

# Wf1 Story Guidelines

You are not required to have perfect grammar to share your story on the Women For One website. That's why we have an editor! However, if you're serious about writing and want to take it to the next level, here are some general suggestions and guidelines. These rules are by no means comprehensive (and like all rules, there are some exceptions), but this basic guide will be helpful when you craft your own piece of truth-telling.

- + Be clear by saying exactly what you mean.
- + Avoid clichés as much as you can. Here's an article that talks about why: <http://blog.oxforddictionaries.com/avoiding-cliches/>
- + Avoid filler adjectives such as "quite," "somewhat," and "interesting."
- + If it's possible to cut out a word without changing your meaning, cut it out!
- + Refrain from using scientific terms, jargon, or foreign phrases if you can find a common English equivalent.
- + Never use the passive voice (e.g., "The dishes were done") when you can use the active (e.g., "I did the dishes").
- + Practice word economy. Keep headlines, sub-headers, sentences, and paragraphs short and snappy.
- + Use bold to make key words and phrases pop (e.g., "The name of this class is Truth-teller: A 5-Week Course for Boldly Sharing Your Story").
- + Use italics to add emphasis to a particular word that would be stressed if someone were saying it out loud. (e.g., "You want to connect to the woman that, deep down, you just know you are.")
- + Refrain from using more than one exclamation mark in a sentence (e.g., "I can't wait!" not "I can't wait!!!")
- + Refrain from using all caps (IT LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE SHOUTING) or underlining anything (it looks like a website URL).
- + Be careful with your apostrophes and be sure to use them correctly when indicating possession (e.g., "a truth-teller's journey") and contractions (e.g., "you're").
- + On that note, always know the difference between "you're" and "your," as well as "they're" and "their."
- + Use the Oxford (or serial) comma, which is the final comma in a list of items (e.g., "Please bring me a pencil, eraser, and notebook").
- + Use hyphens (-) to create compound words (e.g., "self-actualized") and em dashes (—) to create a break in a sentence (e.g., "I was ready—no matter what, I was going to face my fears").
- + If you're ever in doubt about grammar, grab a copy of *The Elements of Style*, by William Strunk. This is one of the definitive texts on all elements of English language style, usage, and composition. Strunk covers such topics as Elementary Rules of Usage, Elementary Principles of Composition, and Words Often Misspelled. You can find it here: <http://www.amazon.com/The-Elements-Style-William-Strunk/dp/1557427283>
- + If you want to expand your vocabulary, have a thesaurus on hand.
- + In the words of Ernest Hemingway, "Write drunk, edit sober." Don't worry about what's on the page until after you've gotten your thoughts out onto it.
- + When it's time to proofread your story, do so by reading it aloud slowly, as you're likelier to notice errors when you do this.
- + Work with multiple drafts. (Writing teachers sometimes refer to the first draft as "throat-clearing.") It takes a while to warm up and transfer your thoughts to the page, so it's a good idea to work through at least two drafts of your story, which will help you crystallize your ideas even further, clarify key concepts, and sharpen your sentences.
- + Take risks and have fun while speaking and writing your truth! If you think you might be saying too much, or that no one will relate, say it anyway. Someone will need to know they are not alone, and they will be glad you were brave enough to share.