

The university is proud to acknowledge the lands and people of the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation which is covered under the Williams Treaties. We are situated on the Traditional Territory of the Mississaugas, a branch of the greater Anishinaabeg Nation which includes Algonquin, Ojibway, Odawa and Pottawatomi.

Ridgeback Student Voices Content Creation Guide

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What Is Ridgeback Student Voices

[Ridgeback Student Voices](#) is a student-driven website where you can connect and share stories from anywhere. All of the content published on this site is written by students, for students. As such, creating content for Ridgeback Student Voices is NOT like writing an academic paper. This guide will help you own your voice in a way that is authentic and relatable for people who engage with your content.

CONTENT GOALS

Your content for Ridgeback Student Voices should align with one or more of the following goals. Think about what you would want as the reader, and how you can make the reader feel.

1. Connecting

- Relatable content that explains people's bond. Makes them say "This is us."
- The type of content that you would tag your friend/roommate/sibling in the comments of.

2. Doing

- Content that helps people do something.
- Example: can help someone settle an argument, learn something, or explain their story.

3. Feeling

- Content that makes people feel something (curious, sad, happy, etc.)
- Some content with this goal will restore people's faith in humanity.

4. Laughing

- Humorous content. Makes people laugh.
- Inoffensive humour.

5. Personal Identification

- Content that is relatable. Makes people say "This is me."
- Represents the readers' upbringing, culture, guilty pleasures, and how they laugh at themselves.
- Writing about yourself and your own experiences will be relatable, whether you realize it or not.

CONTENT TYPES

- Lists

There are three different types of lists: the framework, the definitive, and the listicle. All lists still need an introduction and conclusion. These can be short, one to two sentences minimum. Preface the list - why are you writing it? Sum it up at the end.

1. The Framework

Organized around a story. A story is created first, and then a list is created from the story.

2. The Definitive

You need to know your stuff. Requires research. Tends to be longer. Encompasses all of something.

3. The Listicle

Has no narrative driving it, it's just a list.

- Point of View

Tell YOUR story.

Use specific examples as much as possible "one time I did this and..."

Take us on a journey, and let us see it from your eyes.

Authenticity is vulnerability.

Be honest, don't "fluff" things up.

- Quiz

We use a software called [Interact](#) to create quizzes. If you have an idea for a quiz, submit it the same way you would submit a blog idea and post. The Ridgeback Student Voices team will then work with you to build it in Interact.

The following are important to include in your quiz submission:

1. Choose the quiz topic.
2. Decide on the number of possible results (the more result options, the more complicated the quiz).
3. Write the questions and possible answers.
4. Match the question options with the correlating end result.

Quizzes should all have logic. Have a reason for the results that the students taking the quizzes will receive. To do this, assign each result to a trait or option.

Example: if a student chooses pepperoni as a topping on their pizza, they might not be very adventurous and so when it comes to choosing a place to study on campus they opt for the library because it is simple and expected.

● Videos

The Office of Student Life will help you in any way possible if you are interested in creating a video. Contact the [Ridgeback Student Voices team](#) for support.

BEST PRACTICES (Using the 5W's)

Voice (Who)

Your writing should be from your own perspective. Avoid saying "you". We don't know what the experience of the reader is, so don't guess or generalize for them. Speak about what you know - own your personal experience!

INSTEAD OF...

"You should try this"

TRY...

- "This is something that worked for me."
- Share an example about a time you tried the thing and what happened as a result.

Description (What)

Be as descriptive as possible. Always assume the reader has never heard of what you're talking about. Explain everything. If you say that you tried something, tell us what happened as a result.

INSTEAD OF...

"It was good"

TRY...

- Tell the readers WHAT was good.
- Say "it was good" without having to say "it was good"
 - "When I took a bite of the brownie, it's like the clouds parted in the sky and the sun shined through and gleamed onto my skin - it changed my life." (dramatic example)
 - "The brownie was warm and gooey, and walnuts gave it the perfect amount of crunch in every bite. My mouth is watering just thinking about it."

"My favourite part was the opening scene"

- Assume that the reader has never seen the episode. Describe the opening. You can be detailed without giving any spoilers.
 - "I started ugly crying when the music started playing"

and Jane and Rafael stared into each other's eyes in the opening scene."

Tense (When)

When you're creating content, unless you've spoken to the publisher about a publish date, don't write assuming that it will be posted immediately or in the near future. The Ridgeback Student Voices team organizes and schedules posts strategically around the academic calendar. For example, a post written in the summer that includes study tips might be scheduled around midterms or final exams in the fall semester.

Sometimes posts might be used to explain or promote an event, support or service, so when it's not necessary, it's best to not include dates so that the post can be resurfaced later on and still be relevant. For example, a post titled "How Getting Involved in University Changed My Life for the Better" can be used when talking about the Get Involved Fair in September.

Sources (Where)

If you're referencing anything that has a website/webpage or social media page associated with it, link it using a [hyperlink](#). Let the reader know where to go to find more information about the things that you've mentioned. This goes for internal services (departments, supports and services at the university), and external services (restaurants, businesses).

If you had to Google/research anything for the purpose of your content, include your sources! You can do this using either hyperlinks throughout the post or by including a list of references at the end of your post. A list of references works in scenarios where you have used the same sources throughout the whole post. Hyperlinks can be used when you mention a source once.

