

## HOW TO WRITE ADVICE COLUMNS CAROLYN

*Carolyn Hax started her advice column in , after five years as a copy editor and news editor in Style and none as a therapist. The column includes cartoons.*

Nickel-and-diming your joy for any reason is not the path to fulfillment, period, but when you reflect someday on this particular reason for holding yourself back? And, if he does that enough, perhaps we'll begin to see men asking questions that are not so superficial to begin with. For example: when the Gentleman Scholar debuted on Feb. One family member this year has messaged the family about animal cruelty in detail, and asked that we all eat vegetarian this holiday season. A reasonable expectation of yourself is to choose not to take any of this personally. His writing workshops are even advertised right below his answers! The second question was about a child who is a picky eater. The answers Patterson provides are fun, unique within the genre, and well considered, but they come in response to questions that only reinforce old ideas of masculinity as cold and stoic. Advice columns for men, however, seem not to have made the leap from proscriptive notions of rectitude to the smart-older-sister vibe of advice for women. The third installment got a little closer: a question about chivalry and another about a potential divorce. We could gin up a good argument over whether a guest has a right to ask, and whether the standing of that guest matters " family vs. As detailed in the New Yorker's Oct. Women would never ask an advice columnist about fashion, unless that question were within the context of an interpersonal relationship, i. The men who solicit advice from Gentleman Scholar and other male columnists seem to experience all of their quagmires in a lonely vacuum of shoulds. This, the columnists told us, is how a good woman would act. A new addition to the field came just recently, with Slate's debut of a new advice-for-men column called the Gentleman Scholar , and he's not alone. His first fashion question inspired lots of fashion questions, but he won't let it become a style-advice column. An experienced advice-asker would know that this question only becomes an advice-columnist matter when it's about the relationship between the father and child, or the parents, or the father and the other parents who judge him for his child's eating habits. Submit a letter to the editor or write to letters.theatlantic. But I would argue that they actually fall into the specific-topic category. Though a lot changed between those medieval how-tos and the first letter to Dear Abby, the basic point remained the same. We all know that wedding guests ought to receive thank-you notes, but these days you're less likely to see advice about how to properly phrase such thanks than counsel on how to not hold a grudge when such a note does not arrive. But, no surprise, the 20th century changed the way advice for women was dealt out. Our son got married last year and invited only adults. This is a question for a pediatrician, not an advice columnist—a mistake that is not so much the fault of Troy Patterson, said Scholar, who gives a fascinatingly discursive answer about Flintstones vitamins, but the fault of the writer. Those who ask questions of Prudie or Carolyn Hax are often clearly tormented or hurt or angry, and their questions are about relationships. He says he wants to keep the irreverent tone with which he began but use the superficial as a way into discussing the serious. All have married and have families. Hax: We are hosting the family Thanksgiving at our home this year. This has never been a problem. Hurt feelings are created without reason.