

PULITZER PRIZES

Deadline is January 25

How the Prizes in journalism are awarded

Each spring, the Pulitzer Prizes in Journalism are awarded in fourteen categories by Columbia University on the recommendation of the Pulitzer Prize Board.

Submitting your work for one of those prizes may seem daunting. The purpose of this document is to demystify the process, highlight recent changes to it and anticipate questions that arise when assembling a Pulitzer entry.

First off, entries must be based on material coming from a United States newspaper or news site that publishes at least weekly during the calendar year and that adheres to the highest journalistic principles. Magazines and broadcast media, and their respective Web sites, are not eligible

For entrants, the overarching guideline is this: The Pulitzer Board seeks to recognize journalistic excellence in whatever format best conveys that excellence. Readers now consume news in a variety of ways – on mobile devices and smartphones; in their newspapers and on tablets. The Pulitzer judges want to see the material as readers saw it – whether it evolved as a series of short dispatches or was presented as a polished narrative. We prize original reporting, good writing and, where appropriate, visual storytelling.

In twelve of the fourteen categories, the Pulitzer Board welcomes entries that may include a variety of formats: text, video, multimedia and other visual storytelling methods. In the other two categories – Breaking News Photography and Feature Photography – entries are restricted to still images.

The judging begins with juries of distinguished journalists appointed in each category gathering in the winter at Columbia to spend three days reading Pulitzer entries. Each jury nominates three entries as finalists and submits them to the Pulitzer Board, which is charged with the responsibility and authority under the will of Joseph Pulitzer to accept, substitute or reject the nominations of the jurors.

Please see the [Plan of Award](#) for the definitions of the 14 categories.

Some points of special note

- Entries on paper are no longer accepted. All entries must be submitted electronically through the special Pulitzer entry site found at www.pulitzer.org. Entrants must use our online entry form. Guidelines on how to submit an entry are found on the electronic entry site.
- **The deadline of Jan. 25 is a week earlier than in bygone years.**
- In the category called Local Reporting of Breaking News, the Board seeks a balance under deadline pressure. The category emphasizes immediacy and real-time reporting, with the use of all available journalistic tools. It also asks for context through illuminating reports that, as time goes on, expand on the initial coverage. In short, a strong entry conveys the reader's experience of a breaking story as it evolved, often well before the start of the print cycle. See [FAQ](#) below for more details.
- In the Editorial Writing category, the Board emphasizes the importance of persuasiveness through the use of facts, sound logic and engaging prose. The Board does not think that effective editorials must necessarily be part of a campaign. The Board also looks for "editorials whose moral purpose and power of influence are significant enough to make them especially memorable, persuasive and pivotal to public debate." See [FAQ](#) below for more details.

- In the Breaking News Photography and Feature Photography categories, only still images should be submitted. *For more details, see [technical requirements](#).*

How to submit an entry

Any individual may submit material coming from eligible United States newspapers or news sites, publishing in print or online. The entries should reflect what a reader saw and experienced.

Some rules about numbers:

- **Three entries per entity.** No more than three entries may be made by the editors of a single newspaper, wire service, syndicate or other eligible news site in any one category.
- **Two categories per material.** The same content cannot be entered in more than two categories.
- **Five named individuals maximum.** Up to five individuals may be named on a team entry; they should be the strongest contributors to the work, whether they are reporters, photographers, videographers, graphic artists, producers or journalists who have worked in more than one format on the submitted entry. If the entry requires more than five specific names, it should be submitted in the name of the staff.
- **Twenty items permitted in four categories:** Public Service, Cartoons, Breaking News Photography and Feature Photography. Public Service entries may include editorials, cartoons, photographs, graphics, videos, interactive graphics, databases or blogs. Cartoon entries may include still or animated images.
- **Ten items permitted in nine categories:** Breaking News Reporting, Investigative Reporting, Explanatory Reporting, Local Reporting, National Reporting, International Reporting, Commentary, Criticism and Editorial Writing.
- **Five items permitted in one category:** Feature Writing.

Some other rules

To submit entries electronically, please visit www.pulitzer.org/how_to_enter. It will take you to the entry site where you will be guided through the process.

Entries may be made by news organizations submitting the work of their staffs, by individual journalists of their own work, or by readers or other interested individuals.

In any category, online material must be published on an eligible Web site during the calendar year.

Each entrant must complete an online entry form and pay a nonrefundable handling fee of \$50 via credit card. An entry must also:

- Indicate the category in which it is submitted.
- Include a biography and picture of any individual journalist named in the entry.
- Include a one or two-page cover letter that demonstrates the entry's compliance with eligibility criteria and summarizes its content and, where appropriate, its impact; the letter is especially important in the reporting categories.
- Include on the entry form a one-sentence description of the submitted work.
- Conform to the stated limits on number of submitted items before it can be given jury consideration.

Duplicate entry material must be provided if the same content is entered in two different categories.

Any significant challenge to the honesty, accuracy or fairness of an entry, such as published letters, corrections, retractions, as well as responses by the news organization, should be noted and explained in the cover letter.

