

Plastic

Selling Your Work · By Simon Townsend · 1 min read

Please send only sheets of paper, not any plastic stuff. Plastic! Cardboard! Some new freelancers make the mistake of using unnecessary packaging for their articles and photos. For instance, enclosing their articles in plastic A4 envelopes or plastic folders. Please don't encase your work inside a plastic page. It looks like a kid's school project. It gives the impression you think these few sheets of paper are so precious they must be protected from your editor's (or tutor's) coffee cup staining it. Just make sure everything is secured by ONE STAPLE in the top left-hand corner. Simple as that!

Consider the environmental impact of using unnecessary packaging. Some students bind their articles with spiral binding and then put firm cardboard at the back and see-through plastic at the front. Photographs are encased in thick, heavy cardboard surrounded by plastic bubble-wrap and lots of newspaper, heavily bound with stickytape, inside a padded envelope with 20 staples and all encased in brown paper!! I kid you not.

Any unnecessary packaging is highly irritating to an editor (or to your poor ol' tutor) who has to extract the article and the photos. An article should have nothing more than a simple staple in the top left-hand corner. Print photos can have a bit of cardboard paper-clipped to them, although many freelancers put no packing around photos and write in big red letters on the envelope: PHOTOS DO NOT BEND.

Unnecessary packaging signals that the sender is so proud of the "precious work" inside that it must be highly protected. But remember, to an editor, it's just another package of a disk, words on paper and photos. It's nothing super-special to him. A lot of unnecessary packaging makes a freelancer look amateurish.

Reprinted from The Wonderful World of Journalism. Written in the spirit of Simon Townsend's journalism craft advice. Visit simontownsendjournalist.com for the full archive.