



# BLOOM Blog

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## Overview

Congratulations on becoming a Bloom Blog Writer! We are excited to work with you to elevate the voices of military teens. Since April 2020, Bloom has released blog articles every month, and sharing the writing of our peers will always be a central part of how we reach and support our community.

This guide is designed to be a one-stop-shop for all your writing needs and will offer instructions and suggestions to help you plan, write, and share your blog posts.

## Blog Procedures

Here's how the publication process works for our blog writers:

### 1. Submission:

First, you will create a draft of your blog post using the Wix Post Composer. (more details later). Once you are done with a draft of your blog post, click "Submit for Review" in the top right corner of the Post Composer. This will send your work up to our editing team for review.

### 2. Editing/Revisions:

All Bloom blog posts undergo a minimum of two rounds of edits – meaning that two people will look at your post before it is published. Our editors will revise and fix any small grammar, spelling, and clarity issues, but will contact you or leave notes on your post if any major content changes need to be made. You will receive email notifications if notes are left.

If big content changes are needed, your post may be returned to you for editing, and you will be notified by email. Please make the changes or discuss them with the editors, then resubmit for review.

### 3. Publication/Promotion:

Once your post is cleared, it will be scheduled for release by the Editor-in-Chief. All blog posts will be posted on our website, and a promotional graphic with a quote from the post will be shared on social media. For further exposure, feel free to share the link/graphic on your personal social media! We want as many views for your amazing work as possible!

## Content Guidelines

### Choosing a Topic

All blog posts should be of value to a general audience of military teen readers, and fulfill our mission of empowering, encouraging, supporting, and inspiring military teens around the world. Content should be able to relate to the military lifestyle in some way.

Our blog is sorted into four broad categories:

- Military Life
- Moving
- Experiences
- People

While most blog posts will fall into one of these categories in some way, not all will, and that's okay! The last thing we want is for you to feel boxed into a certain category mold – be creative and let your unique writing voice shine!

We encourage and expect you to think critically about the issues and challenges facing military teens and families, and welcome honest praise for, criticism of, and responses to the military lifestyle. What makes our blog stand out is the raw emotion and genuine thought that our writers share. However, this must be done in a respectful manner.

Additionally, please keep the privacy and safety of yourself and others in mind when you're writing blog posts. We do not recommend sharing your exact location or where your parent may be deployed. Keep in mind not to share sensitive details about your life or a friend, family member, or other military-connected person. Always ask a parent or guardian if you're not sure something is safe to share. Remember that anyone, anywhere can access your writing by simply navigating to our website!

Here is a list of ideas for blog post subjects:

- Experiences with different schools
- PCS (Permanent Change of Station) Transitions
- Making new friends
- Relationships
- Interviews with adults, changemakers, or other military teens
- Analysis/review of a pop culture item
- Advice for younger military teens
- Mental health tips
- Sharing a tough experience you had, and what you learned
- Dealing with deployment
- A list of 10 places to visit near your duty station

There are countless other things you can write about as well! This list is merely designed to get you started. We are always looking for fresh ideas!

Additionally, we understand that writer's block happens—that is a completely normal part of writing! If you find yourself stuck on what to write, we encourage you to talk to a Bloom blog editor, fellow writer, parent, teacher, or anyone else to get some ideas! The Bloom Discord

server has a channel just for blog writers, as well as an “Inspiration” channel where you can bounce ideas off your teammates. Another great resource is the Bloom blog itself! Visit [www.bloommilitaryteens.org/blog](http://www.bloommilitaryteens.org/blog) to read past articles and get inspired.

## Prohibited Topics

We don’t have a list of “banned” topics because we encourage writers to be open and honest in their writing. That said, please use common sense and keep all topics school appropriate. If you have doubts about your topic, talk to an editor or choose something else to write about.

## Requirements

**WORD COUNT:** We recommend that your blog posts be at least 500 words and no more than 1,500 words. However, this recommendation is flexible as long as your piece has a solid introduction, body, and conclusion.

