly bills, creditors, taxes, passwords, etc. and store this ledger in a secure location that is only known to trusted immediate family.</p>
<p>Main Point 3 →</p>	<p>Also keep family information current in DEERS which is maintained by your local FAC. See the last page of the newsletter to identify your local FAC and feel free to contact them to ensure your information is current.</p>
<p>Take Away →</p>	<p>To learn more, visit: http://www.ut.ngb.army.mil/family/docs/Readiness%20Checklist.pdf</p>

Using this technique is a simple way to learn how to write an opening paragraph and how to keep your main body points organized so your reader can follow your story.

CLOSING WITH PANACHE

You've nearly finished your story. You've gathered the most useful tips. You've sprinkled it with optimism. You are so excited because this might be your best story ever! But you can't publish it until you write the closing paragraph. You can't let your best story ever fizzle out with a few drab sentences. So you're left thinking, what more is there to say? You might also be thinking that inspiring your readers has to do with talent or charisma. That you either got it or you don't. But this is far from the truth.

Here are a few savvy tips to close with panache:

- **Address Your Reader:** Your conclusion isn't about you, your life, or your experiences. To inspire your reader, you need to address them directly and personally. When you write your next closing paragraph, think about your ideal reader. Picture them reading your story and what you would like them to do with the information you shared.
- **Shrink the Change:** To get people to take action, suggest simple changes that make sense rather than big goals or a massive behavior change. Provide suggestions that don't require much time and make it sound easy. Think small. For example, suggest a 20-minute walk three times a week rather than training for a 5K.
- **Take Away the Biggest Obstacle:** Time to prioritize and focus on minimizing the biggest obstacle. Consider your ideal reader and what blocks them from taking action. Are they overwhelmed? Do they lack confidence? Perhaps it is too much trouble? For example, suggest grocery shopping is considered a 20-minute walk.
- **Touch your Reader's Heart:** To take action we need to be touched personally. Presenting the facts or using scare tactics doesn't inspire. For example, suggest a 20-minute walk is quality time just for you with no interruptions or tasks to complete. Notice this example is a positive statement and I didn't mention weight loss.
- **Nail your Last Line:** Killer last sentences are sound bites or the line from a movie that sticks with you. They are nuggets of wisdom that communicate the essence of your idea with panache. For example: when you're walking, you are the only one. Out here, you are number one.



Photograph: The National Guard flickr stream, [Working Dog](#)

Now let's see these tips in action:



Walking 20-minutes three times a week is even more fulfilling at an emotional level. Walks don't need to be long adventures rather they can simply be a trip through the grocery store. Walks are quality time just for you with no interruptions or tasks to complete. When you're walking, you are the only one. Out here, you are number one.

Remember you're not simply a newsletter chair. You're a mentor for your readers, a chief of your village, and a leader of your tribe. Now, let's fire up your tribe!

Source for this section: www.copyblogger.com⁹

Framework of a Great Newsletter

USE THE 3-BOX CONCEPT TO ORGANIZE YOUR STORY

Try using this method to organize your stories so they have 100% clarity.

ETHOS & TOOLS

- CRAAP TEST
- Grammarly
- Hemingway App
- Spell Check

TOPIC:

PURPOSE:

Persuade

Inform

Entertain

Share

STORY

HEADLINE:

(Says Yeah!)

INTRODUCTION:

(State your business
and take away)

MAIN POINT 1:

(Share the specifics)

MAIN POINT 2:

(Share the specifics)

MAIN POINT 3:

(Share the specifics)

CONCLUSION:

(Address reader, shrink
change, remove
obstacle, touch heart,
& a nugget of
wisdom.)

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DESIGN GUIDELINES

Printed Space Requirement

OFFICIAL INFORMATION	UNOFFICIAL INFORMATION
Printed Space: 80% Must have 80% or more of the printed white space occupied with official information that is unit related (approved by company commander) or Army related.	Printed Space: 20% Do not exceed 20% of the printed white space in the newsletter with unofficial information.

Page Limit

PAGE LIMIT & MAILING SPACE
Even Pages: 4, 8 or 12 If printed at a state print shop, the page requirement is 4, 8 or 12 pages. On the last page, leave ½ the page blank for mailing information.

Fonts Sizes

TITLES	HEADERS	BODY TEXT
24 to 48 point	12 to 18 point	8 to 12 point

Pick fonts that are clear and easy to read such as Arial, Calibri, and Times New Roman.

Columns

2 COLUMNS
Two columns are easy to read. You can do three columns, just add extra space between the columns so the columns don't blend together.

White Space

White space is pleasing to the eye and can be used to separate important portions of the page.
--

Colors

Add color sparingly throughout the document. Use neutral colors. If printing, do not add large spaces of dark boxes. If you do have dark boxes, just keep them smaller. Dark colors use a lot of toner.

