

80 Micro Writer's Guidelines

80 Micro is unlike most magazines of its size because we rely on the amateur writer for nearly all our articles. We realize not all good programmers are good writers, so we have compiled these simple guidelines. If you stick to them, you will have a much easier time writing for us. If you are already a published author, then these guidelines will give you some insight to our editorial philosophy.

To Write, or Not to Write

The most difficult decision you will make is whether your article idea is worthy of publication. There are two key factors we use to determine which articles to accept for publication: Is the topic different from what has already been published, and will the topic interest enough of our readers to make it worth its price?

As an example, we receive many articles about using the TRS-80 for home finance. This is an overworked topic and this type of article will probably not be accepted. Also, esoteric application articles stand a good chance of rejection; while not many readers are interested in a program that catalogs your toothpick collection, there may be interest in a program that catalogs postage stamps.

If you have any doubts, send a query letter. State your topic and provide a brief outline of the article. Indicate whether you consider it an application, tutorial, product review, utility or other type of article (check our table of contents to get a general idea of the categories). If you think it will help, tell us about your computing background; this is especially important when doing reviews. Query letters prevent your duplicating an article already accepted.

Article categories include:

- Business—anything concerning finance, using TRS-80s in business, tax programs, and so on.
- Education—TRS-80s as a teaching aid and as an administrative helper.
- Games.
- Graphics—techniques or specific applications.
- Hardware—construction, application or technique.
- Review—user report on commercial products.
- Tutorial—lessons for the user in various techniques or use of certain products.
- Utility—programs that aid the programmer or user in various applications, e.g., a printer patch for a specific word processor to a specific printer.
- General—anything that does not fit the above categories.

Software Articles

Most of our articles deal with software; many

people buy *80 Micro* just to get the programs we publish each month. We expect you to provide a bug-free program and a clear explanation of how to use it. We require a cassette or disk with the program listing on it. This lets us print the listing in a format suitable for the magazine and include it in LOAD80. We consider the cost of the tape or disk when appraising an article.

LOAD80 is the cassette or disk version of selected programs that appear in *80 Micro*. We choose programs for LOAD80 primarily on length and usefulness.

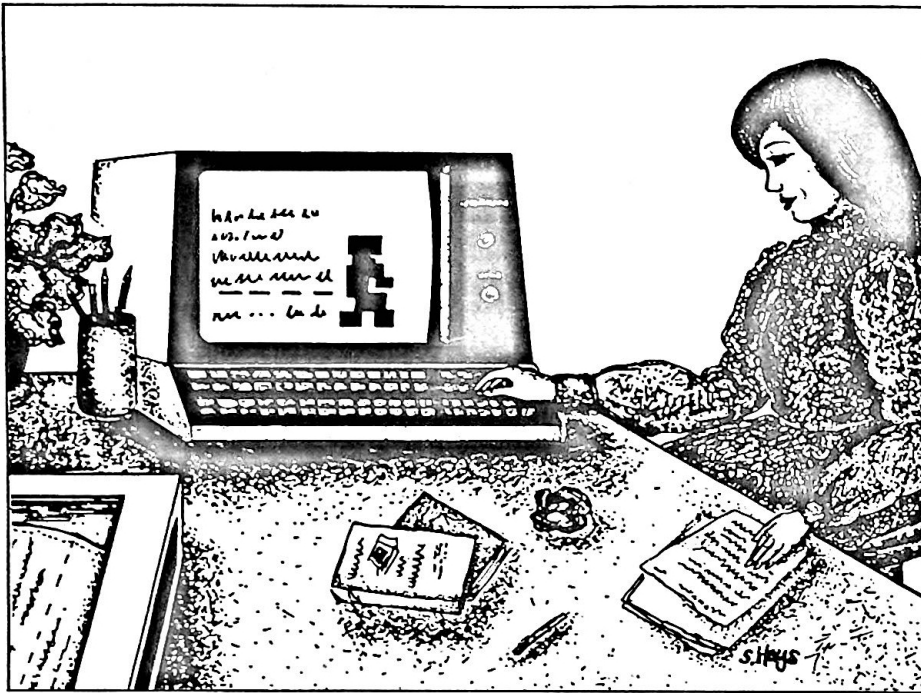
We often publish tutorials on well known software, Scripsit for example. We look for information that takes up where the documentation left off; perhaps you have discovered an application the publisher did not consider. We also publish enhancements to established programs; such articles should be of use to enough readers to warrant publication.

