

## PART II

### 9.1. EDITING PROCESSES

The main consideration in editing is to tell the story in the **fewest words possible**. Condensation is essential because there is more material than can be used. The second consideration is **clarity**, which is obtained by avoiding intricate sentence structure and by using familiar words. The third consideration is **forceful expression**. The sub-editor must constantly seek the most effective way to express the ideas of the story. The fourth consideration is respect for **accuracy**. It means looking out for small factual errors, which disfigure an otherwise good story.

Editing involves more than making sure words are spelled correctly, language is used properly, punctuation is in the right places and spelling is accurate. These, however, are important details that separate a polished publication from a sloppy one. As gatekeepers of a publication, editors must have a clear idea about what the mission is. So part of editing involves being missionaries and a part also involves being ambassadors of ideas.

It is with experience that the best ideas most often come from the bottom up, not from the top down. So editors should be encouraging writers to pursue their own story ideas. This is done with prompting, nudging, cajoling, pushing--whatever works.

**Editing requires good listening.** The writer should be heard first, and then the editor responds. The conversation process enriches stories, because two heads are better than one. Conversation should be taking place when the idea is first being formulated; it should take place during and after the reporting phase; it should take place before the story is written and it should take place after the editor has fully processed the story. **At each stage the editor should bear in mind that it is the**

---

**reporter's story on the one hand, but it also is the reader's story. It is not the editor's story.**

Story ideas are similar to loaves of bread. All of the elements need to be brought together and kneaded. Then the dough is popped into the oven until it rises and is ready to eat. The punctuation has an important function in a story. Its function is to help guide the reader through the sentence or paragraph in a way that will make the wording more understandable.

### **Revision**

Editorial changes, normally made in ink for the printer, are better made clearly in pencil on the typescript if the writer is going to see the changes. A reasonably legible photocopy can then be sent to the author for checking and revision process. The editor can draw attention to doubtful points with a marginal note.

### **Structural Reorganization**

Reorganizing a whole write up, argument or section ought to be the writer's responsibility, but the editor must have good reasons for asking for major reorganization, and they should suggest how it should be done.

### **Expansion**

If a step in the argument is missing, or if further experimental evidence is needed, only the writer can supply the missing material.

### **Shortening**

Shortening an article to a given length may be done by the author but is often better done in the editorial office. If the writer is asked to do the work the editor must indicate how it might be done, which sections, paragraphs, tables or illustrations could be deleted, which part could be condensed, and which marginally relevant theme might be cut out.

### **The Title**

A title that conveys the main subject or the message in a few words as possible is easy retrieval. Since editors know more about the use of titles in information

---

retrieval than most writers, editors should have a major say in re-titling stories where necessary.

## **Spellings**

The difference between American and British spelling produce problems in these days of international journals largely in English. If the editor, publisher or printer cannot accept inconsistency between articles, the editor or copy-editor should change the spelling, where necessary, to whichever version is more common in the country of publication.


### **9.2. Guidelines for rewriting, revising and some basic principles of editing:**

1. Give the main points of the news in the first paragraph
2. Tell the story in headline and use a verb to give it vigor
3. Check names, titles, facts, figures, dates, and address where ever slightest doubt exists. The sub-editor know the reference book which will clear the doubt
4. Both sides of the story in a dispute must be given
5. Use short sentences and short paragraphs
6. Repeat names in court cases rather than refer to them as accused, witness, etc
7. Indicate correctness of doubtful spelling by saying 'correct' within brackets
8. Beware of foreign names
9. Define long, unfamiliar words, especially scientific and medical terms
10. Do not begin sentences with words like 'despite' or 'because'
11. Do not use vague phrases like a 'serous charge' or a 'certain offence'
12. Reporters to give a rather artificial flow to the story 'meanwhile' often use the word. Cut it out
13. Use concrete words, words that make the reader see, hear, smell or taste. Test the story for concrete images and visual word pictures
14. Be careful about pronouns. The misuse of the relative pronoun and punctuation are the most common grammatical errors in the news stories.
15. Editorializing any trace of personal opinion or a value judgment should be eliminated from the copy unless it is a feature or news analysis

