Columns are valuable ways to acquaint Alabamians with the Alabama Cooperative Extension System and our work.

Following are some tips to help you make writing creative columns easy:

- Know your audience
  - Farmers
  - Men
  - Women
  - Youth
  - General public

- Focus on people. These columns are generally the most widely read.
- Use both of the two primary styles of columns: the multiple item column and the single issue column.

Multiple Item Column

- Is the most common type.
- Often based on topics from questions you have answered several times in preceding days. If one or two people are asking about a topic, more people are probably interested in the issue.
- Gives you an opportunity to announce meetings and other programs.
- Allows you to recognize successes of 4-H’ers and others involved in Extension programs.
- Has wide appeal with variety in content.
- Lends itself to a relaxed, conversational writing style.

Single Issue Column

- Has valuable place as well.
- Provides room for detail for topics that may require more than one or two paragraphs.
- Allows for a more formal style than the conversational style of the multiple items column. Certain topics, such as pesticide application guidelines, must be clear and specific.

More Tips and Reminders

- Remember when writing agriculture-focused or other technical columns to make them interesting for the general public as well.
- If you are new to column writing or it has been awhile since you wrote them on a regular basis, try starting with multiple item columns. You may find the task less difficult.
- Add human interest to your columns.
  - Include names. Instead of writing “I had a call about pruning,” you might write. “Jane Samples from the Hartford area came by the office wanting to know how to avoid ‘crepe murder.’”
  - Use personal pronouns and terms, such as I, you, we, our.

- Use short words and simple sentences.
- Use active words. They make writing more lively and help keep sentences short.
- Keep a folder of ideas. Include things such as the following:
  - Questions you are getting from clients
  - New publications
  - Timely information sheets from specialists
  - Articles that arouse your interest