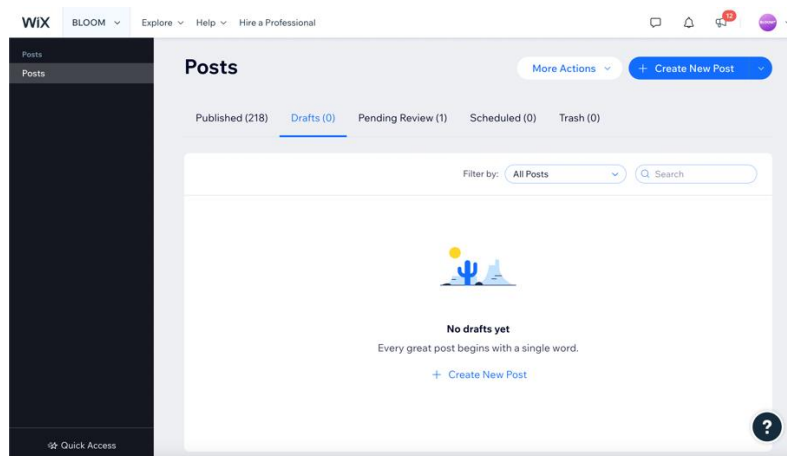
**IMAGES:** All posts should have one featured image at the top, beneath the title and above the body text. You are more than welcome to supplement your piece with more than one image as long as they are your **original photos** or **copyright-free**. If you don’t have an image in mind, don’t worry! A blog editor will add a stock that matches the theme of your post. More information on images can be found in the “Visuals” section in “Using Wix.”

**FORMATTING:** See “Formatting” under “Using Wix.”

## Using Wix

### Creating Your Account

Wix is a website platform that hosts all our Bloom systems. After being accepted as a Blog Writer, you will be sent an email invitation to join our Wix site. Please make an account and bookmark your dashboard for easy access. This is where you will submit your blog posts! Below is a picture of the Wix dashboard for blog writers after logging in.



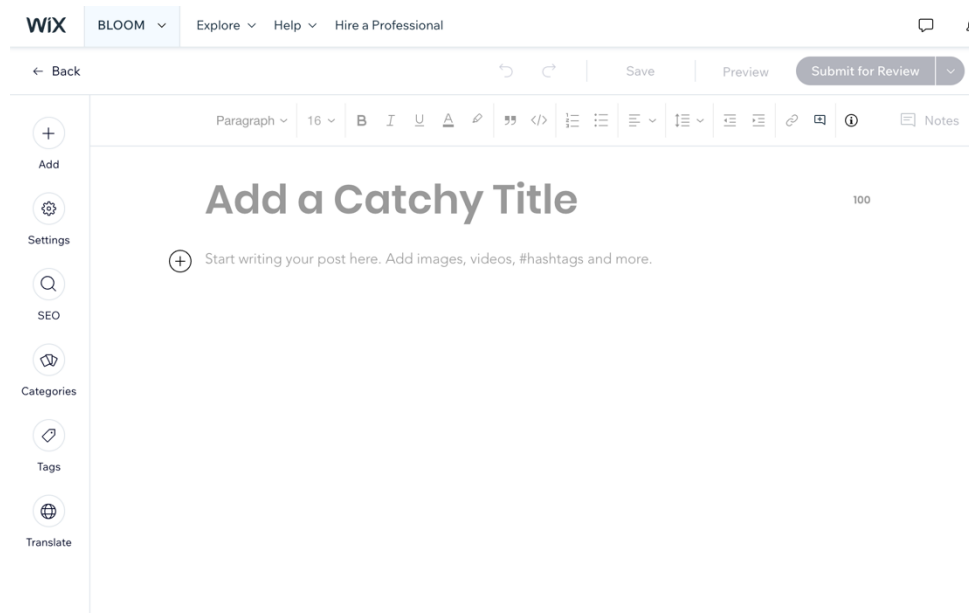
## Setting Up Your Profile

Your Wix Writers profile consists of the name and picture that will be published on the website at the top of the blog posts you write. We ask that all blog writers follow the following procedures for setting up their profile.