### **How to Copy Edit a Story?**

- 
1. **Pull all of the elements of the story together.** There's the copy, caption(s), headlines, and any refers or breakout boxes. You want to be able to crosscheck all of these elements against each other.
  2. **Read the story.** Are the byline and dateline correct? Look for bad or missing punctuation, grammar or spelling errors, incomplete sentences, repeating words ("the the"), AP stylebook (if that's what your publication uses), improper day references ("today," "yesterday"), etc. Double-check unfamiliar names and places. Be sure to run a spell check at the end your spelling skills may be excellent, but everyone makes mistakes.
  3. **Let the writer keep his or her voice.** You may encounter copy that is beyond awful, and rewriting good chunks may be necessary. But editors should also resist making changes not because something is wrong, but because they're adding a style or voice that they prefer.
  4. **Edit the captions.** Crosscheck names, places, events, organization titles, etc., against the story. Is there a discrepancy? Many correct answers can be found by checking with the reporter, calling sources, or looking on official Web sites. Run a spell check.
  5. **Edit the headline.** Make sure that the headline accurately reflects what the main point of the story is, and that any subhead develops off the main headline. Ensure that it reflects headline do's and don'ts. Run a spell check.
  6. **Is it really ready to go?** Don't file something as ready to go for print if, say, you're waiting on a phone call to confirm a fact in the story.
  7. **Review the final product.** If you're working at a paper, you'll want to review how the elements all came together on a page. Does any text run together, do captions fit the photos; have any fonts "blown out" (changed appearance) in the design process? If a story says it jumps to page four, have you checked to make sure the story does land there and the text correctly flows from the originating page to the jump page? Eyeball the headlines for one last spelling check.

### Tips:

1. Work briskly, but not so fast that you miss things.
  2. Don't be afraid to ask questions about suspicious story elements.
  3. Be particularly careful about editing columns and keeping the pundit's original voice.
  4. Even the best writers and editors double-check against a computer spellchecker.
  5. Take care not to insert errors into copy.
- 

---

## What You Need while copy-editing:

- Dictionary
- AP Stylebook
- Red pen (for page proofs)

The Editing process is a great time to pay attention and see where you can improve the next time you file a story.

## Here are circumstances under which you might see your story tweaked or hacked:

- **A new lead is needed.** This is one of the most common things editors will change, because the lead draws the reader into the story or can lose them from the get-go.
- Sometimes a story will go through the editing process only to have the editor at the top decide a different focus should be brought through in the lead. Pay attention to what makes a sharper lead and also note which story elements are moved up in the story -- this has to do with news judgment, and finding the real hook in the story.
- **You made mistakes.** Compare the final version with the original copy that you turned in. Did you get names wrong, have a poor grasp of AP style or grammar, omit key background details, or mess up facts?
- **You embellished.** If your story seems stripped down, it may be because you spent less time on the cake and more time on the frosting. Assess how much story space you're devoting to great lead, hard facts, sharp quotes and key background, and how much you're devoting to descriptive filler.
- **It needs to be cut for space.** Often it's the advertisers who determine how much room there is for your story. Designers place stories on a page after the dummy showing the ad stack -- blocking out space on the page for ad placement -- is received. Because ads can change at the last minute, sometimes the space for your story can be shortened or lengthened at the last minute. This is where you cross your fingers and hope the editor knows what can be cut from the story and what should stay.
- **It doesn't fit the editorial vision of the paper.** This will happen to every journalist at some point in his or her career: Your story is just fine, but

---

you're submitting to a publication that has a strict, recognizable style and will mold your piece to read that way, too. If you work full-time at a newspaper, reworking such as this most often happens to page one stories, which go all the way to the top and are tweaked up until deadline.

### 9.3. Detecting & Correcting Errors

#### When Editors introduce errors

This also has happened to everyone, and it's important to nip the situation in the bud. Often errors are mistakenly introduced in the rapid line-editing process, when copy is being shifted and rearranged. Occasionally errors are introduced by an editor who, to put it plainly, thinks he or she knows better, and changes or includes a fact without looking it up. **A headline writer might put a wrong fact in the story headline, and of course many readers will think it's the mistake of the person whose byline is on the text.**

In these cases where the editors were clearly in the wrong, resist the urge to get upset. **Calmly bring the error to your immediate supervisor's attention as soon as possible.** If the story is online, this version can be quickly fixed. If the error is such that it requires a printed correction from the publication, this should indicate that it the error was one of editing and not the reporter's mistake.

It is important to take story changes in stride and be judicious about when to raise a fuss. (Good times to take the issue up with your editor could be when facts or the general story meaning are changed, when especially good or exclusive parts were taken out, when an important source is cut out of the story, or when the writer's voice in an opinion column is altered.) Look on the editing process as a collaborative effort and learn when to pick your battles.

#### Correcting Copy for Good Taste

Mistakes tend to be inevitable when you're producing an edition every night, often on a limited staff, and there are always readers who are more than happy to overlook what you've done right and let you know what you've done wrong.

**But grammar errors and misspelled headlines aside, mistakes within copy such as wrong quotes or misidentifications can call the very credibility of a publication into question.**

---

The allegation of error may be made directly to the reporter or to an editor, who will then judge whether the newspaper did indeed err and what kind of a correction is warranted. The correction is usually printed in the next edition, and is usually worded positively, clarifying the true facts instead of starkly highlighting the newspaper's fault. Example: *"Joe Smith, director of the local food bank featured in Wednesday's editions, is 56 years old."*

Online journalism offers not only wider readership, but also the opportunity to correct errors even faster.

