

Starting professional writing

A Harding Project: How-to

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The Chief of Staff and Sergeant Major of the Army are calling on all of us to improve our profession through writing.¹

Professional writing helps senior leaders communicate down, breaks down silos through lateral communication, serves as an outlet for communication up, inspires us to find solutions to contemporary challenges from the past, and makes us better communicators.

Below, we suggest places to find professional content, and then present a framework for writers.

First, read widely

Before diving into writing, we recommend immersing yourself in your branch's professional bulletin, skimming the Chief of Staff's monthly articles, taking in the news, and curating social media to bring you interesting ideas.² Here are some outlets to consider:

- *Military Review*, *NCO Journal*, and the *Warrant Officer Journal*: <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/>
- West Point's Modern War Institute: <https://mwi.westpoint.edu/>
- *Armor*: <https://www.moore.army.mil/Armor/eARMOR/>
- *Infantry*: <https://www.moore.army.mil/infantry/magazine/>
- *Military Intelligence Professional Bulletin*: <https://mipb.army.mil/home>
- *Army Sustainment*: <https://alu.army.mil/alog/>
- *The Army Lawyer*: <https://tjaglcs.army.mil/tal>
- *Field Artillery Professional Bulletin*: <https://sill-www.army.mil/usafas/bulletin/>
- *Air Defense Artillery Journal*: <https://sill-www.army.mil/ada-journal/>
- *Aviation Digest*: <https://home.army.mil/novosel/aviationdigest>
- *Engineer*: https://home.army.mil/wood/contact/publications/engr_mag
- *Military Police*: https://home.army.mil/wood/contact/publications/mp_mag
- *Army Chemical Review*: https://home.army.mil/wood/contact/publications/CR_mag
- *Chaplain Corps Journal*: <https://usair1.tradoc.army.mil/journal/>
- *Parameters*: <https://press.armywarcollege.edu/parameters/>
- *War on the Rocks*: <https://warontherocks.com/>
- *From the Green Notebook*: <https://fromthegreennotebook.com/>

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¹ Randy George, Gary Brito, and Michael Weimer, "Strengthening the Profession: A Call to All Army Leaders to Revitalize Our Professional Discourse," Modern War Institute, September 11, 2023.

² This month, GEN George recommended articles by two Military Police sergeants on the future of the MP platoon, the implications of FM 3-0 for aviators, and thoughts on data literacy by a team of junior officers and a sergeant. Check out the CSA's articles at <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Resources/CSA-Recommended-Articles/>

Then, find a gap and fill it

The hardest part of writing is starting. Book reviews or essay competitions are great ways to start, and we hope this framework helps.³

1. Jot down your ideas. Ideas may strike you at random times, so jot them down on a notebook or start a Google Doc. As these ideas mature, organize your thoughts.
2. Discuss your ideas. Talk with others in your unit, in chat groups, on social media, and mentors and mentees to see what they think.
3. Consider your audience and outlet. Write your piece to target a journal that reaches that audience. Understanding the standards for each outlet will minimize changes later.
4. Pitch the idea. Early interaction with an editor will save time and motivate you.
5. Research and write—in a way that works for you. There is no due date. Set one or just let ideas develop. Also, see what else has been written on the subject, and make it modern.⁴
6. Get feedback and iterate. Once you have a draft, circulate it to trusted agents and your command team. Feedback is a gift. Cherish those who give you honest and compelling critiques. If possible, get outlet-specific advice.
7. Pre-publication review. Send it to Public Affairs and your S2.
8. Submit. Double-check the submission guidance and send it. If you don't hear anything after a week, nudge the editor.⁵
9. Share your work. After publication, share your work with your friends and social media connections. They might be inspired to strengthen the profession also!

Renewing Professional Military Writing

The Harding Project aims to renew the Army's professional writing through modest investments in four areas.⁶

- Policy and modernization. Move the Army's professional bulletins to web-first, mobile-friendly formats supported by social media.
- Improve the archives. Unlock inspiration from history by consolidating our archives and storing them by article.
- Educate the force. Familiarize the Army with professional journals and improve writing.
- Update staffing models. Invigorate professional writing with hybrid civilian and Soldier staffing models.

Get involved by tagging @_HardingProject on X/Twitter or following us on Substack.

³ Also see Josef "Polo" Danczuk, "Overcoming Army Writer's Block: Tips to Start Professional Writing and Publishing for Junior Officers," The Center for Junior Officers, July 13, 2022.

⁴ Find great research guides at <https://www.armyheritage.org/programs/research/reference-bibliographies/subjects/>.

⁵ You strengthen the profession by contributing. Rejection happens, a lot. You'll also make mistakes. Find the mistakes in this handout.

⁶ Follow our work at <https://www.hardingproject.com/> or scan the QR code below.

