

# MISSISSIPPI

M a g a z i n e

## Writer's Guidelines

*Mississippi Magazine* is a bimonthly publication that celebrates the positive points of our state—from interesting people and places to homes, gardens, food, history, culture, special events, and more. All topics that appear in the magazine have a **direct and obvious link** to Mississippi.

Many of our articles are written by freelance contributors, and because our magazine is only published six times each year, we must choose each story very carefully. We often develop story ideas ourselves and assign them to freelancers. To be considered for such assignments, send at least three clips of your recent work, along with a letter detailing your writing specialties. We also welcome article proposals from freelance writers themselves. Follow these tips to ensure that your idea will be properly considered.

### Developing a Story Idea

Before submitting a query, study at least one recent issue of *Mississippi Magazine*. Familiarize yourself with our editorial style and the types of articles we generally include. Sample copies are available for \$5 each; mail a check (Memo: Sample Copy) to *Mississippi Magazine*, 5 Lakeland Circle, Jackson, MS 39216.

Consider whether your idea will fit well in our publication. Try to place your story within one of our current issues and see if you can visualize it, illustrations and all. Chances are, if you can't see the story in the magazine, you will have a hard time convincing the editorial staff to use it.

We are always looking for unusual subjects that still manage to fit within our editorial scope. Find a unique perspective that you can use to make your story out of the ordinary. A general story on a well-covered topic (like the Natchez Trace, the city of Oxford, or Eudora Welty) is not likely to be accepted. We are looking for unique topics or fresh angles on familiar ideas.

Keep in mind that we strive to be original, so don't propose an article on something you've recently seen in another statewide publication unless you have a very different perspective or new information.

We do not accept fiction; poetry; articles relating to politics, business news, or controversial topics; or previously published articles.

### Suitable Topics

Subjects that we regularly cover include interesting people, places, or events; unique historical subjects; great gardens or gardening topics; beautiful and unique homes or interior design; and party or recipe ideas.

For new writers, departments—rather than features—are often the best places to break into our magazine. These include:

**Southern Scrapbook**— Short (100- to 600-word) articles on a variety of topics. See recent issues for examples. Due to the brevity of these articles, we prefer to consider **full manuscripts** instead of queries.

**Culture Center**— 800-1,200-word articles on a specific artist or any aspect of the arts, culture, theater, or music in Mississippi.

**Gardening**— 800-1,200-word articles on specific planting topics or profiles of individual gardens.

**Home Pages**— 400-800-word reviews of new books that directly relate to Mississippi.

**On Being Southern**— The last page of each issue is a personal essay written by someone with a Mississippi connection. These essays may be humorous, are often nostalgic, may be related to a specific season, and should always have an upbeat, positive tone. **Full manuscripts** must be submitted for consideration and must be 500-800 words. Send these stories by email (no attachments, please) or by U.S. mail on a disk in text-only format, along with a printed hard copy and cover letter containing your name, address, social security number, daytime phone number, and a short biographical sentence.

### Submitting a Query Letter

With a few exceptions (noted above), we prefer preliminary query letters to unsolicited full manuscripts. Queries allow us to more easily review your idea and potentially suggest how to tailor it for our audience before you begin writing. Due to the large volume of queries we receive, **we cannot accept story ideas by phone**. And no simultaneous submissions, please.

Because we are a bimonthly publication, keep in mind that we plan each issue several months in advance. Seasonal topics should be submitted well in advance of the intended issue date.

Query letters must be typed and must include the following information:

- Name, address, daytime phone number, and email address.
- The subject of story, along with (if applicable) the intended department or or specific issue for which it would be appropriate.
- Your proposed lead, followed by a short but thorough summary of the story's content—noting potential interviewees, sources, and other highlights—and a conclusion. Also note any ideas for sidebars.
- Details about why you think this story would be of interest to the readers of *Mississippi Magazine*.

• Any photographs you have to illustrate the article. This is crucial for home, garden, or art-related story ideas. For consideration purposes only, snapshots are fine. If you have strong photography skills and would like us to consider using your photographs along with the article, please submit high-quality prints or 35mm color transparencies. For articles on subjects other than home, garden, and art, it's okay if you don't have photos, but please briefly describe how the article will lend itself to visual presentation.

- Brief information about yourself and your writing experience.
- A few recent clips or samples of your work.

All queries must also include a **self-addressed stamped envelope** for a reply and for the return of any materials you would like to have back. Always make a copy of any original materials before submitting. *Mississippi Magazine* assumes no responsibility for the return of unsolicited materials.

Queries sent by U.S. mail are preferred, but emailed queries are acceptable if you follow a few special guidelines: Type or paste the entire text of the proposal in the body of the email rather than include an attached document. Compose an email query just as you would one that is sent by regular mail, being sure to include all of the details mentioned above. Please do not send large picture files as attachments. Email queries will not be answered any more quickly than those submitted by mail.

## Our Response

The editor will respond to your letter within eight weeks in one of the following ways:

- Acceptance for publication. If your idea is accepted, you will receive a letter detailing word count, payment information, specifics of the article, deadline, and tentative publication date. You will also receive a writer's contract, which should be signed and returned immediately, and a format sheet, which you should follow carefully in preparing your article.
- Request for more information. Sometimes the staff needs photographs or more details about your idea in order to make a decision. If we request more information, we are still considering your idea.
- We would like to file your idea. Sometimes we have an overflow of ideas for a particular kind of story and need to wait a while to see if and when the story will fit into our editorial plans. With permission from contributors, we also like to keep selected "On Being Southern" essays on file indefinitely for potential use in future issues.
- This story does not fit into our magazine. We want each issue to possess a distinct style and continuity from story to story. Many good ideas simply do not fit into the current editorial plans, or a similar story may have recently been done.

While waiting for a response, your patience is appreciated. Please do not call to check on the status of your submission until at least eight weeks have passed. We receive hundreds of freelance queries each year, and with a small staff, it takes a while to go through each inquiry and respond accordingly.

## Submitting an Article

After writing an article you have been assigned, take time to **confirm and double-check** all facts and figures, quotations, spellings of names and places, phone numbers, addresses, etc. Please consult *The Associated Press Stylebook* for all style questions.

Include two or three suggested headlines (usually 2-6 words) and subheads (can range from a short phrase to a couple of sentences), but please note that these elements are selected at our discretion.

Send the completed piece on a disk in text-only or Microsoft Word format. On the first page, include your name, address, phone number, social security number, and the number of words in the article. Also send a hard copy of the article, printed on high-quality paper by a laser or inkjet printer. Attached to your article, please include a list of references used and people interviewed or included in the article, along with their phone numbers. Articles may also be submitted by email if prior arrangement is made with the editor to do so.

*Mississippi Magazine* buys only previously unpublished manuscripts. We buy first publication rights and pay on publication. We assume no responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts, and we request a self-addressed stamped envelope for the return of any materials. We reserve the right to edit any article for space, grammar, and content. Author proofs are generally not provided. All articles submitted will remain in the custody of *Mississippi Magazine* until publication, unless a rewrite is necessary.

## Payment

Feature articles	\$250-350
Southern Scrapbook	\$25-75
On Being Southern	\$150
Other department articles	\$150-250
Expenses	\$35 limit

Send all submissions to:

***Mississippi Magazine***

Attention: Editor

5 Lakeland Circle

Jackson, MS 39216

Or email [editor@mismag.com](mailto:editor@mismag.com)