Online publications and blogs alike should always be committed to reporting the truth, and when an error is brought to the site editor's attention it should be dealt with promptly. If not, questions about the site's credibility can easily spread like wildfire across the Web, threatening the time and effort that pro or citizen journalists took to build the site up.

How to remedy the situation depends on:

- **Pre-established correction rules for the site:** Is the wrong item simply fixed, or is there a notation that alerts readers who might have seen the piece earlier that there was an error in copy?
- **How bad was the error?** If it's your fault, best to bite the bullet and admit so right out of the gate. Find out how you erred (trusting a bad source, taking bad notes, etc.) and devise how you can prevent such a mistake from happening again (i.e. backing up your notes with an audio recording).
- **How steamed is the person affected by the copy error?** If they, or someone completely unrelated to the story, simply advises you of a copy mistake, quickly fix it and move on. If the error is so bad as to incite controversy, call a subject's reputation into question or make the subject hopping mad, converse as politely as possible with the subject, apologize for misquoting or misrepresenting him or her (or whatever the error may be) and publish a correction. Acting swiftly and accepting responsibility works wonders in defusing a potentially ugly situation.

There are times, of course, when a subject claims you've made an error and a thorough review of the facts indicates that you haven't or it can't be proven that you did. At a newspaper, that's what your editor is there for!

---

**An Editorial is usually written by the editor or one of the writers on his or her behalf and it represents the views of the newspaper.**

Also in editorial section, you will find other people's opinions on the same subject or others. They are known as **columns**.

Editorial stories have:

1. Introduction, body, solution and conclusion like other news stories.
2. An objective explanation of the issue, especially complex issues.
3. A timely news angle.
4. Opinions from the opposing viewpoint that refute directly the same issues the writer addresses.
5. Good editorials engage issues, not personalities and refrain from name-calling or other petty tactics of persuasion.
6. Alternative solutions to the problem or issue being criticized. Anyone can gripe about a problem, but a good editorial should take a proactive approach to making the situation better by using constructive criticism and giving solutions.
7. A solid and concise conclusion that powerfully summarizes the writer's opinion. Give it some punch.

### ***Four Types of Editorials***

- Editorials of argument and persuasion take a firm stand on a problem or condition. They attempt to persuade the reader to think the same way. This editorial often proposes a solution or advises taking some definite action.
- Editorials of information and interpretation attempt to explain the meaning or significance of a situation or news event. There are a wide variety of editorials in this category, ranging from those, which provide background information to those, which identify issues.
- Editorials of tribute, appreciation or commendation praise a person or an activity.
- Editorials of entertainment have two categories. One is the short humorous treatment of a light topic. The second is a slightly satirical treatment of a serious subject. (Satire is the use of sarcasm or keen wit to denounce abuses or follies. While it ridicules or makes fun of a subject with the intent of improving it.)



---

## 9.5. Structure of an Editorial

Editorials are written according to a well-established formula.

1. **Introduction** - state the problem
2. **Body** - expresses an opinion
3. **Solution** - offers a solution to the problem
4. **Conclusion**-emphasizes the main issue

Here are some additional tips on structuring your opinion story.

1. **Lead with an Objective Explanation of the Issue/Controversy.** Include the five W's and the H. Pull in facts and quotations from sources, which are relevant.
2. **Present Your Opposition First.** As the writer you disagree with these viewpoints. Identify the people (specifically who oppose you). Use facts and quotations to state objectively their opinions. Give a strong position of the opposition. You gain nothing in refuting a weak position.
3. **Directly Refute The Opposition's Beliefs.** You can begin your article with transition. Pull in other facts and quotations from people who support your position. Concede a valid point of the opposition, which will make you appear rational, one who has considered all the options.
4. **Give Other, Original Reasons/Analogies.** In defense of your position, give reasons from strong to strongest order. Use a literary or cultural allusion that lends to your credibility and perceived intelligence.
5. **Conclude With Some Punch.** Give solutions to the problem or challenge the reader to be informed.

A quotation can be effective, especially if from a respected source. A rhetorical question can be an effective concluser as well. While it ridicules or makes fun of a subject with the intent of improving it.