In the photography categories, no entry whose content is manipulated or altered, apart from standard cropping and editing, will be deemed acceptable.

Entrants are urged not to crowd the official deadline of January 25.

Frequently asked questions (FAQ)

In general

Q: Who is eligible? A. Material entered in the Pulitzer competition must derive from a United States newspaper or news site that publishes at least weekly and that adheres to the highest journalistic principles. Magazines and broadcast media, and their respective Web sites, are not eligible. As needed, eligibility will be determined case by case.

Q: What is a “news site”? How does it differ from a newspaper? A. We mean United States entities ranging from a traditional wire service to online ventures that do not call themselves newspapers but do publish news, opinion and other information of public interest. Whatever their platform, eligible entrants can include a full range of online material in their submissions.

Q: Can you give examples of online-only newspapers or news sites that would qualify? A. Sites such as MinnPost, Voice of San Diego, ProPublica and Climate Wire have participated in the competition.

Q: What do you mean by “the highest journalistic principles”? A. We mean values such as honesty, accuracy and fairness, values that govern the way news is gathered and the way it is presented.

Q: Why are printed magazines and broadcast media and their Web sites excluded? A. Since their creation in 1917, the Pulitzer Prizes have been awarded exclusively for newspaper journalism. The growth of text-based online publications is in many ways an extension of the newspaper tradition. Moreover, magazines and broadcast media have long had their own contests.

Q: Is an online-only site eligible if it calls itself a “magazine” or “news magazine”? No. Self-designated magazines are ineligible.

Q: If one or two people call their Web site a “newspaper” or “news site” would it be eligible? A. Possibly, if all the other criteria are satisfied. But to compete effectively, an entry would have to demonstrate a high level of quality.

Q. How important is reporting in an entry? A. In its reporting categories, the Pulitzer Board places special emphasis on original news reporting, which entails such techniques as interviewing, first-hand observation, reviewing public records, proper attribution, taking photos and shooting videos.

Q. How important is an entry’s “public impact”? A. The Board is interested in evidence of an entry’s impact, such as the spurring of legislative action or prosecution of lawbreakers. The Board is also interested in reader engagement as a gauge of impact – through letters, e-mails, Web site postings and other audience interaction.

Q: What happens to freelance journalists? A. Freelance reporters, cartoonists, columnists, critics or bloggers who produce work in print or online can enter the competition if their submitted work has been published by an eligible newspaper or news site during the calendar year. Freelancers have won Pulitzer Prizes.

Q. Have entry procedures changed in recent years? A. Yes. Please visit the Pulitzer Web site at www.pulitzer.org for details and guidance through the electronic entry system.

About entries

Q. What kind of an entry do you want? A. An entry should be clear and concise, allowing any juror to see quickly what you did, why you did it and what you accomplished.

Q. How should material be submitted? A. All material must be submitted electronically. Text material, such as articles and columns, should be formatted and submitted as PDFs. To assure readability, the PDF should measure no larger than 8 1/2 x 14 inches, the type size should be 12 pt. and the text should be in a one- or two-column format, single spaced. To show the original display of the material, you can use the first page of the PDF to frame or highlight an entered article on its published page; or use a visual thumbnail to depict the article's original spread. [See examples on Pulitzer website.](#) Video and other online content, such as interactive graphics or databases, should be entered only as URLs on the Pulitzer entry site. You are responsible for making sure the URL works from "outside" your organization. *For more details, see [technical requirements.](#)*

Q. Can text material ever be submitted as URLs? A. No, it must be formatted and submitted as PDFs.

Q. What about a large-scale graphic? A graphic occupying up to a newspaper page or more can be uploaded as a PDF in a size sufficient to reflect the scope and integrity of the work. It will count as one item.

Q. Must an entry contain material that has been published in the newspaper's print edition? A. No, but a combination of print and online elements may be submitted.

Q. Are sidebars considered separate items? A. Yes. Any sidebar submitted will be counted as an item.

Q. Are additional clips, testimonial letters or other supporting material acceptable? A. Judges focus on the entry itself and have only a limited ability to review supplemental material. It should be kept to a minimum. Material that shows how the work engaged its readers, achieved results or caused other news organizations to write about it are examples of acceptable supplemental items. However, under the digital entry system, all supplemental material should be combined and submitted as a single PDF file with multiple pages.

Q. What about challenges to entries? A. Any significant challenge to the honesty, accuracy or fairness of an entry should be noted in the entry's cover letter and relevant published letters, corrections, retractions, as well as responses by the news organization, should be noted and explained in the cover letter.

Q. Why do you want a summary letter at the beginning of the entry? A. Two purposes. One is to demonstrate the eligibility of the entry. The other is to acquaint jurors with the work. The letter should not exceed two pages.

Q. How many entries may I submit in a single category? A. No more than three entries may be made by the editors of a single newspaper, wire service, syndicate or eligible news entity in any one category. The term "editors" includes all titled editors. Individuals may submit entries on their own behalf.

Q. May I submit the same entry in more than one category? A. The same material may be entered in two—but not more than two—different categories. A separate copy of your entry must be supplied for each of the two categories you enter. Where the permissible number of items in the two categories differs, you must prepare entries conforming to the requirements for each category. An added \$50 fee must be paid for each cross-file.