NEWSLETTER TOPICS TO WRITE ABOUT

Here's some suggested topics to include in your newsletter. You wouldn't include all these topics in a newsletter. Keep your newsletter content simple but spice it up with various topics to keep your readers interested.

Messages

Quarterly message from command is standard. The message can be written by the commander and/or the 1st Sergeant. It's unit preference.

- **Message from Commander:** Always display first on the first page.
- **Message from 1st Sergeant:** Always display second on the first page.
- **Message from FRG Leader:** Display third on the first page. Leader can choose when to share a message.
- **Message from Deployed Unit, Platoons or Soldiers:** Can display on any page. If deployed, always write a message and include photos to share positive news with families.



Updates

- **Pre-deployment/deployment information:** Get from command.
- **Military regulation updates that impact families:** Get from Command or www.military.com
- **Updates on programs, benefits or resources:** Get from Command, local FAC or www.militaryonesource.com

"Save the Date" and Reminders

- **Drill dates:** Always get from command. It is also unit preference to share drill dates in the newsletter.
- **Dates for 'educational' courses, workshops, or webinars that are for soldiers and their families:** Get from command, family programs contacts and resources.
- **Dates for 'family' events and youth activities:** The command and/or unit readiness/training NCO will share dates.
- **Dates for FRG events, meetings or fundraisers:** Get from FRG leader and they must always be approved by command before publishing in the newsletter.

Soldier's Corner

These stories are hard to get but if you're ambitious and build trust among the soldiers you may get the opportunity to write some amazing stories using these topics.

- **Soldier spotlight:** Highlight a soldier who is excelling. (Get recommendations from command)
- **Feats of strength:** Highlight a soldier who's overcome/overcoming a great challenge. (Get recommendations from command)
- **Recognition:** Promotions, position changes, awards... (Get from command)

FRG Corner

- **We love our volunteers:** Recognize an FRG volunteer.
- **Let's make an impact:** Put a call out for volunteers for fundraising and other opportunities.
- **Charity is our passion:** Put a call out for donations or participation for National Guard charities.

Feature Stories

- **OPSEC:** Updates and reminders.
- **Events:** Highlight upcoming events and recap past events.
- **Life events:** Birthdays, weddings, anniversaries, babies. (These are easier to manage in smaller units. I recommend staying away from this if you are part of a large unit)
- **Five dimensions of strength:** Physical, emotional, social, spiritual, and family. <http://csf2.army.mil/index.html>
- **Fitness story:** Keep the story simple and for all fitness levels.
- **Family readiness story:** Enhance family readiness of soldiers, spouses, kids and families. (Readiness checklist or family readiness organizer)
- **Youth story:** Feature National Guard hosted activities. (Get from your contacts)
- **Family bucket list:** Feature a list of various activities for families to do things together. Keep it simple and for all ages.
- **Recipe:** Share an easy to prepare and healthy recipe.

Family Resources

- **Employment opportunities:** Feature job fairs, employment workshops, etc.
- **Family Assistance Center (FAC) services:** Work with FAC's to find out what's happening in their areas and share relevant information with families.
- **Discounts:** Share local deals, coupons, specials and so on for military families. <http://www.military.com/discounts>

Contacts

- **Unit:** Readiness NCO and Recruiting and Retention NCO. Unit will decide what contact information to share.
- **FRSA:** Include the phone number and email to your FRSA contact.
- **Family Assistance Center (FAC) locations and contacts:** Share phone numbers and emails.
- **FRG:** Include the phone number and email for FRG leader and include an email for the newsletter chair.

Other

- **Phone tree:** Reminder to keep contact information current and who to contact to update if needed.
- **Newsletter suggestions:** Details on how to submit stories ideas or suggestions for a future newsletter.
- **Newsletter evaluation:** Link to SurveyMonkey evaluation to measure the usefulness of the content to ensure the newsletter is meaningful to soldiers and their families of all ranks.

Filler Stories

Filler stories are great way to fill up your newsletter. Just keep in mind to always share relevant information. Always consider what do families need to know?

- Unit Statistics, facts, history, chain of command
- Importance of family readiness
- Articles on rank, insignia, acronyms, military time
- FRG contributions troop command soldiers/families (share when families who are not FRG leaders contribute/participate)
- Acronyms
- Courtesies

Editing Your Newsletter

COPYWRITING 101

PROOFING

Establishing Your Network

These resources are your primary contacts to get content for your newsletters. Develop relationships with the folks from your state who hold these positions. They will push you content to insert into your newsletter as they receive the information.

Family Readiness Support Assistants are always your first resource to answer questions and gain direction. [Click here](#) to find your unit's FRSA support assistant.

