



Writers' Guidelines

THE MAGAZINE

Cottage Life is the magazine for and about water-based cottagers. Although most of our readers live in Ontario, we welcome stories about cottages and cottaging in other parts of Canada and the northern U.S. We publish six issues a year: March, April/May, June, July/August, September/October, and November/December. Our annual boating supplement, *Cottage Life Boating*, is included with the April/May issue, and we produce a large real estate section for March. The magazine has a strong service slant, combining useful "how-to" journalism with coverage of the people, trends, and issues in cottage country. Regular columns are devoted to cottage design and architecture, boating, watersports, projects, real estate, cooking, nature, personal cottage experience, and environmental, political, and financial issues of concern to cottagers. Depending on the subject, these can be anywhere from 1,000 to 1,800 words long. Our front-of-the-book department, *On the Waterfront*, features short news, humour, human interest, and service items, with a maximum length of 400 words. (If you have not previously written for the magazine, *On the Waterfront* is an excellent place to break into the book.) Features range from 1,500 to 3,500 words and cover every aspect of cottage living – including profiles of cottagers, cottages, and cottage communities, historical "flashbacks," investigations of relevant environmental and political issues, and in-depth service pieces that help readers solve common cottage problems. The magazine does not publish poetry or fiction. The fee varies with the length and complexity of the story, and the writer's experience. Rates range from \$75–\$400 for *On the Waterfront* items; \$750–\$2,000 for columns; and \$1,800 to about \$3,500 for features. The editor and writer will agree on the fee when the story is assigned.

Cottage Life demands accurate, lively writing that demonstrates a breadth and depth of knowledge about the cottaging experience. Writers are expected to support their logic with interviews and thorough research. We're looking for stories that are more than just good information – they must also be a good read. The only way to become familiar with *Cottage Life* and its style is to read a few recent issues of the magazine.

THE PROCESS

Queries should be in writing. The query should include a succinct outline – a page or less should do – explaining your angle, why the story is timely and appropriate for the magazine, potential sources, and expected length. If you haven't previously written for us, please enclose samples of your published work and some background information. Include your telephone number and e-mail address. We're a small, very busy shop, but if you don't hear from us within a month, please call.

Lead times are long The first draft of an article must be in-house two to three months before the issue for which it is scheduled is published.

Manuscripts We generally receive manuscripts via e-mail. If you submit hard copy, it should be double or triple-spaced and have a healthy margin.

Fixes and editing are normal parts of the editorial process. For substantial alterations, stories will be returned to writers for revisions. If time is short and alterations are minor, changes will be made after close telephone or e-mail consultation. However, last-minute cuts without notification may be necessary because of space limitations. >>

Changing a story line after it's assigned could cause problems. If the story doesn't work out the way you thought it would, discuss it with us well before the deadline. We may not want a story that's fundamentally different from the one you originally agreed to write.

Previews of manuscripts by sources are a no-no. Assure your sources that a fact-checker will call them to verify the material used. If an interview subject requests to see your story before it's published, call us. We may prefer to drop the story.

A checking sheet must accompany the first draft of your story, listing all sources and their telephone numbers and e-mail addresses. (It helps if you point out difficult or possibly hostile subjects.) Be precise. Include copies of all printed materials you have used in your research. If you have drawn material from a book, provide page references and a copy; or photocopy the title page and the relevant material. Also, please note if any sources are going out of town for extended periods. If our researchers can't verify a fact to our satisfaction, we can't print it as part of your story.

Payment is made promptly on acceptance of a fully satisfactory manuscript. Please submit an invoice with your story.

Expenses will be paid when we get an itemized list with receipts. Phone expenses are a given, but travel expenses should be discussed with an editor and approved before they are incurred.

Kill fees are payable on assigned stories only. If the article is unacceptable and cannot be fixed, the kill fee is usually 50% of the original fee. If you do the job we agreed on and the piece is killed by *Cottage Life* for other reasons, the kill fee is usually 100%.

Subsidiary rights and reprints are your business. *Cottage Life* buys first English-language North American rights, so any inquiries about reprints or adaptations will be referred directly to you. Occasionally we may want to issue reprints – we'll be in touch beforehand.

Electronic rights A fee of 5% of the original story rate will be paid if the piece is used on our website. The editor will discuss electronic rights with the writer when the story is assigned for the magazine.

The art department appreciates your help. Keep the visual side of the story in mind as you proceed with your research. We appreciate information on things you may have seen in the course of your interviews that present good photo opportunities. Let us know about people and places you think are particularly photogenic, and please feel free to pass along brochures, pictures, or other materials that you think might be useful as reference for illustration.

Deadlines are a fact of publishing life and should not be violated. If it looks like you're going to be late, please let your editor know well in advance (which is not the day before the piece is due).

And, finally, if you just want to pick up the phone to discuss your story – its progress or problems – by all means do so. We're a friendly bunch. 🐾