Popular software applications include business (home and office), education, hobby, science and, of course, games. Programs in these fields should offer something different from what has already been published, or it might be an enhancement of an old idea. We look for articles that can be used by a fair portion of our readers; keep that in mind when writing your article.

Remember that our average reader is not very technically knowledgeable. Write as if you were explaining the program and its functions and terms to the computer novice. Some exceptions are made for articles aimed specifically at the advanced reader. These exceptions, however, are fairly rare.

Hardware Articles

Hardware construction articles require a



great deal of expertise. Do not submit hardware modification articles unless you have built the mod yourself and have used it long and often enough to be sure of the mod's reliability.

Draw all diagrams and figures on separate pages and reference them clearly in the text. Circuit diagrams need not be camera ready, but be sure they are drawn clearly enough and with enough directions for our artist to reproduce. Our draftsmen will reproduce your drawing as it is. If, for instance, you want a space where none shows on your drawing, you must indicate this clearly. Each figure must be accompanied by a caption.

Define electronic terms that may not be clear to all readers. Photos add to the value of construction articles, but they must be in focus and have good contrast. Black-and-white photos are preferred.

Write in plain, jargon-free English; use precise words. For example, if something must be soldered on a board, say "solder," not "attach."

Reviews

Reviews provide a valuable reader service.

They not only separate the good products from the bad, but ideally tell the user which product is best suited for his or her application.

80 Micro is always looking for well written reviews by knowledgeable people. If you are using a product you would like to review in our pages, here are a few guidelines:

1. Be familiar with the type of product you wish to review. For example, do not send us a review of a macroassembler unless you have experience using several different macroassemblers. Games are exceptions to this rule. Briefly state your qualifications for reviewing the product.

2. For your convenience and ours, send a short query letter to our review editor before you write a review. This prevents duplications and wasted effort. Again, state your qualifications for doing the review.

3. Be specific about what applications the product is best suited for. A slow, letter-quality printer would not be suitable for someone who needs lots of copy quickly, but it may be ideal for someone who sends out a modest amount of correspondence. You should briefly describe the circumstances under which you used the

product and suggest under what conditions the product would perform at its best and worst.

4. If you have a serious problem with the product, contact the manufacturer. Sometimes there is a solution already available; sometimes the manufacturer is less than helpful. You should mention how the company responded to your queries. Do not send the review to the company for an okay; do not write a review if you have an affiliation with the company whose product you wish to review. Send us copies of any correspondence you have with the product manufacturer.

5. If a product is so bad you have nothing good to say about it, do not review it. We do not intend to eliminate criticism; we believe products developed that poorly do not deserve the publicity and space even a bad review would give them.

6. Conversely, try not to be over-exuberant about a good product. Be objective in your praise without sounding like an advertisement.

7. Write a thorough review. Include price; an appraisal of features, flexibility, durability and documentation; and how well the company supports the product. Emphasize the significance of the good and bad points; back up your statements with examples.

8. Stick with the topic and make your points quickly. Readers do not want to wade through five paragraphs of "war stories" to reach the first mention of the reviewed product. Be concise.

9. Photos and samples of the product's output, when appropriate, enhance a review by providing a graphic example. Be sure the photos are sharp and clear, preferably black and white, and of good contrast (no Polaroids, please).

10. Make sure the product is current. If you have version 3.1, check with the company to see if it has been replaced by version 3.2. Also, there are many items that have been around for some time, but have not been reviewed by us. Generally, we prefer not to accept reviews on these products so we can devote more space to newer ones. Similarly, many games are rehashes of old standards. Do not review a game unless it is new and has some unusual features or a new twist. A short query letter will help deciding these matters.