Family Assistance Coordinators or Family Assistance Specialists are good resources for what's happening throughout the state. [Click here](#) to find the FACs throughout your state.

ESGR: [Click here](#) to find your local contact.

H2H: [Click here](#) to find your local contact.

NCO's are appointed to a rank conferring leadership over other enlisted personnel. Get to know your unit's Readiness NCO and the National Guard's Recruiting and Retention NCO. If you don't know who they are, ask your FRSA contact how to get in touch with them.

Child & Youth Program: Comprehensive approach to family readiness that delivers great programs for military youth. [Click here](#) to find your local contact.

Operation Military Kids: Partnered with 4-H, The American Legion, U.S. Army Child, Youth & School Services, Boys & Girls Clubs, Military Child Education Coalition, and ChildCare Aware of America to deliver great programs and activities to military youth. [Click here](#) to find your local contact.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

These are recommended websites to help you become informed and discover new topics to share with your military families.

Key Army Website

- Military OneSource: www.militaryonesource.com
- Army OneSource: www.myarmyonesource.com
- Army Reserve Family Programs: www.arfp.org

Army Related Websites

- <http://blog-brigade.militaryonesource.mil/>
- www.military.com
- www.spousebuzz.com
- www.militaryspouse.com
- www.jointservicessupport.org
- www.army.mil/readyandresilient
- <https://armyfit.army.mil/Protected>
- www.armywifenetwork.com

Other Army or Military Related Resources

- Army Behavioral Health: www.behavioralhealth.army.mil
- Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventative Medicine (CHPPM): chppm-www.apgea.army.mil
- Army Center for Substance Abuse Programs (ACSAP): <https://acsap.army.mil>
- Army Comprehensive Soldier Fitness: www.army.mil/csf
- American Red Cross: www.redcross.org
- Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury (DCoE): <http://www.dcoe.health.mil>
- Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS): <https://mypay.dfas.mil/mypay.aspx>
- Department of Defense’s Military HOMEFRONT: www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil
- Department of Veteran’s Affairs: www.va.gov
- Deployment Health Clinical Center: www.pdhealth.mil/main.asp
- DeploymentKids.com web site: www.deploymentkids.com
- Military Spouse Career Center: www.military.com/spouse/fs
- My Hooah 4 Health: www.hooah4health.com
- National Center for PTSD (NCPTSD): <http://ncptsd.va.gov>
- National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN): www.nctsnet.org
- National Military Family Association (NMFA): www.nmfa.org
- Operation Military Child Care: www.childcareaware.org
- Operation Military Kids: www.operationmilitarykids.org
- Strategic Outreach to Families of All Reservists (SOFAR): www.sofarusa.org/about_sofar.html
- Suicidology Organization American Association of Suicidology: www.suicidology.org
- Surviving Deployment: www.survivingdeployment.com
- Veterans Affairs and DoD after deployment: www.afterdeployment.org
- Virtual Family Readiness Group (vFRG): www.armyfrg.org
- Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USUHS): <http://www.usuhs.mil/psy/>
- Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress: www.centerforthestudyoftraumaticstress.org
- U.S. Army Wounded Warrior Program (AW2): www.aw2.army.mil

Addendums

ADDENDUM 1: CRAAP TEST

EVALUATING INFORMATION – APPLYING THE CRAAP TEST

Meriam Library  California State University, Chico

When you search for information, you're going to find lots of it . . . but is it good information? You will have to determine that for yourself, and the CRAAP Test can help. The CRAAP Test is a list of questions to help you evaluate the information you find. Different criteria will be more or less important depending on your situation or need.

: indicates criteria is for Web

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Currency **The timeliness of the information.**

C

When was the information published or posted?
Has the information been revised or updated?
Does your topic require current information, or will older sources work as well?
 Are the links functional?

Relevance **The importance of the information for your needs.**

R

Does the information relate to your topic or answer your question?
Who is the intended audience?
Is the information at an appropriate level (i.e. not too elementary or advanced for your needs)?
Have you looked at a variety of sources before determining this is one you will use?
Would you be comfortable citing this source in your research paper?

Authority **The source of the information.**

A

Who is the author/publisher/source/sponsor?
What are the author's credentials or organizational affiliations?
Is the author qualified to write on the topic?
Is there contact information, such as a publisher or email address? (examples: com .edu .gov .org .net)
 Does the URL reveal anything about the author or source?

Accuracy **The reliability, truthfulness and correctness of the content.**

A

Where does the information come from?
Is the information supported by evidence?
Has the information been reviewed or refereed?
Can you verify any of the information in another source or from personal knowledge?
Does the language or tone seem unbiased and free of emotion?
Are there spelling, grammar or typographical errors?