1. Navigate to the “More Actions” button toward the top right corner of your dashboard. There, you can click on “Set your author info” which will take you to a page entitled “Writer Profile for Guest Writer.”
2. Under “name,” please type your first name and last initial with a period at the end. This is for consistency and ensuring our website maintains its clean and professional look.
3. Upload a profile picture of yourself if you and your parents are comfortable.

## Creating and Designing Your Post

Once you have your profile set up, you’re ready to create a blog post! In the top right corner of your dashboard, click “Create New Post.” You’ll then be taken to the Post Composer (below).

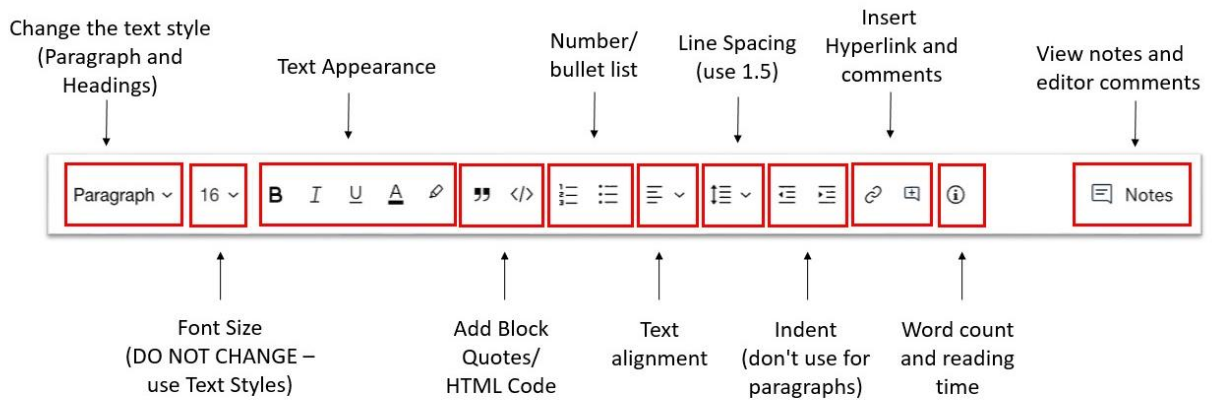


**NOTE:** We highly recommend that you type the body of your post in a word processor such as Google Docs, Microsoft Word, or Pages just in case Wix glitches!

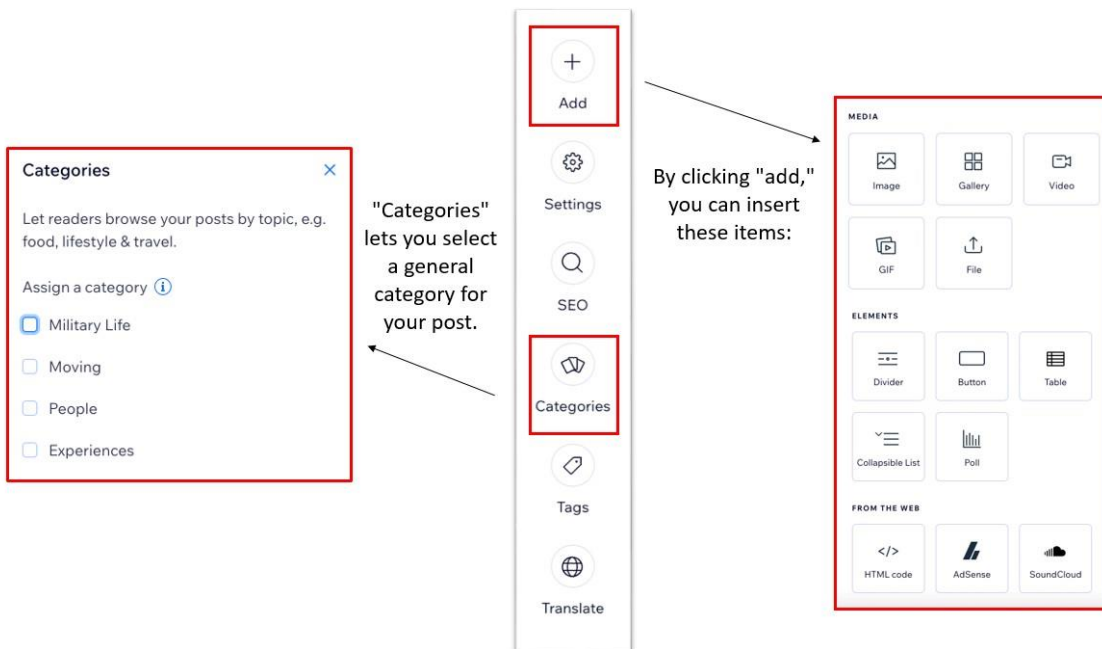
Your blog post’s fonts and font sizes will be largely predetermined by our site design. However, there are still many ways that you can customize the appearance of your post, which will be detailed later in this guide!