Q. How many individuals may be named in a team entry? A. Up to five and they should be the strongest contributors. If more are involved, the entry must be in the name of the staff.

Q. What is an online element? A. This vague term refers to a variety of possible items on the Web, including a story, video, database, blog, interactive graphic or slide show. The rule is that each designated online element will count as one item in the total number permitted in an entry. But beware: Cramming too much into one item taxes the patience of judges. Edit your entry. Make sure it is compelling, cohesive and concise. The conceptual logic tying the parts together should be clear. In their judging, jurors will look at multimedia material the way a viewer does, taking into account ease of navigation as well as quality of content.

Q. Where does video belong? A. Video storytelling can be entered in all categories except Photography, where entries are restricted to still images. Usually video is part of an entry that contains other items, such as stories or graphics, but an entry consisting entirely of video storytelling is permissible. Each separate video counts as one item in an entry – except in cases where several short videos on the same theme are combined into one presentation of 10 minutes or less. See [technical requirements](#).

Q. How should photo entries be submitted? A. See [technical requirements](#).

About categories

Q. How does the Public Service category differ from other categories? A. Public Service rewards total journalistic effort, such as overcoming obstacles to reporting, achieving results that benefit a community, using all available resources and engaging readers. An entry may include articles, blogs, editorials, cartoons, photographs, video, multimedia presentations and other items that appeared in print or online. The entry must be made in the name of the eligible entity.

Q. What kind of content belongs in the Breaking News category? A. The category seeks a coherent balance under deadline pressure. On the one hand, the entry should clearly demonstrate how quickly and accurately a news organization used all available journalistic tools to cover the story, with emphasis on a demonstrated use of real-time reporting. It would be disappointing if an event occurred at 8 a.m. and the first item of your entry was drawn from the next day's newspaper. On the other hand, the Board is also interested in subsequent coverage that, within days, puts an event in perspective and provides greater context, with the entry reflecting the best representation of each day's coverage. We suggest providing a timeline, in the cover letter or in supplemental material, detailing the precise chronology of events in a breaking story and how it relates to the timing of items that comprise the entry.

Q. In the Breaking News category, how should I count a series of breaking reports posted to the Web as events unfold? You may count items differently if multiple brief dispatches were posted to the Web. Examples would include reports from different areas during a hurricane, updates as the facts of an airplane crash or a school sniper incident become known. This may constitute a single online item that leads readers from the initiation of a news event to a more complete picture of what is happening. The single item could be a PDF with several pages or a list of URLs embedded in a PDF, allowing quick evaluation of coverage. Provide enough detail to convey the sweep of your coverage but be mindful that this latitude could easily be abused, to the detriment of your entry in the eyes of the judges. Look for the material that most concisely and comprehensively conveys your coverage.

Q. What belongs in Explanatory Reporting? A. Any story or series that provides deeper understanding of a subject that is both significant and complex, enabling readers to put news about it into a meaningful context. We strongly advise against cross-filing into this category material that fits the definition only marginally. The jury will disregard an investigative, enterprise or feature story or series that falls short of the explanatory test.

Q. What belongs in Local Reporting? A. Robust reporting on significant city, regional or state issues, demonstrating original thinking, resourcefulness and an expert grasp of a community's makeup, problems and concerns. Originality can include a fresh approach to a familiar issue, or the exploration of an unusual issue or concern. Entries may consist of a reporter's body of sustained work as well as special projects; and the work's impact can entail greater insight by readers as well as political change. An entry should begin with a descriptive letter offering context: why the reporting was done and how local people benefited. We discourage cross-filing of entries – especially those also placed in Investigative Reporting – that lack the strong "local reporting" envisaged by the category's definition and guidelines.

Q. What belongs in Feature Writing? A. Stories that are not hard news and are distinguished by the quality of their writing. Stories should be memorable for their reporting, crafting, creativity and economy of expression. Entries may consist of a single significant story, a portfolio of stand-alone stories that reveals a body of work or a concise series of stories on a single topic.

Q. What belongs in the Criticism category? A. Critical work on such subjects as books, theater, television, movies, dance and architecture.

Q. What is the difference between Editorial Writing and Commentary? A. Editorials are written in the name of the newspaper or news entity. Columns represent the writer's views.

Q: Does it matter whether the point of view in Editorial Writing is conservative or liberal or something in between? A: No. What does matter is the quality of the argument and its persuasiveness, using facts, sound logic and engaging prose. Judges will also consider how well an entry addresses competing arguments.

Q: Does an Editorial Writing entry have to be an editorial campaign that focuses on a particular issue and can demonstrate results? A: Not necessarily, though this sort of entry is most common. Also of value are editorials whose moral purpose and power of influence are significant enough to make them especially memorable, persuasive and pivotal to public debate.

Q. How do multimedia elements fit into "writing" categories, such as Feature Writing and Editorial Writing? A. While juries will place primary emphasis on the quality of the writing, multimedia elements are welcome in order to enhance an entry.