**Writing for socialist.ca: a 10-step guide**

**If you can explain to a friend why you’re angry about an injustice or the latest climate disaster; if you have told friends why they should attend a protest, or afterwards why the protest was important; if you want to write about “not merely what is wrong, but also, above all, what is to be done;” then you can write for socialist.ca.**

The corporate media normalize exploitation and oppression, justify colonialism and imperialism, ignore ecological destruction, defend state repression, and minimize the ability of ordinary people to change the world and themselves. The corporate media produce these ideas with small numbers of professional writers—who are trained to be “neutral” towards the antagonisms in society—and distribute these ideas to passive consumers who can’t shape its content to reflect their experience.

There are many good alternative media sites with a wide reach, which bring together the views of individual columnists or activists who represent a rage of debates and theoretical perspectives within movements, and that is their strength. But it can also be a weakness, for this can lead to articles arguing opposite conclusions—which makes it difficult for readers to translate ideas into action.

Socialist media is a specific type of alternative media that aims to challenge the ruling ideas of corporate media, reflect movements and intervene with socialist politics—connected to socialist organization. The production of socialist media is not reserved for professional writers or self-identified activists but open to all—in order to better reflect the many struggles in which people are involved. At the same time, socialist media is a not a free-for-all but a collective task, organized through an editorial board that edits articles in order to promote clarity of ideas and synthesize theory and practice.

If you don’t consider yourself a writer, don’t know what do write about, or think you’re too slow a writer—then those are all great reasons to start writing! Like all skills, writing is a process that gets easier with practice. And writing for socialist media is a collective task, including an editorial board that can help you.

To get you started here’s a simple 10-step guide. This is not meant to be a rigid framework but more of an approach to the writing process, and you might find as you write that you go back and forth between different steps, eg reading, outline, writing, and editing.

**1. CHOOSE A TOPIC**

The first step is deciding what to write about. The most direct approach is to write about your own activity. As Gigi Ibrahim explained, “By me going to this protest and writing about it and expressing my views, I was able to connect this through social media so others are aware. When peope have a clear story of what the issue is, then they can know what their simple role can do for this cause.” What movements are you building, what debates are you engaged in, what events are you attending? Talk with others about ideas.

**2. CHOOSE A FORMAT**

\* *News stories* about recent developments

\* *Reports* from protests, strikes or movement events provide an eye-witness account of developments

\* *Feature articles* allow you to take the time to write a longer article that explores in greater depth a topic and how it connects to socialist theory.

\* *Reviews* of books or movies provide a summary, and the opportunity to comment on the politics.

\* *Interviews* give voice to movement organizers or participants. You can ask about their experience, the issues of the struggle, strategic debates, or next steps.

**3. SET A DEADLINE**

*Socialist Worker* newspaper goes to press the last week of the month but socialist.ca can upload right away.

\* news article or reports should be written within days, because the sooner it is online the more relevant it is and the more likely it is to be read and shared

\* interview, feature articles or reviews take longer to write and are not as time-sensitive, but you should give yourself a deadline of a couple of weeks or you won’t write it

**4. READ ABOUT IT**

Before writing about a topic you need to read about it. Don’t worry if you don’t know initially much about the topic: writing an article is often the best way to learn about it

\* *who, what, where, and when*: often the corporate media suppress these basic facts, and simply stating them can be helpful

\* *why and how*: context and explanations have competing interpretations

**5. NOTICE DIFFERENT INTERPRETATIONS**

As you learn the facts, notice different interpretations

\* how are the corporate media presenting the issues and what are their arguments?

\* are there any good alternative media articles about it, and any debates?

\* are there any good articles by the individuals, communities or organizations the articles are about? These can provide first hand experience and quotes

\* visit socialist.ca to see related articles, and read around relevant socialist theory if you have time.

**6. MAKE A ROUGH OUTLINE**

Your outline can change as you write, but it’s good to sketch out the main structure before you start. This can also be a collective discussion with other members about points to emphasize and campaigns to promote

\* title: simple or catchy

\* first sentence summary (“pre-tell”)

\* points: what three or four main point do you want to convey, and in what order? How are you reflecting people’s experience, connecting it with socialist politics, and encouraging activity?

\* summary (“re-tell”) and next steps: how can readers get engaged with the subject through actions, events, petitions

**7. WRITE YOUR IDEAS**

Now fill it in: convert each point into sentences, and group them into paragraphs. If there are multiple paragraphs for every point you can group them into sections with subheads

\* don’t worry about spelling, sentences or paragraph structure, you can edit later. For now just get your ideas out

\* practice makes perfect. There is only one way to become a better writer, and that is by writing. The more you use this process, the easier it will get.

**8. EDIT**

\* edit for flow: eliminate redundant or unneccessary words or sentences; break up run-on sentences; rearrange paragraphs for better flow; read it aloud to hear if it makes sense

\* edit for politics:

-socialist media should be accessible, regardless of educational level or first language, so avoid jargon or uncommon words that some might not understand

-socialism is about self-emancipation, so whenever possible include quotes from the people about whom you are writing—so that socialist media can amplify the voice of their struggle

-socialists should be the “tribune of the oppressed,” fighting against every form of oppression. So avoid all words that reinforce oppression (“crazy”, “lame”, etc.), or that reinforce nationalism/immigration status (eg say “people across Canada” instead of “Canadian citizens”).

-corporate media often uses the passive voice to hide or minimize the source of oppression or exploitation, e.g. “a protester was killed”, “100 workers lost their pensions.” Use the active voice instead, e.g. “police killed a protester,” “the company cut pensions.”

\* add hyperlinks for your sources, related articles on socialist.ca, and for events or resources at the end

**9. SEND TO THE EDITOR (****reports@socialist.ca****)…WITH A PHOTO**

Socialist media is a collective task coordinated through an editorial board that edits articles to promote flow and clarity, to synthesize theory and practice, and to fit articles into a print edition when possible.

\* Don’t be shy about writing or offended by edits, We can all learn from each other, and ask the editorial board if you have questions/suggestions/concerns.

\* If you can, include a photo:

- if you’re writing a report from an event take a photo

- if you’re interviewing someone, ask if you can include their photo with the article

- if you use a photo from the web (e.g. google images) make sure it does not have non-copyright (e.g. CP, AP, Reuters)

**10. DISTRIBUTE ONLINE AND IN PRINT**

\* once your article is on socialist.ca you can email it, share it on social media and assess the response

\* if your article is in *Socialist Worker* this can make it easier to distribute to your contacts