

CROSSTALK

The Journal of Defense Software Engineering



AUTHOR GUIDELINES

CROSSTALK, The Journal of Defense Software Engineering,
is an approved Department of Defense journal.

Our mission is to encourage the engineering development of software in order to improve the reliability, sustainability, and responsiveness of our war-fighting capability, as well as to inform and educate readers on policy decisions and new software engineering technologies.

Published by the Software Technology Support Center, CROSSTALK is circulated bimonthly to more than 40,000 members of the defense software community, industry, and academic world.

In its 25-year history, CROSSTALK has become a respected and trusted resource within the defense software community. Thanks to the support of its authors, the journal has consistently provided useful and valuable information to its readers.



CROSSTALK has been informing and educating readers since 1988.

Today, CROSSTALK is read by more than 40,000 members of the defense software community, industry, and academic world.

CROSSTALK publishes many types of articles that relate to software development. Articles that address the defense software community are of special interest, but we also consider articles that deal with government software development or the software industry at large.

Here are examples of some typical **CROSSTALK** categories:

Articles with overviews from emerging or established fields



Fresh information within a specific field of interest



Technical papers



Articles from the perspective of people “in the trenches”



Tutorials about software engineering methods and concepts



Lessons learned

CROSSTALK typically provides features that cover a variety of important software-related areas.

Here are some topics often found in CROSSTALK:

Software Engineering Technology

Articles that address software technology adoption, application, and new developments.

Policies, News and Updates

Articles that reflect the latest DoD policies, decisions, and management directives.

Open Forum

Articles that provide an opportunity to see firsthand how a new trend or technology affects a project.

Best Practices

Lessons learned from individuals making practical use of software technologies.

SUBMISSION PREPARATION

ALL SUBMISSIONS MUST BE ORIGINAL



CROSSTALK TIP

Be sure to attach all the required elements with your submission and put them in the proper format. This will speed up the process for potential publication.

Title

Titles should be concise, specific, and informative, contain key points of the work, and be less than 10 words.

Text Format

Articles can be submitted in Microsoft Word format.

Text Length

Articles should be no longer than 3,000 to 3,500 words, including tables and figures.

Style

Authors are encouraged to follow *The Associated Press Stylebook* in keeping with the guide used by the staff when editing the journal. Only include essential formatting such as clear section headings and italics. If there is an issue not covered in the stylebook, we recommend checking AP's online database at www.apstylebook.com/ask_editor.php.

SUBMISSIONS MUST INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING ELEMENTS

1. Abstract

Summarize your article in a way that hooks the reader's attention in a two-to-four sentence paragraph.

2. HU[YHX'ggi Y

Ki{qw'ctg'uwdo kwpi "cp'ctv'erg'hqt'c"ur gekhe'kuwg. r r'g'ug'lpf'lec'g'y j cv'kuwg"{qw'ctg'uwdo kwpi "{qw'ctv'erg'hqt'y kj lp"{qw'uwdo kuukqp0"Vj ku'y kmj gr'gpw'g'yj cv'qw'ctv'erg'ku'cti g'gf'hqt'yj g'e'q'gt'gev'kuwg'y j lej "{qw'j cf "lp'o lpf 0"Ki{qw'ctv'erg'f qgu pqv'i g'v'ug'ge'gf'hqt'yj cv'ur gekhe'kuwg.'y g'y k'ri't'g'w'lp {qw'uwdo kuukqp'hqt'eq'p'kf'cv'kp'lp'yj g'p'gz'v't'gr'x'cpv'isuwg0"Ki{qw'ctg'pq'v'uwdo kwpi 'hqt'cp'ur gekhe'kuwg. please indicate as much in this section.

3. Author Photograph

This color picture should be of the authors head-and-shoulders. The resolution should be at least 300 dpi, and have a .tif or .lrgi extension. **If your photo is embedded in your article, a separate file is required to be submitted.**

4. Author Biography

This should be no longer than 75 words outlining the author's job, background, professional accomplishments, education, and other pertinent accolades or areas of interest.

5. Contact Information

The author must include his/her complete business address, phone number, fax number, and e-mail address.

6. Figures and Tables

Figures and tables should be publication-worthy upon submission. R'g'cug'gpw'g'yj cv'qw't'cr j u ctg'qh'j ki j "gp'qwi j 's w'c'k'v' "v'q'dg't'g'cf {"hqt'r'v'd'r'ec'v'k'p'"" w'rq'lw'wdo kuukqp0

If graphics are embedded, separate files are also required with an .eps or .jpg extension.

Additionally, screen captures and Microsoft PowerPoint slides are too low of a resolution to reproduce at press quality. If you choose to use either, they must be saved at a high resolution (300 dpi) and have a .tiff extension.

