



DEBATE

contributor style guide



hey.

We're stoked that you want to be part of *Debate*, AUT's award-winning (and super humble) publication.

Students who write for us often get snapped up by bigger and badder media outlets after a year or two, like the NZ Herald, Vice, Paperboy (RIP), and more. So getting involved will be awesome for your career and you should totally do it.

who are we?

Debate is the voice of AUT students. We aim to inform students about what's happening in the university and around Auckland, investigate issues that impact them, and provide relevant and entertaining content that stimulate thought, discussion, and laughter.

literally though?

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signing up

Make sure you email the editor asking to join the *Debate* mailing list.

She'll send out regular updates explaining upcoming themes and deadlines.

tone

Debate's tone is informal yet to the point. We love articles that are easy to read, factual, and relatable to our student audience (who, by the way, are mostly pretty intelligent people that aren't into hashtags and buzz words).

We're a teeny bit sarcastic and froth over writing that demonstrates personality.

balance

Debate aims to uphold the journalistic principle of balance and fairness. Therefore, in general, any claim you make that isn't backed up by a fact should be labelled as an opinion.

As in:

In my opinion, Labour has been doing a terrible job running the country.

Or:

According to TIJI, an organisation I just made up, Labour has been doing a terrible job running the country.

But not:

Labour has been doing a terrible job running the country.

Also, make sure you provide the other side of any argument you make.

fact-checking

Above all, *Debate* strives to be a fully accurate source of news. That means all factual claims must be rigorously fact-checked and cross-examined, and the source of said fact needs to be included in the story. That doesn't mean we want APA referencing or footnotes; usually the person or organisation's name will suffice.

Example: The Ministry of Health made this super detailed survey that explains *blah blah blah*.

Also, avoid quoting other media (like: *according to the NZ Herald, this thing happened*). Instead, go to the source themselves.

deadlines

Please meet deadlines.

And try not to commit to something you can't complete.

If you do, don't freak out, just let the editor know as soon as possible.

how to hand in work

Please email the editor a Microsoft Word document of your piece written in a standard font.

Do not design the article yourself – we have someone else in charge of that.

Make sure you include a title, subheading, and your name. Here's what that looks like:

Title: AUT Grad: Barrett Owen

Subheading: From no high school education and rejected uni applications, to advising the country's top financial leaders, AUT graduate Barrett Owen started from the bottom, and is now here.

Name: Shawn Cleaver

photography

If you like taking pictures and have access to a HD camera, please take a few large high-resolution photos to accompany your article. Photos are great, especially if you are profiling someone, doing vox-pops, or writing about a specific place.

Or, if photography isn't your thing, let the editor know and she may be able to send someone along with you to an interview.

pitching

To make sure you don't waste your time, it's best to pitch your article idea to the editor before you start writing. Otherwise someone else may already be covering that topic and have bagged it in advance, meaning your piece won't get published.

If you don't know how to pitch, we made a simple guideline you can follow on the next page.

Alternatively, if you have already written an article that **isn't published anywhere else**, send it through and we'll take a look.

pitch template

Hi *editor's name*,

My name is... I study... I've been published by... (or here's some of my unpublished work)

I would like to write a story about... I would like to do this because...

The piece includes interviews with/unique insights about... (*make the editor give a shit*)

The piece will be XXXXX words and I can have it finished by XXXX date.

Warm regards,

Your name

Your phone number

types of stories

Please put your name on every piece of writing you submit, or risk losing the by-line and the glory. For more information about a style or to see examples, please ask the editor.

news in short

150-250 words

A short and snappy news article written in an informal, yet 100% factual way.

Preferably AUT or student-related content.

standard news article

300-500 words

Article about a person, event, development or something interesting. It can be written informally, but it must include the standard journalistic spiel of who, what, when, where, why (who did it affect, what happened, where did it happen, when did it happen, and why did it happen).

At least 1 interview required, unless discussed otherwise with the editor.

Preferably AUT or student-related content.

large feature

1300-1800 words

Investigative, hard-hitting, and in-depth look at an issue (*preferably student-related*). This is not an opinion piece – it's a balanced, longform news article. However, you can add some personality, colour, and informed personal insights to the writing.

At least 3 interviews required, unless discussed otherwise with the editor.

types of stories

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observational feature

600-800 words

Go to an event and write about what happens in a witty and insightful way.

Topic suggestion: any AUTSA or AUT event. Or, an event or protest around Auckland.

opinion piece

300-500 words

Your well-researched thoughts on a current event, NEW social trend, or NEW phenomenon. Please note the aggressive caps on the word NEW, because for an opinion piece to be interesting, the topic must be relevant right now. Another tip: try writing about something specific. If you like feminism, pick a specific NEW development within the movement. Sorry, I'll stop capping now.

review

250-400 words

Could be a book, film, album, song, theatre show, event, or anything, really.

MUST INCLUDE:

1. The name of the thing
2. What the thing is (book, film etc)
3. Your name
4. A star rating out of five

Plus any other information you think might be necessary. In terms of style, a review is a short piece of writing, so there's no need for an introduction like, "I was excited to go to the concert..." Just get straight into it and tell us briefly what it was about and how you found it. Avoid clichés and be honest.

types of stories

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Q&A

600-800 words

Interview someone interesting and write out your conversation in a question/answer format. You can abbreviate what you said, but don't change the content of the question so skews the subject's answer. Also, please delete any ums and ahs from their answers (unless it's purposeful).