The layout of the Wix Post Composer is like that of most word processors. Below are diagrams detailing the features at your disposal.

### Top toolbar:



### Side Toolbar:



### Text Formatting

To make things easier for our editing team, please try your best to abide by the following formatting rules:

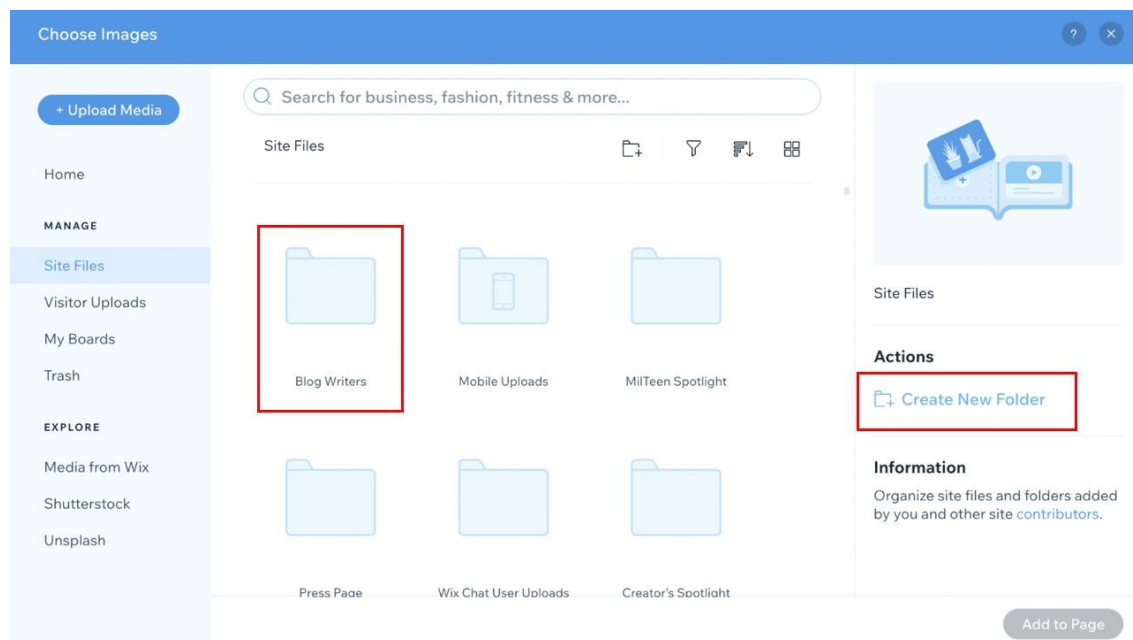
1. **PARAGRAPHS:** Do not indent your paragraphs; instead, add a blank line/spacer between them.
2. **LINE SPACING:** Make sure that all your lines are spaced at 1.5
3. **HEADERS/SECTIONS:** Rather than using bold or italics to distinguish headings or section titles, use the predetermined formatting by selecting the various Heading options under Text Styles.
4. **TEXT SIZE:** All body paragraph text should be size 16 (just use the “paragraph” preset!)

## Visuals

At minimum, all blog posts should have one featured photo at the top of the page. This can be a photo you took or created, or a stock photo. If you don't have a picture to use, don't worry! Simply submit the text of your post for editing and an editor will add one for you that matches the theme.