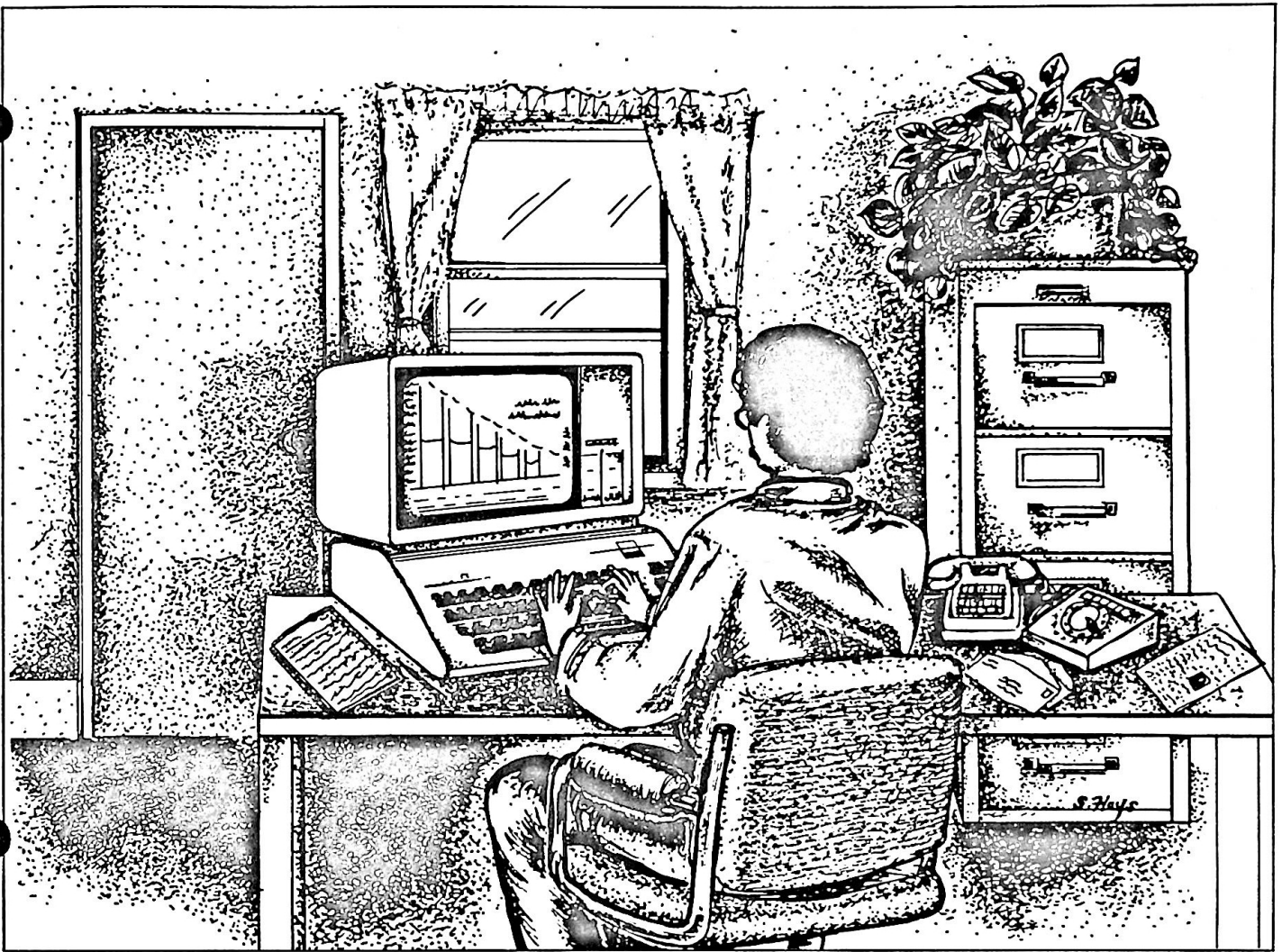
11. Be methodical in your review. A typical format would be: a short description of the product; an assessment of its significant features; a general statement on how it stacks up against the competition; your overall impression; and who would gain the most or least from using the product.