At least 1 interview required.

profile

600-800 words

Again, interview someone interesting, but instead of writing out the transcript of your interview, write about who they are in general and about your interaction/conversation with them. This style is often more gripping to read than a Q&A, so consider choosing this style over the other.

At least 1 interview required.

Topic suggestion: a story about an AUT graduate who is doing something awesome would be perfect for this category.

lists (but not listicles)

250-400 words

Around 50-100 words per item plus a 100-200 word introduction.

Write a concise introduction about what the list is about and why, then write small blurbs about different things. It sounds vague, and that's because it is. You can get creative with this category and take it almost anywhere.

In the past people have reviewed cafés and restaurants, shared Japanese words that can't be translated into English, and written about snowboarding tips for the poor. Go wild.

Topic suggestion: as usual, anything AUT-related is welcome, like a review of the best bathrooms, coffee shops around campus etc.

types of stories

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listcles

300-600 words

These articles usually have a short intro as to what the list will be about followed by a list of usually five or 10 items. Think of all the '5 reasons why' or '10 awesome things' articles you have seen online. But, in saying that, also forget those articles and throw away all generic topic ideas. We crave originality and know you can satisfy that craving.

recipe

200-400 words

This can be your own family recipe or one you found online or in a cookbook. All recipes need a large high-resolution photo, and if the recipe is not your own, you must send credit the creator. Feel free to write with colour or present the recipe in a unique format (as long as it's clear).

vox-pops

Each interview should be 50 words or less, and there must be three or more interviews. Go around asking people short questions on a current event or phenomenon, or a topic related to the theme of the mag.

Must include: interviewee's first names and a picture of each person.

other

other ideas

If you have any other ideas, please pitch them to the editor. We'd love to hear 'em.

letter to the editor

100-300 words

On the other hand, if you just love/hate Debate and want to let us know, please do. We're happy to publish your feedback. See an example [here](#).

grammar

Debate (like any publication) utilises a grammatical style guide to keep its content clear, easy to read, and indicative of its own unique tone and voice.

GENERAL

All pieces handed into the *Debate* editor are to be written in New Zealand English and follow the rules accordingly. That means we write colour instead of color, litre instead of liter, and apologise instead of apologize.

It's okay for intentional mistakes to be used in writing (grammatical errors, made-up words, etc.) provided they are serving a purpose to the overall piece. We like to play with language around here, and welcome any contributors to give it a go themselves, however just be sure to make a note if the mistake isn't obvious, or it may be changed in the editing process.

And we have no problem with using 'and', 'but' or 'because' at the beginning of sentences. Because it's actually grammatically correct and enhances flow.

Debate is to be italicised when referenced, as are any other publications. Debate may be referred to as *Debate* or *Debate Magazine*, but in either case must be capitalised appropriately.

Email addresses, website URLs, and song/film/book/play titles are also to be italicised.

grammar

NUMERALS

Numbers from zero to nine are written out, 10 and higher are numerals. When referencing mathematics/measurements, issue numbers, or dates, use numerals. Numbers up to 9,999 are to be written with commas and 10,000 and up are to be written with commas to divide the thousands.

PUNCTUATION

Double quotation marks are used when quoting someone, not single. Single quotation marks are used for quotes within quotes or to emphasise sarcasm.

Punctuation is to be included within quotes if it is part of the original quote, but outside if only parts of a quote are being used.

Examples: Sarah described the movie as “dull” and “not what she expected”.

“Didn’t you find yourself falling asleep in the middle?” she asked.

grammar

For titles like Mrs, Mr, or Dr, do not use a full stop. **ADD** use last names However, we prefer to avoid using titles like this. Instead, write the person's first and last name the first time they appear, then only their first or last after that (depending on formality of the article).

Unless it is under special circumstances, no more than one question or exclamation mark will be used at a time.

At *Debate*, we practice the use of the Oxford comma. This comma is used before the 'and' when listing.

Example: The dessert buffet served brownies, ice cream, pie, and cheesecake.

Brackets are used for additional information that isn't completely necessary. We should be able to remove brackets and still have a grammatically correct sentence, so punctuation that is necessary to the overall sentence should be included within the brackets.

Colons are used to introduce extra information or to start off a list/example.

Semicolons are used between related clauses of a sentence. There are rare cases when they can be used to separate elongated lists in which commas would be insufficient. However, *Debate* rarely incorporates semicolons in listing.

grammar

Hyphens can be used to connect descriptive words together to make hybrid adjectives. The hyphen should only ever be between the words that make up the description, it should not come between the adjective(s) and the noun. Be careful not to skip the hyphen when it is necessary, as it can change the meaning of a sentence entirely.

Examples: My cookie-baking grandma is the best. (My grandma bakes cookies and it's awesome).

My cookie baking grandma is the best. (My cookie is baking my grandma and I kinda like it).

grammar

OTHER THINGS TO NOTE

% is written out as percent.

If your tooth is **loose**, you might just **lose** it.

It's an error that often comes up, but **its** devil is in the detail.

The lasting **effect** was rather **affecting**.

Whose pen is this? **Who's** missing a pen?

I have **fewer** dollars than I did yesterday. I have **less** happiness because of this.

Okay. Not ok or OK.

No one is two words and no hyphen.

You **compliment** someone on the hat that **complements** their outfit.

Amongst and among are interchangeable, but we will only be using among in *Debate*.

(Unless it is for colloquial purposes: "Get amongst!")

e.g. shows one or a few examples out of many. i.e. refers to something specific.

get amongst it!

We look forward to seeing all the rad stuff you come up with this year.