INSIGHTS STYLE GUIDE

A HOW-TO GUIDE FOR WRITING OP-EDS FOR YAIA'S INSIGHTS BLOG

UPDATED AUGUST 2024

CONTENTS

SUBJECT MATTER AND HOW TO CHOOSE YOUR ANGLE

As an op-ed writer, you are seeking to write engaging and brief pieces on current events in international relations spaces. International relations is a pretty broad remit. Nevertheless, try to keep your topic in the realm of political, cultural, social, technical relations between countries, or within a country, noting how it may impact broader international movements or events.

You may choose a contemporary, 'hot button' topic, or a 'slow burn' topic - events that have been developing for a while, but may have had recent developments. While the 'hot button' topics may be tempting as they are front and centre, be aware that your piece will be competing with many others being published in Insights and elsewhere. 'Slow burn' topics may allow to demonstrate area in a niche area, and write on a topic that may be unique, and stand out, among all the pieces currently being published.

For all topics, but especially for 'hot button' topics, try to find your unique angle. Don't try to write everything about a particular event, the job of an op-ed writer is not to be a journalist. You are trying to investigate and analyse a particular aspect of an international relations event or movement. Have a look at our current Insights blog for good examples of this.

Try to write with the audience in mind. Our audiences are generally well educated—though not expert in—the various fields of international affairs we cater for at YAIA. As a blog, it is fundamental that the amount of academic and jargonistic language is reduced as much as possible.

In digital publishing, the great battle is to attract—as well as keep—the attention of the reader. The shorter, snappier and witty pieces are generally the ones that get the most clicks.

If you are unsure whether a topic is appropriate for Insights, please reach out to the Publications team at publications@youngausint.org.au, we are here to help!

HOW TO WRITE A GOOD TITLE

The title of your piece determines whether a reader will open your article and read your opinion on a topic. The title on, so it's important that your title does your article justice!

Some key tricks to writing a good title:

- *Avoid phrasing the title as a yes or no question.* Statements phrased this why are usually answered in the affirmative anyway, which disincentivises readers from reading the article. Make the reader work for the answer.

- *Write the title after you have written the article.* You will be far more informed as to what you are actually saying once the article is written (even if it is only a first draft). Your title should encapsulate the overall message of your article.

- *Think of your title as your first topic sentence of your piece.* What is the essence of your article? What are you really talking about? Are you suggesting a solution to an issue, or just analysing an issue or development?

- *Critically analyse the grammatical structure of the title you've written.* A simple formula can be to connect two phrases together with a colon, but this can give the article an unintended academic tone. These titles are also quite easy to construct, and can appear like a last minute attachment to an article. *E.g. Drug trafficking in the Pacific Islands: The impact of transnational crime.*

- In the middle is the why or how question structure. These are great for analysis pieces. *E.g. Why Australian students studying in the Indo-Pacific could hold the key to harmonious regional relations*

- A harder-to-nail title is one that is an independent clause (a full sentence). This structure can be hard due to the fact that they require a concise but precise opinion that captures the content of the article. *E.g. The Quad and AUKUS show messy, creative democracies hard at work.*

Feel free to experiment with how **you** write your titles, but make sure that the important information is there, and that it relates to the argument that you are developing throughout your article.

REFERENCING

For the Insights blog, hyperlinked words, numbers or phrases are used to reference information or statistics that you've taken from another source and used in your article.

You should reference any information that is not common knowledge. It can sometimes be difficult to determine whether something is common knowledge or not so if you have any doubt, it is best to include a reference to avoid plagiarism.

You should get your information from freely accessible websites, videos, news articles, or government reports. Ensure your sources are robust and trusted sources. Avoid academic journals and paywalled articles, such as the AFR, NYT, Washington Post etc. This is so that readers can easily access and refer to your sources for further reading.

Try to keep your hyperlinks to a maximum of 5 words — try not to hyperlink entire sentences.

GRAMMAR AND COMMON MISTAKES

As noted on the Insights Submitting Guide, Insights uses the ABC Editorial Style Guide. Most of the answer to questions about grammar can be located there. Nevertheless, there are a few common mistakes we notice that you may also want to look out for.

- Currency: when referencing an amount of money, particularly dollars, ensure you note the currency. E.g. AUD$100. Where possible, convert to AUD.
- Units: where possible, convert any units to the metric system.
- Per cent, not percent or %.
- The possessive pronouns of cities/countries are 'its', not 'their'. E.g. France is concerned about *its* debt.
- The Oxford comma is used.
- Em-dash: when linking clauses of sentences, use an *em-dash.* Insights does not use a space either side of an em-dash.
- Slash: When a slash separates two words, there *is no* space either side of the slash. When a slash separates two phrases, there *is* a space either side of the slash.

If you have any grammar questions, please reach out to the Publications team.

HOW TO FIND CREATIVE COMMONS PICTURES

A good cover image can make your article stand out. A good image will draw the eye, and thus attention, to your article. Images are used as cover photos on YAIA articles, and as thumbnails on the YAIA website and social media channels. It will usually be the very first part of your article that your reader sees and focuses on.

As such, your image should be representative of your article.

<u>What is Creative Commons?</u>
Images used in YAIA blog posts and articles need to be licensed as "Creative Commons". This means that they can be freely used by YAIA, usually only with attribution (image credit) to the photographer/creator and a link to the source.

There are many websites with Creative Commons images. Some places to start are:
- Flikr - www.flikr.com
- Unsplash - www.unsplash.com
- Google Images
- Wikimedia Commons
- Canva
- Shutterstock

Make sure the website's settings are set to only display Creative Commons images. You can find this setting under 'usage rights' or 'licensing', depending on the site.

<u>Finding an Image</u>
It can be difficult to find an effective image to use, particularly if your article is about a niche topic or an confronting topic (eg. conflict, humanitarian disasters). Consider using broad search terms to find an image. It's also important to note that the image shouldn't be overly confronting - avoid graphic pictures of conflict, death, injury, etc.

<u>Sending the Photo to YAIA</u>
Towards the end of the editing process, your Editor will ask you for an image to accompany your article. When you send the image, please include a URL to the source - this will allow your Editor to verify the image's Creative Commons status, and add the necessary attribution and link in the blog post.

publications@youngausint.org.au

YOUNG AUSTRALIANS in
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS