

# Rambler Staff Policies

## Deadlines

The word speaks for itself. More accurately, the word will rule your life for the next few months. Meeting deadlines is essential to the intricate process of producing a newspaper. **When you miss a deadline, the delay has a domino effect on the rest of the editing and production process.** Deadline schedules will be posted in the office.

### **Stories and photos are due by noon on Wednesday.**

In the event that a writer or photographer cannot make the set deadline, they *must* contact the page editor for which the assignment is due and/or the Editor-in-Chief by noon on Wednesday with a legitimate reason for requesting a deadline extension. After repeatedly missing deadlines without contacting the editor, the staffer may be terminated from employment. This decision is subject to the discretion of the Editor-in-Chief. If a story or photo is assigned or due *after* the Wednesday deadline (late breaking news, event, etc.), then the page editor will give the writer/photographer a clearly stated deadline that the writer/photographer is responsible for meeting.

Stories are to be e-mailed to [twurambler@yahoo.com](mailto:twurambler@yahoo.com).

## E-mailing stories

When sending stories to *The Rambler* e-mail account ([twurambler@yahoo.com](mailto:twurambler@yahoo.com)), attach as a **Word Document** in Times font, single-spaced with .25" tabs set. The e-mail subject line should include the section the story will appear and the name of the article (i.e. Entertainment: jazz band concert preview).

## Contact Information

**All staff members must give updated contact information to the Managing Editor.** Contact information must include e-mail address, mailing address, cell and home phone numbers.

## Schedules

**All staff members must provide the Editor-in-Chief or Managing Editor a copy of their class schedules.** Senior staff members must post their schedules in the office, along with any office hours they intend to keep.

## Equipment

**Use of the office computers and printers for non-*Rambler* work is discouraged.** Our computer equipment gets a lot of use and has a tendency to malfunction periodically because of all the wear and tear. Please use the computer labs in the library basement or in the School of Business for work unrelated to *The Rambler*. Non-staff members are strictly prohibited from using *Rambler* equipment.

## Passwords

**Staff members must receive permission from the Editor-in-Chief or Managing Editor to use computer passwords.** This includes the password to any *Rambler* e-mail accounts.

### **Paperwork**

**All editors and staff writers must fill out paperwork at the beginning of the school year.** Everyone employed by *The Rambler* will need to complete a Payroll Requisition Form at the beginning of each academic year. The Business/Ad Manager will handle Payroll Requisition Forms at the first meeting of the semester. Staffers who miss this meeting or do not complete the information on the form are responsible for this form and cannot be paid without it. New *Rambler* employees must fill out a **W-4 form** and an **I-9 form** for income tax purposes. **Staff will not get paid unless all of the above is completed.**

### **Training**

**All staff members who use computers must be trained.** Staffers are expected to become proficient in using the software pertinent to their primary job assignments.

## **Rambler Hiring Policy**

**Writers/photographers:** With the consent of the Editor-in-Chief or the Managing Editor, writers and photographers may submit their work for publication. If a writer or photographer is interested in regular, paid work, he/she should request an application.

**No one will become a staff writer or photographer until at least one non-paid submission is printed.** Selection will be made based on quality of work and on ability to successfully perform all aspects of the position. Continued employment will be based on performance of job duties including, but not limited to meeting deadlines, accuracy, regularity of submissions and professional conduct.

**Senior staff:** Decisions concerning hiring of senior staff will be made by the Editor-in-Chief after interviewing the prospective editor. Applicants must complete an application including a letter of intent explaining why they want the job and what makes them suited for the job. Selection will be made based on past performance as an employee, ability to handle the responsibilities of a leadership position and ability to positively represent *The Rambler* to the campus community. Continued employment will be based on performance of duties as outlined in the job description.

## **Rambler Pay Policy**

### **Stories:**

Staff writers will receive 10 cents per word (after editing) for complete stories that include at least three sources and are turned in by deadline and subsequently published.