Purpose (Why)

Have a reason for creating a piece of content. Revisit the writing goals after you've written your article. Did you accomplish the goal that you set out to accomplish? What takeaway do you want students to have after engaging with your post? If you can't answer these questions, revise your post.

STYLE GUIDELINES

In order for our content to look consistent on the website, there are a few key style guidelines from the university's [Editorial Style Guide](#) to note. You are encouraged to review the Editorial Style Guide in full and follow the other guidelines outlined there, but there are a few things that come up in Ridgeback Student Voices posts more than others:

Buildings

Please use the university's building names as referenced in the [Editorial Style Guide](#).

Capitalization

When writing titles and headings for your posts, only capitalize the first word.

Lists

When writing listicles, please use headings to separate your ideas rather than bullet points or numbered lists. Numbered lists should only be used for sequenced/numbered steps.

Time

7 to 9 a.m. - if something starts and ends in the same time period, you don't need to reference it in the start time.

7:30 a.m. to 9 p.m. - if something starts in a.m. and ends in p.m., reference both.

9 a.m. to noon

10 p.m. to midnight

12 a.m. should always be written as midnight.

12 p.m. should always be written as noon.

a.m. and p.m. are always separated by periods.

If you are referencing an event that starts on the hour, do not use minutes (:00).

EDITING

ALWAYS edit your work. Do it three times, and look for something different each time:

1. For errors (more errors = less credibility)
 - Typos
 - Grammar
2. For consistency
 - Especially for tense. It's very easy to switch from past tense to present tense throughout a piece of writing without realizing it. Make sure you are consistent throughout when you are telling a story.
3. For tone
 - Are you using "I" instead of "You"?
 - Your tone should be casual and conversational. If you are struggling with how to write a piece, have a conversation with someone about the topic you're writing about. Tell them your story and make notes (or have them make notes) of how you're telling it.

- Your tone should be personal. Tell your story and share your experiences. But don't make it a diary entry. Write it like you're talking to a friend, not like you're writing in a private journal.

DO'S AND DON'TS

Below are some general guidelines for your content creation. If there's anything not on this list that you are curious about, send the Ridgeback Student Voices team an email.

DO

Be honest and authentic
Get personal
Tell stories
Apologize when you make a mistake
Be open to learning

DON'T

Be hateful or promote hate (racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic, xenophobic, etc.)
Abuse, threaten, harass, bully, insult, or cause harm to others
Talk about anything illegal

HEADLINES AND DESCRIPTION

You should write at least 3 headline and description options for your article. Think of different ideas. Change the wording to see how it sounds. Paste multiple options at the top of your document, and submit your favourite one in the Submission Form on Ridgeback Student Voices. Below are some tips:

Headlines

1. Don't give it all away.
2. Don't form an opinion for the reader in the headlines.
3. No clickbait.
4. Create multiple headlines for every story you write.

Descriptions

1. Explain the post.
2. Gives a reason to click on the article.
3. Pick a powerful, emotional, or funny quote from the post.
4. Sum it up without giving any spoilers.

VISUALS

Using Your Own Images

- Your images should be in landscape, not portrait, especially when it comes to a thumbnail for the article.
- Make sure the photo is clear and in focus.

- Photos should be of good quality.
- If you are using your own photos, upload them to Google Drive and input the links to the files in the document where you want the photos placed in your post.

Using Someone Else's Images

- You must have someone's permission to use their images.
- Photos from the Internet must be **royalty-free**, free to use and alter.
 - [Pexels](#), [Google Advanced Search](#) (filter by usage rights "free to use or share")
- Student Life has a huge photo archive, so if you're looking for photos from any Student Life events on campus, reach out to the Ridgeback Student Voices team.

GIFs

- GIFs are what we recommend using for your posts.
- Use [GIPHY](#) to search for GIFs to use.
- Paste the GIF Embed Code in the document where you want the GIFs placed on your post.
- Use GIFs to support your writing, not to replace it.
 - Be careful not to overuse GIFs. If you can't find a GIF that matches or supports what you're trying to say, don't use them.

SUBMISSION PROCESS

Submitting an Idea

Submit your ideas by filling out the [Submit an Idea](#) form on Ridgeback Student Voices located in [Creator Central](#). The deadline is an optional field for you to set a goal for yourself. The Ridgeback Student Voices team will reach out to you to approve your idea and offer any advice/suggestions based on the information you submitted.

Submitting a Finished Piece

Submit your finalized piece for editing using the [Submit a Post](#) form on Ridgeback Student Voices located in [Creator Central](#). Use the "Potential Title" and "Potential Description" fields to input your favourite ideas. Your other title and description options should be in the document that you submit.

Once you submit a finished piece, the Ridgeback Student Voices team will do a final edit of your post (you should have already edited it a few times). If we change anything that we think might alter the tone or voice of the article we will send it back for your review and approval.

RESOURCES

- [Grammarly](#)
- [Ontario Tech Editorial Style Guide](#)
- [BuzzFeed Style Guide](#)
- [Readability Test Tool](#)

REFERENCES

If you want to learn more about anything in this guide, the following resources will help!

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