12. Do not call a company and say you are doing a review for us and request a copy of the product. This is the job of the review editor, and any review copy requested in the name of *80 Micro* must be obtained by a staff member. If you need a review copy, contact us.

13. We encourage comparison reviews. If you want to do such a review, make sure you have access to all the competing products. Avoid saying, "This one is better than that one." Look for applications for which each product is best suited before coming to a general conclusion.

Commonly Misspelled Words

adapter	nanosecond	Schmitt trigger
bus, buses	operand	Schottky
converter	Pascal (lowercase)	setup (n.)
decibel	percent	standoff
disk	perfboard	teleprinter (no capital)
flowchart	preamp	timebase
hobbyist	printout	time-sharing
logkeeping	pull-up	troubleshooter
microcomputer	real-time	warm-up
microprocessor (no hyphen)	resistor	wire-wrap
minifloppy		Z80



14. Some products are not easily reviewable. How do you judge the performance of one edge connector against another? If all you can say about a product fits within two typewritten pages, chances are it is one of these products.

15. Include the complete address and phone number of the company involved.

Don'ts

Below is a list of cardinal sins that you should avoid committing when writing for *80 Micro*:

1. Do not submit your article on erasable paper. This makes your article nearly impossible to edit and creates smudges. Do not send anything in on the metallic, heat-sensitive printout paper.

2. Do not single space copy, as this also makes editing difficult. Single-spaced submissions, as well as any other submission not adhering to these guidelines, will be returned to you.

3. Avoid writing in the passive voice. Use the active voice instead. I.e., do not say, "The dog was bit by the man." Say, "The man bit the dog." The passive voice makes your article sound wordy. If you use the active voice your article will read much better. Of course, you cannot always avoid using the passive, but eliminate it as much as possible. Use the pres-

ent tense whenever possible; avoid the words "will" and "was."

4. Do not use footnotes; incorporate what you have to say within the text.

5. Do not reference your sources outside of

*"Do not submit
your article on
erasable paper. . .
Do not single
space copy."*

the text unless it is absolutely necessary. Give credit to the parties involved within the text if it is convenient.

6. Avoid excessive abbreviations and capitalizations. Frequent use of contractions and abbreviations looks and sounds unprofessional.

7. NEVER submit your article to more than one publication at the same time without saying so in your cover letter. Should more than one magazine publish your article, it causes copyright problems for the publications involved and reflects poorly upon your credibility. If we accept an article and, for any reason, you decide you do not want it published in *80 Micro*, notify us before you submit it elsewhere. Remember, by cashing your check you are making a contract with us; it is too late to change your mind once the check is cashed.

8. Do not send any revisions or corrections to your article until you receive your author's proofs; unexpected changes interrupt our work flow.

9. Do not contact us concerning your article's acceptance unless it has been more than 10 weeks since you submitted it. We carefully evaluate all submissions, and the average time it takes before we notify you of acceptance or rejection is six to ten weeks.

Dos

This is a list of things you should do before sending a submission to us:

1. Check and double check your program and article for errors. It is impossible for us to run every program we receive, and we depend

on you for the integrity of the article.

2. Make sure all program listings, diagrams, schematics, tables, photos and so on are included and properly labeled. Do not use felt pens on photos; they tend to soak through and ruin the photo.

3. Spell everything out; do not use confusing abbreviations.

4. If your schematics and diagrams are not photo ready, make sure they can be easily copied by our artist. Keep all these items separate from the rest of the text, but be sure to reference them within the text.

5. Put your name and page number on every page you submit. This prevents a page from unknowingly becoming lost.

6. If you use an uncommon abbreviation or acronym, define it within parentheses the first time you use it within the text. You may use the shortened form thereafter.