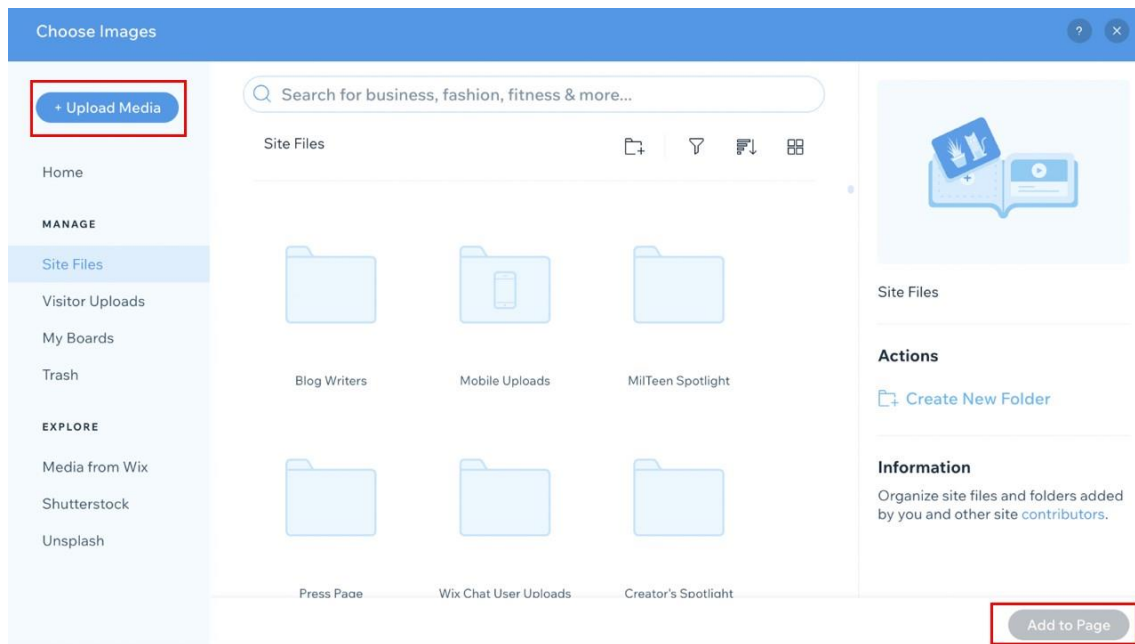
**To upload or choose a photo, click “add” on the side toolbar.** The site File Manager popup will appear.

Before you upload any pictures, open the **“Blog Writers”** folder and click **“Create New Folder”** under **“Actions”** on the lefthand side.

