

# RAPID

## MAGAZINE

## CONTRIBUTOR GUIDELINES

Updated October 2005

*Rapid* magazine covers all aspects of whitewater paddlesports. *Rapid* celebrates the diversity of whitewater *freeboating* – paddling rivers top to bottom, throwing down, splatting rocks and tearing up waves. *Rapid* is a magazine with Canadian roots, a global scope and a growing international readership. Our readers range from rank beginners to experienced boaters who share the desire to learn, explore and experience the whitewater paddling world. *Rapid* magazine publishes four issues annually, in February (Spring), April (Early Summer), June (Summer) and August (Fall/Winter). We do most of our editorial scheduling between August and October for the upcoming year, but we accept submissions at any time.

We are in the market for articles that have depth, emotional impact and take-away value for the reader, complemented by striking photos. The best way to assess our interest in your idea is to send us a thorough article proposal—a query. See the section below, **Submitting a Query**, to find out how to do this.

### SUBMITTING A QUERY

Queries should present a clear and specific idea for developing an interesting story, not merely a general topic or destination, and should reflect familiarity with the magazine's content and tone.

Please send queries by email to the address below. We do not accept queries over the phone. We will reply to your query within 8 weeks if we are interested in your idea. We will not return unsolicited manuscripts or photos unless you include an SASE or return courier account number. Writers submitting story ideas should be aware that the editors at *Rapid* may already have assigned a similar story.

A good query includes the following five points:

- 1. The Sell**—Be clear about what article is about, what message you hope to convey and why a reader should care. Answer these questions:
  - What is the headline?
  - What is your article about?
  - What information or message will you communicate?
  - Where will we print this article in *Rapid*? Which section?
  - Why do you think this article will be of interest to our readers? What will make your article stand out for them?
  - What will be your specific angle? What theme will you use to tie your information together, particularly in the case of a feature?
  - What information do you already have, and what additional research will you do?
- 2. The Lead**—Write a sample introduction to your article to show us your writing style and demonstrate how your introduction will entice the reader.
- 3. The Outline**—Outline the proposed structure of the manuscript to follow the introduction.

- 4. The Photos**—Photos are almost always critical. Poor quality photos are often the reason that features don't run. We will occasionally buy a story based on photos alone. We will rarely consider a story without good photos. Please tell us how we can get professional quality slides, high-resolution digital or print images to illustrate your article. Better yet, email us a few low-resolution preview images along with your query, or mail us a CD that we can keep. See photography guidelines for more details.
- 5. The Writer**—Don't forget to tell us who we'll be working with. Let us know what qualifications you have to write about this topic. Tell us where you have been previously published and include samples of your work. Include your full name, address, phone/fax numbers and email address.

First, carefully study several issues of *Rapid* to visualize how your idea will fit into the magazine. We're open to just about anything, but the stories we buy will typically fit into one of the following departments.

## CONTENTS

### STANDING WAVES

We need queries for Standing Waves more than any other section of the magazine. It is a hodgepodge of timely or interesting tidbits. The query formula is simple: tell us your story idea, whether it be news/ a development/ an access issue/ a trend/ an event; tell us why readers will care; show us you can make it interesting; show us you can do it succinctly. It's that easy.

As usual, all stories need to be accompanied with photos, so help us by suggesting any photo sources you know of.

We have two regular sub-sections of Standing Waves:

**River Shorties:** This is our newsy section for industry updates, trends, environmental stories and other interesting morsels of information. Give us your newspaper-style writing with all the key facts packed into the first paragraph. 100–400 words with supporting photos.

**Rapid Reviews:** We're looking for critiques of any whitewater-relevant media, such as videos and books. We need a photo or other image of the cover to accompany text. 100 words.

### PADDLER PROFILE

**New! Attention photographers!** Who are the players, past and present? Who inspires you? This section profiles personalities who are well known in the whitewater world or who you think ought to be. It all starts with two good photos: one spectacular vertical action shot and one lifestyle portrait. Tell us why your subject should be profiled.

## TECHNIQUES

Instructors take note—this is for you! *Rapid* is all about whitewater, so we need freestyle moves, solo and tandem open boat moves for both playboating and tripping, and even rafting tips. The skill level can vary—our readers range from haven't-bought-a-boat-yet to freestyle champions. The two key elements are photos and a clear teaching progression:

1. Introduce the skill and explain why it's useful.
2. Break the skills down into steps and make sure there's a photo for each step.
3. List tips and critiques. Include the most common mistakes, correct common problems, and give hints.

Take a look at how we've done it in recent issues. Provide 4–6 sequence photos with accompanying explanations.

## LIFESTYLES

Here's one story you can send without a query or photos. Just give us a creative essay or short story that captures the spirit of the sport and why you do it. Share your campfire stories with a wider audience—the road trips, camaraderie, camping, nightlife, the lifestyle. This is the soul of paddling. Don't shy away from the irreverent or the bizarre. Humour and philosophical looks at the things we do are good bets. 400–1,000 words.

## FEATURES

Our feature articles are 1,200–2,000 words in length and must be accompanied by professional-quality photos. Please submit a detailed query if you are considering a feature story. Most feature stories are assigned in early fall for the following year. Features are our most competitive category; please consider whether your story can fit into one of *Rapid*'s other columns.

Our feature articles encompass an eclectic mix of paddling stories. Give us well-written investigative journalism, environmental dilemmas, personality profiles, and even humour or fiction. There are few limits to what we'll consider, but we are only interested in queries that are about stories, not topics or destinations. We need to know from your query what narrative thread or storyline will entertain our readers. Stories should contain something—exceptional humour, a life lesson, a new outlook or deeper understanding—more than a play-by-play account of what happened on your trip or at a destination. In your query, tell us what about the story you want to write, not just the place you have been to. If you do propose to write a destination piece, take a fresh angle deepened by background information and interviews with local characters.

## TEXT SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

If we accept your query, please submit your completed work according to these guidelines:

- **Include your name, article title and word count on the first page of your submission.**
- Carefully check all facts and figures and spellings (names, places, scientific terms) for accuracy.
- **Include a concise, 25-word biography** to be published at our discretion.
- Please save documents in Microsoft Word or Rich Text Format (RTF) and send as an email attachment – do not paste it into the body of an email message.
- Be sure to include your name, mailing address, telephone number and email address with all submissions.

We will make all reasonable efforts to ensure the safe return of any slides, negatives and other materials that you loan to us; however, contributors are responsible for insuring these materials against loss or damage.

## TERMS AND PAYMENT

We expect first North American print rights to your work. *Rapid* requires that you inform us if your submission, or any portion or concept of your submission, has been previously published or is being considered for publication elsewhere. We also require that you inform us as to any flights, accommodations, meals, etc. that were given to you free of charge as part of a familiarization or press trip.

We pay contributors a pre-negotiated rate of up to \$0.20 per word depending on length, content and quality. Payment is within 45 days following the release date of the issue in which the material appears. We buy first North American print rights as well as the right to reproduce the original publication by any means or technology for our promotional purposes including indefinite publication on the Internet as part of our online edition. Details are outlined in our contributor agreement.

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## CONTACT

Address queries and submissions to:

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