Number and name figures and tables appropriately, and indicate where they should be placed in the text. Please minimize the number of graphics to five or less.

CROSSTALK reserves the right to reject graphics that are not production-ready, are redundant to the material, and/or do not add to the reader's understanding.

7. References and Notes

Authors are responsible for providing complete information for their references and should double check the reference numbers against their references to ensure complete accuracy prior to submission.

Most articles require some references, and some contain incidental information best treated as notes.

In the body of the article, use brackets for references and superscripts for notes, then list the two groups separately at the end of the article. These should be numbered in the order they appear in the article.

Format references using the *MLA Handbook*. For those without this book, utilizing the MLA function at www.easybib.com is recommended. Here are a few examples:

Book: Humphrey, Watts S. TSP: Coaching Development Teams. New York: Addison-Wesley Professional, 2006.

Journal: Blanco, Marina, et al. "SPI Patterns: Learning From Experience." 18.3 IEEE Software (May/June 2001): 28-35.

Conference Proceedings: Jensen, Randall W. The Problem with Software. Proc. of the 20th Annual Systems & Software Technology. Las Vegas, 2008.

8. Additional Reading

Our readers appreciate pointers to relevant books



CROSSTALK TIP

The strongest submissions tend to come from authors who first ask their peers to review their articles for content and clarity.

and articles. List these at the end of the article in the same format as references.

Originality

All submissions must be original. Articles should not have been published previously in another magazine or journal, nor have been available in a final version on a publicly available Web site. However, if work described in conference proceedings is substantially revised, it will be considered.

Submission of an article represents certification by the author that the article is not being considered nor has been published elsewhere.

Please note that sections of previously published white papers, case studies, point papers, and technical reports may appear verbatim within an original article, providing each is referenced correctly.

Letters to the Editor / Open Forum / BackTalk

For Letters to the Editor, please include your name, phone number, and e-mail address. We reserve the right to edit for style, length, and content in all cases.

Open Forum is reserved for opinion pieces with non-technical slants, but are related to software engineering.

BackTalk articles should provide a concise, humorous, or satirical yet insightful look at the software engineering profession. BackTalk articles should be entertaining and clever or original in concept, design, or delivery. The length should not exceed 750 words.

Copyrights / Releases

Authors retain ownership of their articles printed in CROSSTALK.

The author(s) is responsible for ensuring the correctness of the copyright notation on his/her article. Any changes in the copyright notation from the time the article was submitted must be provided in writing when the author(s) receives an edited copy of their final article to proof for accuracy. If an article requires approval from a corporate or government public affairs office or security agency prior to publication, the author must do this *before* submitting to CROSSTALK.

The author is responsible for obtaining any required organizational clearances.

CROSSTALK asks that publications reprinting material from our journal provide a credit line.

Publication Process

All articles submitted to CROSSTALK are subject to our editorial review process and may be changed to fit the style of our journal.

Check the theme calendar for article submission deadlines to ensure timely review by the CROSSTALK Editorial Board (CEB).

The following is the process for an article considered for publication in CROSSTALK:

1. The article—containing all required elements previously mentioned—is submitted.
2. The article is reviewed by at least two CEB members comprised of engineers with expertise in the topic area.
3. After the reviews of the article are completed by the CEB, the author is contacted regarding the article's status.
4. The CROSSTALK staff edits for style and clarity. The author may be asked to make additional changes or to perform small amounts of additional writing.
5. The author is notified that his/her article has been placed on a preliminary publishing line-up.
6. The author receives an edited and laid-out copy of the article in a PDF file to proof for accuracy. It is too late, at this point, for authors to make major additions or revisions.

After Publication

Each author will receive 10 complimentary copies of the journal in which their article appears.



CROSSTALK

TIP

First, make your article useful to your target audience, then make it accessible to people less familiar with the subject's terms and concepts.

Ratings

EP (Edit and Publish)

Articles that are technically sound and are recommended for publication.

RP (Revise and Publish)

Articles that require additional information or corrections. If corrected to publisher's satisfaction, it does not go through the CEB again.

RR (Rework and Resubmit)

Articles that require substantial additions or corrections. These articles are reviewed again by the CEB if resubmitted.

R (Reject)

Articles that are not appropriate for CROSSTALK.

TIPS FOR WRITERS



Submitting an article for publication should not feel like playing 20 questions. Does the editor like long or short articles? How much background information is best? Should the article include reams of data? Are personal experiences better than company experiences?

What is the best way to summarize years of experience?