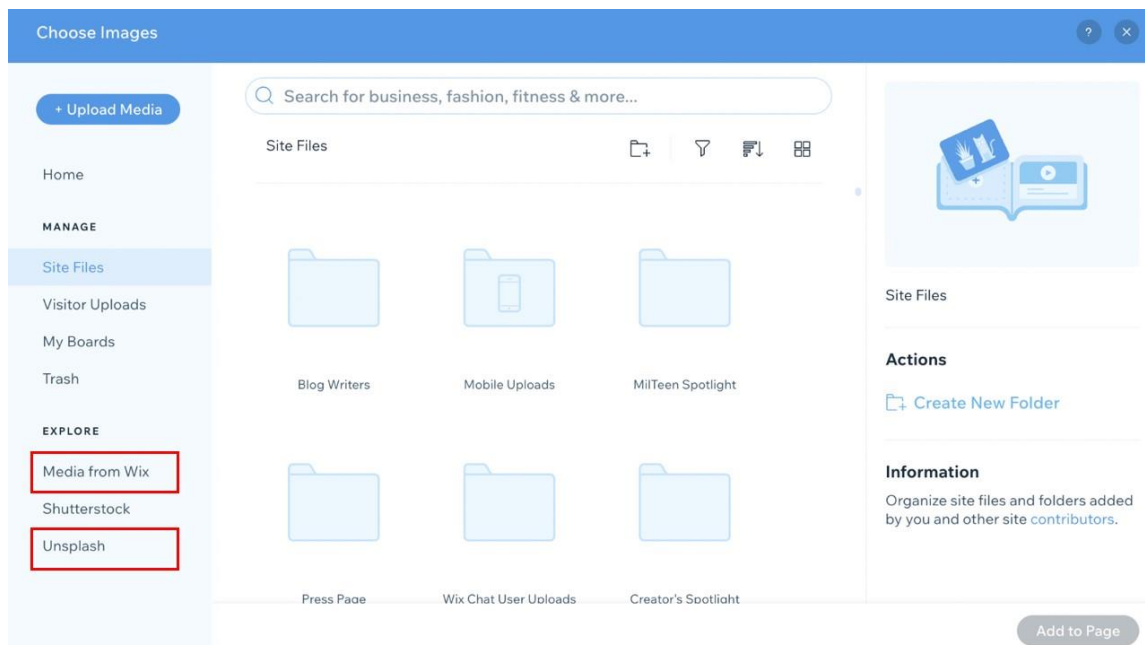


**Name the folder** your First Name and Last Initial (I.e., “Matthew O”). This will be YOUR exclusive folder for all your photo uploads.

**To upload a photo**, navigate to your folder and select **“Upload Media”** in the top left corner. To add your photos to your blog post, select the image, then click **“Add to Page”** in the bottom right corner.



**To select a stock photo**, click **“Media from Wix”** or **“Unsplash”** (under **“Explore”** on the left sidebar) and select for the photo you want. Then click **“Add to Page.”**

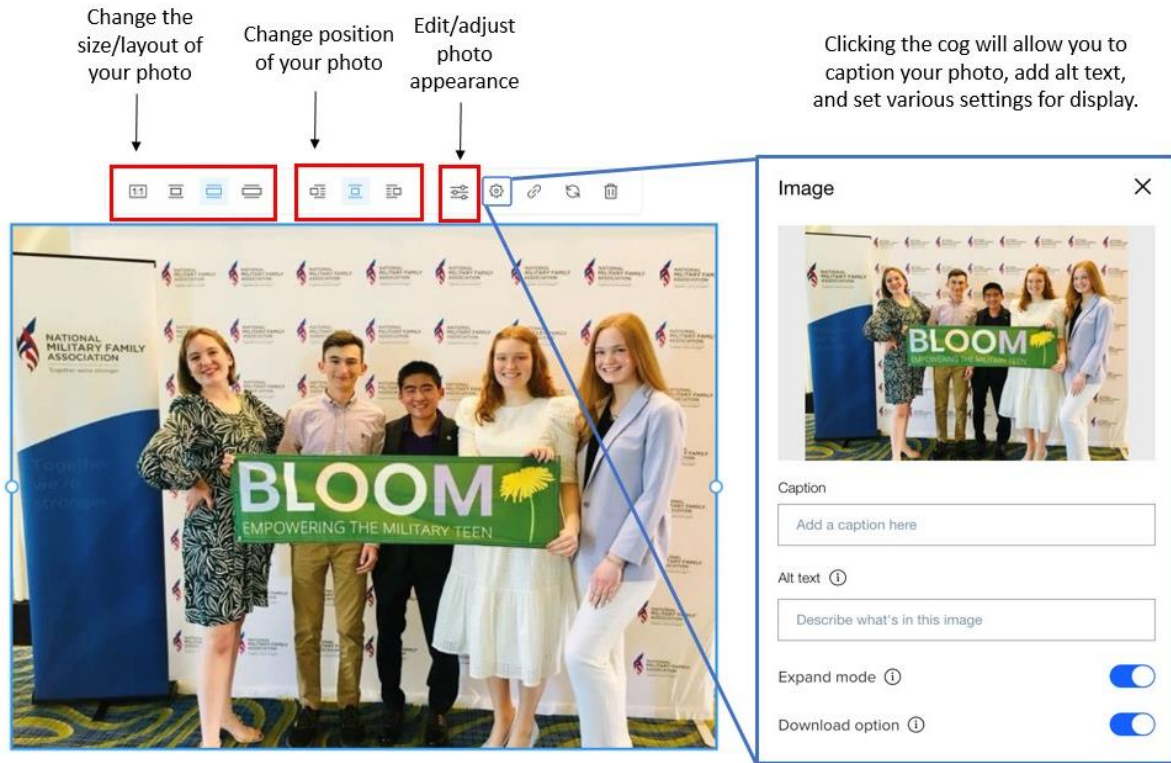


You can also visit [www.pixabay.com](http://www.pixabay.com), download a photo, then upload it into your folder.