Purpose **The reason the information exists.**

P

What is the purpose of the information? Is it to inform, teach, sell, entertain or persuade?
Do the authors/sponsors make their intentions or purpose clear?
Is the information fact, opinion or propaganda?
Does the point of view appear objective and impartial?
Are there political, ideological, cultural, religious, institutional or personal biases?

ADDENDUM 2: POWER WORDS TO WRITE EMOTIONAL HEADLINES

For more information, refer to the [Write an Emotional Headline](#) section in the guide.

180+ Power Words From Copywriter Karl Stepp

FOR WRITING **EMOTIONAL HEADLINES**

free	enormous	attractive	obsession	unconditional	superior
sale	spotlight	easily	surging	timely	unparalleled
new	useful	approved	revisited	bonanza	fascinating
professional	survival	competitive	unique	security	compromise
guaranteed	largest	full	bargain	refundable	odd
special	colossal	mammoth	hurry	quickly	bottom line
tested	now	innovative	daring	revolutionary	zinger
improved	unlock	it's here	pioneering	=miracle	simplified
immediately	fortune	just arrived	destiny	magic	tremendous
limited	authentic	sure fire	unsurpassed	proven	helpful
simplistic	announcing	soar	genuine	reward	special offer
powerful	huge gift	beautiful	informative	weird	technology
big	introducing	crammed	mainstream	surprise	selected
popular	practical	growth	complete	delighted	sturdy
exclusive	focus	promising	last chance	confidential	wealth
valuable	wanted	astonishing	exploit	sizable	successful
how to	absolutely lowest	imagination	quality	wonderful	opportunities
endorsed	interesting	greatest	gigantic	delivered	last minute
unlimited	challenge	high tech	love	secrets	monumental
discount	lifetime	latest	lavishly	scarce	startling
fundamentals	highest	important	reliable	alert famous	quick
under priced	expert	urgent	terrific	strong	easy
suddenly	advice	amazing	breakthrough	unusual	direct
perspective	the truth about	exciting	emerging	outstanding	simple
launching	compare	portfolio	profitable	energy	strange
skill	colorful	revealing	sampler	instructive	value
reduced	affordable	sensational	noted	liberal	insider
better	ultimate	excellent	luxury	rare	download
shrewd	willpower	remarkable	unconditional	edge	

@CoSchedule - CoSchedule.com

ADDENDUM 3: TRANSITIONAL WORDS

Transitional words and phrases clarify the relationships among sentences by establishing the spatial, chronological, and logical connections within a paragraph.

TO SIGNAL SEQUENCE OR ADDITION

again	furthermore
also	in addition
besides	one ... another
first ... second ... third	too

TO SIGNAL TIME

afterward	later
as soon as	meanwhile
at first	next
at the same time	now
before	soon
earlier	subsequently
finally	then
in the meantime	until

TO SIGNAL COMPARISON

also	in comparison
by the same token	similarly
likewise	

TO SIGNAL CONTRAST

although	nevertheless
but	nonetheless
despite	on the contrary
even though	on the one hand ...
however	on the other hand
in contrast	still
instead	whereas
meanwhile	yet

TO SIGNAL EXAMPLES

for example	specifically
for instance	thus
namely	

TO SIGNAL NARROWING OF FOCUS

after, all	in particular
indeed	specifically
in fact	that is
in other words	

TO SIGNAL CONCLUSIONS OR SUMMARIES

as a result	in summary
consequently	therefore
in conclusion	thus
in other words	to conclude

TO SIGNAL CONCESSION

admittedly	naturally
certainly	of course
granted	

TO SIGNAL CAUSES OR EFFECTS

accordingly	since
as a result	so
because	then
consequently	therefore
hence	

¹ [U.S. Army Family Readiness Group Leader's Handbook](#) (2010), page 39

² [U.S. Army Family Readiness Group Leader's Handbook](#) (2010), page 25

³ [U.S. Army Family Readiness Group Leader's Handbook](#) (2010), page 40

⁴ AR 600-20, The Army Command Policy, (13 May 02), 5-10, page 38.

⁵ DA PAM 608-47, A Guide to Establishing Family Support Groups (16 Aug 1993), 3-1, page 6.

⁶ DA PAM 608-47, A Guide to Establishing Family Support Groups (16 Aug 1993), 3-4(a), page 6.

⁷ [U.S. Army Family Readiness Group Leader's Handbook](#) (2010), page 32

⁸ Unknown. (n.d.). [14 "Insider" Tips That Will Cure You of Writer's Block Forever](#). Retrieved January 1, 2016.

⁹ Duistermaat, H. (n.d.). [A Rabble-Rouser's Rules for Writing Kick-Ass Closing Paragraphs](#). Retrieved January 2, 2016.