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Staff writers will receive 7 cents per word (after editing) for complete stories that include fewer than three sources and are turned in by deadline and subsequently published.

Late stories (stories turned in past the deadline without receiving a deadline extension from the section editor or Editor-in-Chief) may not be published or, even if published, may receive only a \$5 flat fee.

If a story has to be increased or rewritten by more than 50 percent of its original length, the writer will not be paid for the additional work completed on his/her story if someone other than the original writer completes it.

Submission of a story is not a guarantee of publication.

#### **Photos:**

Staff photographers will receive \$7 per photo that is turned in by deadline and published.

Staff Photographers are paid a one-time \$4 for a mug shot upon initial publication.

#### **Graphics/illustrations:**

Original graphics (including charts, graphs and comic strips) are \$7 each. Small icons are \$4 each.

Submission of photos, original graphics and comic strips, etc. is not a guarantee of publication.

#### **Ads:**

Staff members will receive 20 percent commission on ads sold. Staff members will be paid when *The Rambler* is compensated by advertisers. The Ad Manager will receive 5 percent commission on the ads that the staff under he/she sells.

## **Ethics**

### **Prior Review**

**Reporters and editors are not allowed to submit any portion of a completed story to a source for approval before publication.**

**Relationships and coverage:** Staffers must declare conflict and refuse involvement in stories involving themselves or those with whom they have a personal, financial or adversarial relationship.

**Fabrication of any kind:** The use of composite characters or imaginary situations or characters will not be allowed in news or feature stories. A columnist may occasionally use such an approach in developing a piece, but it must be unmistakably clear to the reader that the person or situation described is fictional. ***Knowingly altering or***

***fabricating direct quotes or facts for a story will result in immediate termination.***

**Anonymous sources:** Generally, anonymous sources are not used in stories. Information that comes from an unnamed or unknown source should not be used unless it can be verified through another known source. If two independent sources verify the information and both are unnamed, the Editor-in-Chief may decide to publish the information with careful consideration of the need for immediacy and the news value of the information. The source may be identified generally as one associated with an agency to give some degree of credibility to the information. The danger exists that the reader may not believe the information if sources are not given and the publication's credibility may suffer; information obtained later from a named source, and verified, may disprove the information given by the unnamed or unknown sources.

**Contests, honors:** *The Rambler* has a proprietary interest in the material it publishes. Thus, *The Rambler* as a voting group or the Editor-in-Chief is entitled to determine which entries will be submitted to contests. This will avoid the appearance of a conflict of interest that may occur if staffers were to win or accept awards from organizations they are assigned to cover. Awards presented to the staff as a whole or *The Rambler* becomes the property of the paper. Individuals who win awards for work published in *The Rambler* may accept the award and retain ownership of it.

**Cooperation with law enforcement, government and university administration:** A publication must remain independent in order to be an effective watchdog. The publication should not take over any of the duties of any outside agency. Cooperation or involvement in the work of these agencies should be restricted to what is required by law. Staffers should be familiar with any freedom-of-information, open meetings and shield laws that apply to their work. If a staffer believes any public authority is interfering with his or her responsibility and/or function as a journalist, the matter should be reported to the Editor-in-Chief.

**Corrections:** An inaccuracy is never knowingly published. If any error is found, the publication is obligated to correct it as soon as possible, regardless of the source of the error. A consistent location for the publication of corrections will be determined by the Editor-in-Chief. It should be clearly and prominently labeled as a correction.

**Electronically altered photos:** Readers expect photos and stories to be truthful. Therefore, electronic alteration of photos for news and general feature stories, or even those used as stand-alone news or feature photos, is prohibited. Photo content may be altered as a special effect if the caption or credit line clearly states that the photo has been altered and if the average reader would not mistake the photo illustration for an un-posed, unaltered photo.