*NOTE: Do not use “Shutterstock” on the sidebar; you will have to pay for those photos.*

Once your photo is inserted into your blog post, selecting it will allow you to make other changes to how it is formatted.



Clicking “Add” and selecting “Gallery” will also allow you to display multiple photos in a unique layout.

## Tips and Tricks

Here are some final thoughts to help you on your journey with Bloom:

- **Do not fret if your article is not immediately published!** Our scheduling team is working hard to plan out a steady stream of content, so your article may just be scheduled for a different week.
- **If you write a few articles and realize writing is not for you, don't feel like you have to quit!** Bloom is always trying to expand into different projects, from YouTube videos to MilTeen Spotlight. There is a way for everyone to get involved, so feel free to dip your toes in all the puddles! If you have ideas for other projects based on your strengths, please reach out to your leaders!

- **Share, share, share!** The more your work is shared, the more people it reaches! If you haven't already, follow us on Facebook and Instagram to participate in activities and see other blog posts by your teammates.
- **Never compare yourself to other writers on the team.** Every single person that joins our team has a different perspective and background; you can't compare apples to oranges, so don't compare yourself to anyone else! Keep doing an amazing job!
- **Your team members are your friends!** Never hesitate to reach out via email or Discord Direct Message to get feedback, bounce around ideas, or ask for support of any kind! Without collaboration, Bloom wouldn't be alive, so make sure we are working as a team to create the best possible products!
- **It gets tough sometimes.** You'll have writer's block, or maybe you just don't feel like continuing. In those times, remember that what you are doing is helping a lot of other military kids. You are creating positive change in your community, and what a wonderful thing that is!

## Rules for Writing

\*From the National Military Family Association Rules for Writing

### Frequently Asked Formatting Questions

**Acronyms** - Even if you know that an acronym is spelled out somewhere else, write it out the first time it appears in your article and give the acronym in parentheses. However, if the acronym is not used later in the article, do not give the abbreviation.

**Articles, conjunctions, and prepositions** – In titles or headings, do not capitalize words like: "the," "a," "an," "and," "as," "but," "if," "or," "nor," "at," "by," "for," "in," "of," "off," "on," "out," "to," or "up" unless they are:

- The first or last word used in a heading or title
- The first word following a dash or colon in a title

**Bullets** – Complete sentences end in a period whether they are in bullet form or not. Bullets that are not complete sentences do not require any form of punctuation at the end. The key is consistency. If one bullet is a complete sentence, all bullets should be complete sentences. If the majority of the bullets begin with a verb, they all should begin with a verb.

**Photo Captions** with several names begin - **From left to right:**

**Dates** - Reference to dates will always be in the format of month day, year (e.g., March 11, 2006). However, when the year is not necessary to list, the format will be Month day (e.g., On March 11, Congress met to discuss...) Do not write dates as "March 11<sup>th</sup>".

**Time** should be am or pm in lower case with no space after the number (e.g., 9am)

## Numbers

- Always spell out numbers **less than** ten. However, if in the case of a list of numbers, some of which exceed the number ten, use the numerals for consistency (e.g., There were 9 people who joined on Monday and 132 who joined last week.)
- Do not use “.00” (e.g., **\$1,000** NOT \$1,000.00)
- When citing amounts of people or things always use a comma for 4-digit + numbers. For example, **1,234** NOT 1234

**Quotation Marks** – Punctuation should **always** be within the quotation marks (e.g., **“My name is Mary.”** NOT “My name is Mary”.)