7. Double space all text; use upper and lowercase letters. Articles not in this format will be returned.

8. Copy everything before you send it to us. Sometimes we do lose things.

9. We now publish a bio box with each article giving a little background on the author. You may include this in the original submission. A short paragraph about your work, how long you have used computers, education, and so on is all that is needed.

10. We also must know the system configuration the article is written for. Indicate whether it is for a Model I, II, III, Color or Pocket Computer, the memory required, operating system, and special hardware or software needed. List only the information pertinent to the article.

11. Use subtitles to break up long articles.

12. Keep your article titles short, preferably to three or four words.

13. Include your social security number on all submissions.

Other Things You Should Know

When you submit an article to *80 Micro*, you will receive a card from us indicating that we have received it and that it is being considered for publication. If you do not receive this card within a few weeks, let us know; your article may have never reached us.

If we accept your article, you will receive another notice indicating the purchase price and the assigned article number. Use this number when referring to your article in any correspondence with us. At this point it is not necessary to confirm that you accept our terms, but if you decide to withdraw the article, notify us immediately.

We pay roughly \$50 per published page, which translates to about five or six typewritten pages. Program listings, photos, figures and so on add to the value of the article. Contact us immediately if the terms we offer are not satisfactory to you. We pay upon acceptance.

We evaluate articles according to length, usefulness, presentation and how much work is required to get it published. All these factors are taken into account when we set the price. Remember this when preparing your article.

If we use your program in *LOAD80*, you can expect an additional, separate payment.

80 Micro buys all rights. Acceptance and pay-



ment do not guarantee publication. If you do not wish to sell all rights, we may consider buying first publication rights only if you indicate this when you submit the article. We occasionally buy first publication rights only for exceptional articles.

Expect your article to be edited, perhaps heavily. We buy articles for their content, and our editors will sometimes rewrite an article if

they believe its content can be presented in a better way.

You will receive proofs of the text and other material before we publish your article. Please check these carefully. If we made a mistake in the editing of the article, you may be the only one to catch it. Check your program listing carefully as well to be sure it is complete and accurate.

Submission

Send all review submissions and query letters to:

80 Micro

Review Editor

Pine St.

Peterborough, NH 03458

Send all other submissions and query letters to:

80 Micro

Manuscript Editor

Pine St.

Peterborough, NH 03458

Good Luck!

80 Micro Author's Guidelines Addendum

We are currently interested in the following:

*Science programs, with the exception of astronomy; business applications; interesting and unique spreadsheet templates; tutorials on how to get more out of commercial software; and programs that link together two or more commercial software packages.

*We would like to see more Model 4 programs, particularly utilities and business applications.

*We're interested in unusual educational software. We are not interested, however, in test generators and drill programs.

*We'd like to see some short, original games, in both Assembly and Basic.

We're not interested the following:

*articles that deal exclusively with the Model I, II/12/16, Model 100, or Model 2000. We will consider programs written for the Model I, but they must be compatible with the Model III, and preferably with the Model 4. We will consider articles that discuss the above systems if their scope is broad enough to appeal to the entire TRS-80 community.

*Articles on the Color Computer.

*General articles that do not deal specifically with TRS-80 computers.

*Screen-formatting, -draw, and -dump programs; printer graphics programs for Epson printers; stock market analysis and graphing programs; flash card and math drill programs; test generators; calculator programs; disk file managers; and Scripsit modifications. Submissions in the these categories will need to be exceptional and original before we consider them.

Some miscellaneous notes:

*We would like to see more short programs. Programs whose listings are more than 8-10 manuscript pages must be exceptional to be considered.

*We are receiving an increasing number of improperly prepared manuscripts. Please remember the following: Manuscripts must be double-spaced. We require a printouts of both manuscripts and programs, as well as a magnetic copy of programs. Material should be submitted in a standard 10 by 13-inch envelope, and should include an SASE.

*Please note that the earliest date an accepted article will usually be published is six months from date of acceptance. This is important to remember when submitting seasonal material; a tax preparation program, for instance, would need to be submitted in July of the previous year for publication in January.