**False identity, stolen documents, concealed recording, eavesdropping:** No staffers shall misrepresent themselves as anything other than representatives of *The Rambler* in the ordinary course of reporting a story. Staffers may not steal or knowingly receive stolen materials. A staffer shall not record an interview or meeting without the

interviewee's permission, or without placing a recording device in plain view (not hidden) of the subject at the start of the interview or meeting. If an interview subject objects to the use of a recording device, the reporter should consent to the subject's wishes but should also point out that use of a recording device during an interview insures greater accuracy of the reporter's notes — especially when attributing quotes — that can in some ways protect the subject. No *Rambler* staffer will commit an illegal act to eavesdrop on a source.

**Granting and preserving confidentiality to sources:** A reporter should not promise confidentiality to a source without the permission of the Editor-in-Chief. Confidentiality should be given only if there is a real danger that physical, emotional or financial harm will come to the source if his name were revealed. The Editor-in-Chief should have all the facts and the source's name before making a promise of confidentiality. A reporter must make every attempt to get the same information from another source that will agree to be named, since the goal is to attribute all information to a specific source for all stories.

**Negative stereotyping:** Staffers will take care while writing to avoid applying common, but usually erroneous, group stereotypes to individuals. Generalizations based upon stereotypes are misleading and inaccurate. In a broader sense, writers and photographers should avoid subtle stereotyping in their selection of interviewees and subjects of photographs. Some examples of negative stereotypes: unmarried, black, teenage, welfare mothers; unemployed, alcohol-using Native Americans; limp-wristed, effeminate gays; inarticulate, dumb, blond women.

**Plagiarism of words, art, other** (from 1998-2000 Student Handbook, page 57): Offering the work of another as one's own without proper acknowledgement is plagiarism; therefore, any student who fails to give credit to quotations or essentially identical material taken from books, encyclopedias, magazines or other reference works or from themes, reports or other writings of a fellow student has committed plagiarism. This also applies to the use of graphics and other illustrated material.

**Posed photos:** Set-up or posed scenes may be used if the average reader will not be confused or misled, or if the caption or credit line clearly states that the photograph is an illustration.

**Profane, vulgar words, explicit sexual language:** The primary readers of college newspapers are adults. Although words considered profane or vulgar are commonly used by some persons in everyday conversation, this vocabulary is not normally used for scholarly or academic writing, even at the collegiate level. Writers for *The Rambler* are expected to attain the most advanced writing skills, including development of a substantial vocabulary and precision of language. Thus, profane, vulgar or explicit language is not appropriate in opinion or feature writing. Reporters will encounter interview subjects who use such language; if the words are essential to the reader's understanding of the story, the reality of the subject's life or the expression of the subject's character, the language may be published. Explicit language — but not vulgar,

street language — may be used to describe sexual activities or human body parts in crime or health issue stories.

**Reporting names, addresses of crime victims:** *The Rambler* will not publish the names of rape victims. Deviation from this editorial policy is unacceptable. Victims of nonsexual crimes may be identified, but the newspaper has a responsibility to give some protection to the victim (such as giving imprecise address), with the exception of major crimes an arrested person is not named until charges are filed.

**Scrutiny of a public person's life:** Conflicts exist between an individual's desire for privacy and the public's right to know about a public person's private life. Persons who freely choose to become celebrities or public servants should expect a greater level of scrutiny of their life than that which a private person is subject to — greater even than that of a private person who suddenly is involved in a matter of public concern. Staffers should make judgments based on the real news value of the situation, common sense and common decency. Publishing intimate details of a person's life, such as their health or sexual histories, should be done with extreme caution, after extensive and responsible verification of the information — and then only if the facts are important for the completeness of a story and if they are significant to the public life of the subject.

**Sexist language:** Staffers will avoid sexist labels and descriptive language and replace them with neutral terms and descriptions. For example, sports reporters will refer to athletes as men and women. Because sports coaches often casually refer to student athletes as boys or girls, reporters may politely inform coaches that all verbal references will be changed in story texts to reflect the editorial policy of *The Rambler*.

