

Grapevine Writer's Workshop

(original version for Hot Dog Workshop on 9/6/2014;
subsequently revised for La Viña Editor, Irene D on 12/11/2019; 10/10/2020)

Submit all articles to gveditorial@agrapevine.org

Do's

Select a **main point** and build your story around that revelation or point

Choose topics that will **help others in their sobriety**

Start your story by giving it a **specific place and location**, such as group, city, and state

Pepper your stories with universally **familiar AA** clichés, slogans, catch phrases, and principles

Personalize stories with **places, events, and people** (first names only)

Mention **specific meetings or AA gatherings** where you heard or **learned an important lesson**

Be specific about an event, experience, or situation where you **learned something important**

Keep a journal, one that you take to all your meetings to record good material for stories

Focus on **specific activities** like sports, hunting, fishing, camping, skiing, dancing, etc.

Keep it short and sweet: **300 to 1800 words** (although shorter is more likely to be published)

Submit electronic stories with **lines spaced at 1.5**

Attach as a Word document; **cut-and-paste** single-spaced story in body of email

Save as pdf and use **Acrobat "read aloud"** option to hear your story before you send it

Following is a free link that allows you to **record and hear your stories**: <https://otter.ai/>

If the subject matter is very personal or **too revealing**, sign your article "**anonymous**"

Write the story as an AA testament so that it would be **recognized if taken out of the magazine**

If **published elsewhere, let Grapevine know** if they send you a copyright form

"Share" don't "teach" in your stories

Write your stories like you tell them, sharing your **experience, strength, and hope**

Preface each submittal with the **Grapevine department it is intended for**

Submit **your experiences** on **prayer, meditation, amends, forgiveness, sponsorship**, etc.

Be an avid Grapevine reader, which will help you be a better writer; remember your audience

Quoting from the **Big Book** helps

Grapevine (the organization) likes to hear **how Grapevine (the magazine) has helped alcoholics**

Don'ts

Don't submit your story immediately; **put it away** (weeks or months), **read and edit, then send it**

Don't use **product names** – They changed "Volkswagen" to "car" and "Wild Turkey" to "liquor"

Don't write stories that go on and on about a particular person; **no memorials**

Poetry and song lyrics are not welcome

Don't **submit to other publications**, like newsletters, unless you don't mind rejecting Grapevine

Avoid **fiction** and excessive **exaggeration**

If you are submitting a short saying, **don't plagiarize**; attribute it to the person saying it

Don't dwell on **drug use**; **stick to alcohol** (it's always enough!)

Categories

What are those **aah-hah moments** that were turning points in your sobriety?

Share **lessons you've learned**, especially the hard way

How did you deal with **difficult people, places, or situations**?

Experience, Strength, and Hope

Steps stories and lessons, particularly Steps 4 through 12

Traditions stories and lessons

Check *Editorial Calendar* for monthly themes and **submit intended story five months in advance**

Seasonal celebrations; how to deal with/celebrate Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Years

Indicate that your story is intended for one of the following **monthly topics**: Steps and Traditions, Our Personal Stories, Old-Timers, Newcomers, Emotional Sobriety, Spiritual Awakenings, Sponsorship, Into Action, Home Group, Young and Sober, and What's On Your Mind?

Other **repetitive themes** have included: Holidays, AA History, Relapse, On the Road, Fun in Recovery, Prisons, Feeling Different, Young People, Being of Service, My Favorite Slogan, and Relationships

Indicate your story is for one of the following **monthly departments**: *Dear Grapevine* (letters) or *At Wit's End* (jokes), or send photographs of meeting halls for *If Walls Could Talk*

How to Submit Stories

Submit Grapevine articles to:

gveditorial@aagrapevine.org (email) or <https://www.aagrapevine.org/share> (website)

For specifics on submitting to the Grapevine, see:

<https://www.aagrapevine.org/guidelines-contributing-grapevine>

How to Deal with Rejection

You could submit rejected articles to local newsletters (but could be published five years later!)

Try rewriting a story for new submission, or call it in to the audio Grapevine as a spoken story

Published Examples and the Points in Each Article (Grapevine publication dates in parenthesis)

A Bead on Recovery – Returning to hunting cabin first time sober after 25 years drunk (3/2008)

A Place to Belong – What I learned about love through attending meetings (9/2013)

Alcoholic's Meditation – Meditation technique (11th Step) (11/2010)

At My Father's Grave – Making amends to someone who has passed (9th Step) (3/2013)

Checked by the Chip Chick – Humility and One Day at a Time (6/2011)

East to Joshua Tree – What it was like then and what it is like now as a result of meetings (5/2011)

Ed the Dead Sings Songs of Gratitude – Dispelling the notion there's no fun in sobriety (4/2011)

Mattering – Progression from spirituality to drunkenness and back to spirituality (6/2014)

Not a Classroom – Effective and ineffective ways of carrying the message (8/2012)

Pestered – How we are ruled by attitudes; collective conditions revealed that truth (2/2014)

Pickin' and Grinnin' for Santa – Christmas, comparing meetings to music gatherings (12/2012)

Running Wild – Surrender **to** alcohol versus surrender **from** alcohol (6/2014)

Seeing Myself in You – What I learned about me by watching you in meetings (1/2013)

Step 11 to the Rescue – Applying meditation to other people, situations (11th Step) (2013)

The Big Catch – Returning to music festival first time sober after 15 years drunk (6/2006)

The Deer Hunter – Turning personal sorrow into a valuable tool through empathy (3/2014)

The Parade in My Head – Meditating through worries in the middle of the night (11/2019)

Tony, Darryl, Dan, Jan & Nancy – About experience with Sober Voices Group (2/2020)

Trip to Tehachapi – How the program, especially meetings, have changed my life (1/2013)

Unity at the Music Festival – How to stay sober among active drinkers (7/2011)