

Oakland Local Writers Guidelines

Interested in writing for Oakland Local? This is a guide for both bloggers and writers.

Bloggers

If you are a blogger who lives or works in Oakland and/or writes about Oakland topics and would like to blog for us, or have us cross-post your current blog, contact Susan or Kwan. We are especially interested in blogs that focus on:

Local neighborhoods, neighborhood associations, community groups

Our key areas of focus:

Environment and Health

Food and Land

Housing and Development

Justice and Identity

Arts and Culture

Wonderful, offbeat blogs with unique points of view

Blogs with a mission or cause

Photography, video or any kind of multimedia

If you're a potential blogger, especially with the above interests, but haven't gotten started yet, we are happy to refer you to local workshops and trainings, some of which we run ourselves or sponsor. Get in touch if this is you.

NOTE: We do not currently pay for blog posts, but we do point traffic back to you and promote you on the site.

Writers & Reporters & Videographers & Multimedia producers

Oakland Local runs beat reporting, investigative reports, features and story packages on issues important to Oakland and items that catch our interest. We run original writing, photography, web video and multimedia. We also run materials provided by partners, with credit and attribution and used by agreement.

Send pitches to Susan, Kwan, or Amy; we'll get back to you. Pitches should provide an overview of your story, your story angle, a couple of ideas for interviews, a time line for completion and a couple of samples of previous work.

Food and Development pitches go to susan@oaklandlocal.com

Environment can be directed to amy@oaklandlocal.com

Identity and Arts pieces can go to kwan@oaklandlocal.com

In most cases Oakland Local pays for original stories; our fees, while small, are sadly, competitive with the rest of the industry. We are a brand new news and community nonprofit, right now our rates reflect that, but we do

go for great ideas.

But don't let funds stand in the way of pitching us (unless you're looking for big, big bucks). We partner with Spot.us and other sites to raise money for larger, more involved stories. So if you've got a great idea let's talk about it.

We typically buy first rights for original work. After publication rights revert to the author and you are free to resell or distribute the work. Payment for second rights is on a case by case basis and often involves repurposing or customizing the original.

GUIDELINES

Features and Beat reporting

Features may be up to 2,000 words in length. Beat reports (shorter, breaking news and ongoing coverage) should not exceed 1000 words. They should employ language that is appropriate for both the subject matter and the intended audience. All content will be proofread and copy edited prior to publication.

Columns/Essays

A column is a regularly recurring publication on a specifically themed topic. Columns may appear weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly. Sometimes columns are actually guest blogs. Proposals for new columns should include an overview of the intended content, a rationale of how it fits with the Oakland Local philosophy, a description of the audience it will serve, a suggested publication schedule, and a brief biographical sketch of the contributor(s). All columns and essays are subject to editorial review.

Reviews

We define a review as a critical evaluation of a book, film, performance, exhibition, web site, media presentation, product or service. Our interest is in the above as it relates to Oakland and to our areas of focus; ie, we don't want reviews of popular movies. A review is limited to 500 words, which should include a description of the subject followed by a critical evaluation. We encourage reviewers to submit supporting materials (e.g., photographs) for which they have permission to reproduce or otherwise own the copyright with their reviews. Send us review queries before you write them, with your credentials, please. All content will be proofread and copy edited prior to publication.

Photography, Podcasts, and Other Media

We love to publish Oakland related photos, videos, podcasts. We support sex-positive and diverse perspectives, but we do not accept sexually explicit imagery for publication. If you would like us to publish any media content, you must do one of the following: certify that you created the media yourself, provide a release from the copyright owner of the media, or provide us with some other written evidence that we may publish the media (e.g., content from Wikipedia that is governed by the GNU Free Document License or content available under a Creative Commons license that allows for commercial use).

In some cases, fair use may cover the publication of certain media. "Fair Use" is a legal doctrine that allows copyrighted works to be used for certain purposes such as criticism. For example, we may use an image of a book when we publish a review of that book. You must inform us if the media you are submitting is being used under the fair use doctrine. ALL PHOTOS must be attributed.

Interns & students

Hey, we love you. If you would like to intern for Oakland Local, get in touch. We'll make it a mutually beneficial experience. Contact Susan re: interning.

THE STYLE GUIDE

Writing a Standard Blog Post

A standard post for Oakland Local should be at least 150 words with an accompanying photo:

Writing an article

If you're writing an article, it should be no more than 2000 words, unless you have agreement for more length from your editor. With longer pieces on the front page and main sections, the first two paragraphs will appear "before the jump." We like brevity; 750 words is just fine.

Sidebars, raw material and visuals

We like to run "extra" materials that accompany stories and blog posts, Extras can be photos, embedded videos, additional quotes and notes from people, lists of further reading or other useful material that may not fit in your story that is still worth sharing, Please send us these files, images, etc if you would like to find ways to include them on Oakland Local in ways that may not have occurred to you (or suggest ways that have).

Posting a Video

If you're just posting an embedded video or a large image, obviously the minimum of 150 words goes out the window. For a video, simply write up a quick description of what the video is about, a comment or identifiers and post. Always credit and/or attribute when possible.

Posting a Large Image

When posting large images on Oakland Local, add a short description. Always credit and/or attribute when possible, and please link back to the artist, gallery or source.

Please source and link like a maniac!

We want to always link back to the sources for both stories and images.

Not only is linking back to your sources polite and the right thing to do, it's also positive for Oakland Local's traffic.

Hyperlink for SEO(Search engine optimization)

How you link to other websites in your copy is very important. Google likes it when you link back to searchable phrases, rather than doing the whole, "Check out her blog [HERE!](#)" thing.

For example, if you're linking to A Better Oakland it should look like this:

"For more on the City Council meeting this week, go to V Smoothe's analysis at A Better Oakland.."

It should not look like this:

"For more on the City Council meeting this week, [click here!](#)"

People will not search the Internet for the phrase "click here": they are searching for "city council" and "A Better Oakland."

Source that image!

When using an image from another source, in the mouseover and/or the description, attribute your source.

Related Stories

If you're writing a post about AC transit and bus cuts and you know you've written a story about it previously, link back to it. Linking back to related stories gets our readers clicking.

Expectations around spelling, etc.

Use spell check and be accurate

We're your editors, but we're not your Moms. Use your spell check tools before you send out copy to us, please.

Grammar & Punctuation

The classic source is The Associated Press Stylebook & Libel Manual.

Thanks again for your interest and we look forward to reading your pitches!

The Oakland Local team,

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Oaklandlocal.com

News for the people.