**Use of photographs of victims of accidents, fires and natural disasters:** Photos have a tremendous impact on readers. The question of privacy versus the public's right to know should be considered. The line between good and bad taste and reality and sensationalism is not always easy to draw. Care should be taken to maintain the dignity of the subject as much as possible without undermining the truth of the event.

**Use of racial, ethnic or other group identifiers:** Identification of a person as a member of any population group should be limited solely to those cases when that cultural or social identification is essential for the reader's complete understanding of the story: it should be done with great care so that the writer does not inadvertently perpetuate negative group stereotyping. Reporters are cautioned that use of any cultural identifier will invariably offend some member of the subject group who prefers a different identifier. The reporter must always ask each subject which identifier he or she prefers. For example, some Wesleyan students identify themselves as deaf; others prefer the term hearing impaired. Other examples of identifiers: Hispanic, Jew, lesbian, person with AIDS (PWA), physically challenged.

## Conduct

**Professional office conduct is expected at all times from every member of the**

**staff.** This is a place of business — foul language, temper tantrums, distasteful or disrespectful behavior will not be tolerated and may result in disciplinary action.

**Keep personal conflict out of the office.** A staffer with a personal (read: non-*Rambler* related) disagreement with another staff member should resolve the disagreement outside of the office. Such conflicts distract other staffers from the business at hand. If a conflict involves *Rambler* matters, staffers should make a sincere attempt at resolving that issue themselves. If the conflict persists, then set up a meeting with the Editor-in-Chief. A meeting with the adviser is the last resort.

**Please be courteous to visitors.** Don't ignore them. *Rambler* staff should greet them, introduce themselves and ask how they can help them. If the staff member they are looking for isn't available, take their name and telephone number and assure them they will be contacted soon.

**Keep the work area clean!** Potential advertisers, other students, faculty and staff may visit *The Rambler* office. Editors should keep the desks clear of files, notes and other papers. This will improve the professional appearance of the office and help everyone who must share the workspace. Most importantly, when writers are working on a story, they should remember that they have materials on their desks that should not necessarily be seen by anyone who happens to walk through the office.

### **Sexual Harassment**

**Sexual harassment is strictly prohibited.** As defined by Texas Wesleyan University, sexual harassment is unwelcome sexual advances, request for sexual favors, or other verbal, visual or physical conduct of a sexual nature in the following context: *when submission to, or rejection of, such conduct is used as the basis for employment or academic decisions when such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with one's work or academic performance by creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive work or academic environment.*

### **Internal Issues**

All professional organizations regard staff disagreements as internal matters. Thus, **internal disagreements are not to be broadcast to outsiders.** Criticizing colleagues or supervisors to outsiders, especially when staffers have failed to make an effort to resolve their concerns in a professional manner with their editors, ***will not be tolerated and may be grounds for dismissal.***

### **Visitors**

**Social visitors are not welcome in the office.** *Rambler* staff are free to invite business/advertising clients, interview or photo subjects into the office at any time. However, staffers should entertain friends, family and significant others elsewhere.

### **Telephone**

**Staff members should use the hall telephone or their own cell phone for personal calls.** Incoming personal calls in the office should not last longer than five minutes

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during office hours.

**Long distance phone calls may not be made without the permission of the Editor-in-Chief or the adviser.** The long distance phone bill for the office is carefully monitored. Anyone who uses the long distance telephone code for any calls other than those related to *Rambler* business will be expected to pay for the calls immediately.

**Answer the phone promptly, and be pleasant and professional.** When taking messages for other staff members, get the full name of the caller, a brief message, a phone number and the time of the call. If the message is urgent (i.e. a faculty member trying to reach a staff writer about an interview), try to contact the staff member ASAP.

## University Publications Policies

The University considers the student press a valuable aid in establishing and maintaining an atmosphere of free and responsible discussion. Student publications are a means of disseminating news, of bringing campus concerns to the attention of institutional authorities and of formulating opinion on local, national and international issues.

Each publication should provide a full opportunity for students to inquire, question and exchange ideas. Content should reflect a diversity of student interests, including topics about which there may be dissent or controversy.