On the other end of publishing, article reviewers shouldn't feel like they are riding a merry-go-round—up and down, round and round—and never getting to the point of an article. Everyone can avoid this vicious cycle by following a few simple technical writing tips. The ideas presented below are adapted from “How to Write a Good Technical Article” by Steve McConnell, editor-in-chief of *IEEE Software*, and will help authors get information published in its best format.

Know Your Audience

CROSSTALK is a practitioners' journal whose audience seeks hands-on experience and lessons learned articles primarily for the defense software engineering industry, and to learn about new software engineering technologies. Most of our readers build software to improve the reliability, maintainability, and responsiveness of the nation's military. They also need to know about up-to-date DoD policy decisions.

Do not overestimate or underestimate your audience. CROSSTALK readers are at all levels of software experience, from beginners to experienced professionals. It's OK to address a specific level of experience, just don't exclude others completely.

Remain Focused

Present one clearly focused idea in your article. Do not begin with unnecessary and lengthy background material. State the main summary of background material, then provide references for readers to get any detail they may desire. Do not circle around all the perimeter angles that touch your idea. Remain clearly focused. Remember, you set out to present a certain idea to the reader. There are many angles you can use to present your idea in your article, such as:

- Your experiences with a single project (or multiple projects).
- Your company's experiences.
- Your experiences with a new tool, practice, or methodology.
- New ways of using old practices, solo or in combination.
- Statistically significant research findings.

State Your Purpose

Get to the point of your article as soon as possible. State your purpose for writing the article, then explain and support your point. Don't tell readers 10 different ways to come to your conclusion and then expect them to connect the dots. Use lessons learned, hands-on experience, and personal observations to support your point, then show readers how you drew your conclusions. And note that a short paper can be just as effective as a long one.

Relate Your Experiences

You can cite endless lists of tips and rules for producing successful software engineering projects, but only your real, hands-on experience in applying these methods will get your audience to read your entire article. Most importantly, describe your struggles and how you overcame obstacles and setbacks. There is not much insight in outlining how you did things correctly. Tell readers *exactly* how you achieved your results and what measures you took to succeed. Don't simply list years of accolades, provide endless formulas and computations, or reiterate models and processes. You can refer readers to references to read about these things themselves. Tell readers what you learned and how you learned it.

Include Data

Support your idea with data. Don't speculate and don't over-generalize. Just because you say that something is so will not convince your audience that it is true. This includes adding supporting data for all claims, from the simple ones to those that are more complex to the conclusions. When you make a claim, this is the best time to put the complete details and supporting data in referenced material, tables, charts, or graphs. Lastly, do not be intimidated by the thought that your writing or grammar skills are rusty. CROSSTALK editors can make your article a publication quality piece—it's their job.

Hazard Traps

Avoid these writing traps at all cost. They have contributed to the demise of many good articles.

- Lack of focus in multi-author articles.
- Generalization.
- Swimming in academic background information.
- Short paper aversion (shorter can be better).
- Article is inappropriate for a theme (don't simply change the title of an existing article hoping that it will then be accepted as a theme article).

SUBMISSION CHECKLIST



This checklist ensures that your submission meets CROSSTALK's basic requirements.
Please review this list before submitting your article for your records.

TITLE Does your title get straight to the point? Is it concise and fewer than 10 words?	<input type="checkbox"/>
ABSTRACT Does this two-to-four sentence summarize the key points of your article?	<input type="checkbox"/>
TARGET ISSUE Did you remember to indicate which issue you are submitting for, if one is specific?	<input type="checkbox"/>
PHOTOGRAPH Is the resolution of your color photo 300 dpi and have a .jpg or .tiff extension?	<input type="checkbox"/>
BIOGRAPHY Is your biography between 50-75 words and outline the key points of your history?	<input type="checkbox"/>
CONTACT INFORMATION Have you included all pertinent information so readers can get in touch with you?	<input type="checkbox"/>
GRAPHICS Did you remember to send each graphic separately in black and white with an .eps or .jpg extension?	<input type="checkbox"/>
NOTES & REFERENCES Have you numbered and named your references in the order they appear in your article?	<input type="checkbox"/>
COPYRIGHT Is a copyright needed? Have you mailed us your copyright letter?	<input type="checkbox"/>
RELEASE (IF NEEDED) Have you received approval from your government or public affairs officer?	<input type="checkbox"/>

HOW TO CONTACT CROSSTALK

ADDRESS:
CROSSTALK
517 SMXS/MXDEB
6022 Fir Avenue
Bldg. 1238
Hill AFB, Utah 84056-5205

INTERNET:
WWW.CROSSTALKONLINE.ORG

E-MAIL:
CROSSTALK.ARTICLES@HILL.AF.MIL

PHONE:
801-777-9828