**Service Rank Abbreviations** - Services have different abbreviations for their ranks—always check for the proper abbreviation that corresponds to the correct service branch. You can also check this site: <http://www.defense.gov/about/insignias/officers.aspx>

**Spacing** – please use ONE space between an end-stopped sentence and the sentence following (e.g., The hat was **blue. It** also had green spots.)

**States** – spell out full name in articles, use USPS abbreviation standards for images and list displays.

**Use of Titles and Subsequent References to:** DoD and other agency leadership: Capitalize the title: Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness Dr. David Chu—in later references, say Dr. Chu; in subsequent references to Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, always use Secretary Gates or the Secretary.

## Frequently Used Terms (Formats and Capitalization)

**Airman** – capitalize

**active duty** has NO hyphen and is lower case.

**armed forces** is not capitalized, unless it is a proper noun (e.g., Armed Forces Committee, or Armed Forces Day); term refers to the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force and Coast Guard.

**Commissioned Corps** is capitalized

**Coastguardsman** – capitalize

**DoD** – Department of Defense; referred to as “*the* Department of Defense” or “*the* DoD” (RIGHT: “According to *the* Department of Defense...” NOT: “According to DoD...”)

**Em dashes:** Use an em dash like you would a semicolon. No space before or after the dash. (RIGHT: Dishes, laundry, and dusting—they’re all done, now I need to rest! WRONG: Dishes, laundry, and dusting – they’re all done, now I need to rest.)

**email** is one word and not capitalized

**family member** is two words - not capitalized

**federal** is lowercase when used as an adjective to distinguish something from state, county, etc. (ie. federal government, federal court)

**Federal** is capitalized when it is a part of the organization's formal name (e.g., Federal Trade Commission).

**health care** is two words.

**His or Her** – eliminate from writing (e.g., WRONG-Each member is responsible for his or her... RIGHT-Staff members are responsible for their...)

**Marine** – capitalize

**nation** is not capitalized, unless used in a name (e.g., United Nation, Cherokee Nation)

**National Guard and Reserve** is capitalized. Any subsequent reference can be shortened to Guard and Reserve.

**nonprofit** – One word, no hyphen, lower case

**online** is one word and not capitalized

**quality of life** is hyphenated only when it is used to modify a noun (e.g., **quality-of-life issues**)

**Reserve** does not have an "s" when referring to the Service (e.g., Army Reserve **not** Army Reserves)

**Reserve Component** – capitalize when using as a proper noun.

**reserve component** – do not capitalize when using as a term. It refers to one or more of the following:

- Army National Guard of the United States
- Army Reserve
- Naval Reserve
- Marine Corps Reserve
- Air National Guard of the United States
- Air Force Reserve
- Coast Guard Reserve
- Reserve Corps of the Public Health Service

**reserve duty** has NO hyphen.

**Retired** military personnel are referred to as: (Ret) (e.g., Gen John Michael, USMC (Ret)); if using “retired” as an adjective, it should not be capitalized (e.g., The company liked to hire retired veterans.)

**service** is not capitalized (Exception: Only when writing testimony, “Service” is capitalized when referring to one of the eight Services. This is to distinguish between “service” to the country and “Service” branch.)

**service member** is not capitalized and is two words.

**Sailor** – capitalize

**Soldier** – capitalize

**TRICARE** should be in all capital letters

**uniformed services** is not capitalized, and describes the seven Uniformed Services: Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Coast Guard, and the Commissioned Corps of the Public Health Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. It is appropriate to capitalize Uniformed

**U.S.** is not a necessary precursor to U.S. Army, U.S. Public Health Service, etc. If referring to the United States solely, spell it out rather than using “U.S.”

**veteran** is not capitalized

**website** and **web** are lower case

## Resources

Stock photos: [www.pixabay.com](http://www.pixabay.com)

List of blog post ideas from Wix: <https://www.wix.com/blog/2021/03/blog-post-templates/>

8 Tips for Writing Catchy Blog Titles: <https://compose.ly/for-writers/write-catchy-blog-titles>

Create a Killer Blog Post Title: <https://www.bramework.com/create-a-killer-blog-title/>