In order to maintain the quality and integrity of the student press, the university provides reasonable financial support and adequate facilities for official publications. Administrators have delegated to a student-faculty governing body the task of clarifying the role of student publications and establishing guidelines for their operation. Guidelines published in the Student Publication Handbook outline the editorial freedom and the corollary responsibility of the student press.

The university assumes no liability for the content of any student publication and urges student journalists to recognize that with editorial control comes responsibility to follow professional journalism standards.

Editorial freedom for the publications is protected by allowing editors to develop their own editorial positions and determine news coverage. University officials are not permitted to review copy prior to distribution for censorship purposes, nor may they remove editors or advisors because of student, faculty, administrative, or public disapproval of editorial decisions. Moreover, university funding cannot be withheld because of editorial decisions.

In determining the content of the publications, editors should:

- Make editorial decisions based on reader interest and sound journalism principles.

- Review material to improve sentence structure, grammar, spelling and

punctuation.

Verify fact and the accuracy of quotations.

Provide balanced news coverage of campus events.

Include factual support for editorials.

Encourage rebuttal comments and provide space when appropriate.

State in the masthead (staff box) or on the editorial page that opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the university or the student body.

Students work with an advisory staff that provides clerical, business, advertising and production support as well as editorial advising. The advisory staff has primary responsibility for maintaining journalism standards, providing sound fiscal management, recruiting and training student staff members, assisting student editors and managers in developing and improving their management techniques, and for providing evaluations and recommending improvements of staff members and publications, as well as assisting students with financial aid, support systems, internships and postgraduate employment.

### **Personnel**

The university recognizes that the student publications are staffed by journalistic beginners who not only are allowed but encouraged to be innovative and creative. Mistakes that may result, whether in judgment or technique, are to be expected occasionally and recognized as part of the learning process. Professional journalistic standards are the goal of the student publications but within the framework of permitting student staff members the opportunity to fail and learn from the experience.

### **Editorial policies**

*The Rambler* shall be published weekly during the academic term, except for vacation and final exam periods, as budget permits. Authority and responsibility for all news and editorial content shall rest with the editor who shall seek the advice of the adviser. The editor is responsible to the Student Publications Committee, for all content that has the filial authority on behalf of the publisher (the president of the university). *The Rambler* is not a public relations organ, nor is it the “property” of the editor and his /her staff; it is a news medium and a forum of ideas opinions and information from, for, and related to the Wesleyan community — its students, faculty, staff administrators and trustees. Practices or content that violates any law — local, state or federal regulations of the university are prohibited. Content and practices should also conform to good journalistic standards and accepted community standards. Recognizing that “standards” are subjective, evaluation of content and practices should be representative and fair, not arbitrary, and shall be the province, authority and responsibility of the Student Publication Committee. *The Rambler* should standardize its style and implement these practices on a day-to-day basis. It shall be the responsibility and authority of the editor to oversee such positive control over content and practices, and to seek assistance from the advisor and/or others in implementing and maintaining consistency and quality. One such control would be the reliance upon a university stylebook, such as The Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual, and an updated Rambler stylebook approved by the SPC.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I certify that I have received a copy of *The Rambler's* staff manual and have read and fully understood the contents. I understand that failure to comply with *The Rambler's* policies and rules may result in disciplinary action up to and including discharge. I understand that the staff manual is not intended to be a contract of employment, express or implied, and that my employment is at will, for no specific period of time, and may be terminated at any time by the Editor-in-Chief. No editor or staff member has any authority to enter into any agreement for employment for any specified period of time, or to make any agreement contrary to the foregoing unless approved in writing by the Editor-in-Chief. *The Rambler* reserves the right to revise or terminate any or all policies and procedure, in whole or in part, with or without notice at any time.

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EMPLOYEE NAME

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EMPLOYEE SIGNATURE

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DATE SIGNED

This page must be turned in to the Managing Editor to be placed in your employment file.