**Redundancy** in information theory is the number of bits used to transmit a message minus the number of bits of actual information in the message. Informally, it is the amount of wasted "space" used to transmit certain data. Data compression is a way to reduce or eliminate unwanted redundancy. As with any communication, compressed data communication only works when both the sender and receiver of the information understand the encoding scheme. For example, this

---

text makes sense only if the receiver understands that it is intended to be interpreted as characters representing the English language. Similarly, **compressed data can only be understood if the decoding method is known by the receiver.**

Just as in a conversation, many writers say almost the same thing twice, or more, to make sure the point is not lost, but more likely because of deadline pressure or sheer carelessness. The alert copy-editor notes repetitions and deletes them. More commonly, redundancies take the form of one or several unnecessary words. Example: ‘little boy’, ‘young gentlemen’ ‘future schedule’ etc. clutter and redundancy are only two examples of the many writing faults for which the copy editor also is responsible if they are not corrected. Every country has its idioms, slang terms, clichés, jargon and the like that infest otherwise readable stories. The principles of proper writing, however, are universal. Even stories that are composed in a hurry can be grammatically and structurally sound: if not, good editing will make them so.

## **9.6. Reading Proofs**

Proof reading is a final proofing of the manuscript, usually focused on cleaning up any typographical errors before the manuscript is typeset. It is the process of reading composed copy in order to identify and correct errors. It also involves verifying that text has been entered correctly, as well as looking for spelling and punctuation errors. Proofreading is not an innate ability; it is an acquired skill.

### **Tips for successful proofreading:**

- Cultivate a healthy sense of doubt. If there are types of errors you know you tend to make, double check for those.
- Read very slowly. If possible, read out loud. Read one word at a time.
- Read what is actually on the page, not what you think is there. (This is the most difficult sub-skill to acquire, particularly if you wrote what you are reading).
- Proofread more than once. If possible, work with someone else.

**In proofreading, you can take nothing for granted, because unconscious mistakes are so easy to make.** It helps to read out loud, because 1) you are forced to slow down and 2) you hear what you are reading as well as seeing it, so you are using two senses. It is often possible to hear a mistake, such as an omitted or repeated word that you have not seen.

---

**Professional editors proofread as many as ten times.** Publishing houses hire teams of readers to work in pairs, out loud. And still errors occur.

**Remember that it is twice as hard to detect mistakes in your own work as in someone else's!**

### **General tips for Proofing and Editing**

- Read it out loud and also silently.
- Read it backwards to focus on the spelling of words.
- Read it upside down to focus on typology.
- Use a spell checker and grammar checker as a first screening, but don't depend on them.
- Have others read it.
- Read it slowly.
- Use a screen (a blank sheet of paper to cover the material not yet proofed).
- Point with your finger to read one word at a time.
- Don't proof for every type of mistake at once—do one proof for spelling, another for missing/additional spaces, consistency of word usage, font sizes, etc.
- Print it out and read it.
- Read down columns in a table, even if you're supposed to read across the table to use the information. Columns may be easier to deal with than rows.
- Use editor's flags. Put #s in the document where reviewers need to pay special attention, or next to items that need to be double-checked before the final proof print. Do a final search for all # flags and remove them.
- Give a copy of the document to another person and keep a copy yourself. Take turns reading it out loud to each other. While one of you reads, the other one follows along to catch any errors and awkward-sounding phrases. This method also works well when proofing numbers and codes.
- First, proof the body of the text. Then go back and proof the headings. Headings are prone to error because copy editors often don't focus on them.
- Double check fonts that are unusual (italic, bold, or otherwise different).
- Carefully read type in very tiny font.
- Be careful that your eyes don't skip from one error to the next obvious error, missing subtle errors in between.
- Double check proper names.
- Double-check little words: "or," "of," "it," and "is" are often interchanged.

- 
- Double check boilerplate text, like the company letterhead. Just because it's frequently used doesn't mean it's been carefully checked.
  - Double check whenever you're sure something is right—certainty is dangerous.
  - Closely review page numbers and other footer/header material for accuracy and correct order.

### **Preparation to Proof or Edit**

- Write at the end of the day; edit first thing in the morning.
- Listen to music or chew gum. Proofing can be boring business and it doesn't require much critical thinking, though it does require extreme focus and concentration. Anything that can relieve your mind of some of the pressure, while allowing you to still keep focused, is a benefit.
- Don't use fluorescent lighting when proofing. The flicker rate is actually slower than standard lighting. Your eyes can't pick up inconsistencies as easily under fluorescent lighting.
- Spend a half-hour a month reviewing grammar rules.
- Read something else between edits. This helps clear your head of what you expect to read and allows you to read what really is on the page.
- Make a list of things to watch for—a kind of "to do" list—as you edit.

**As soon as editing of a copy is done, the first symbol used is for paragraph indentation.** Even if every paragraph is indented, one should mark this symbol on every paragraph. This would help the typesetter to know that you want paragraph to begin at that spot.

**Slug:** a news item or story may run into several paragraphs and also exceed one page. If running into pages, a news story has to be kept track of from amongst various stories, and chronologically arranged. Hence, these paras, in a page, are divided into two or three parts. Then, these parts are 'slugged' and numbered, i.e. given a label, which identifies that story for that particular day, and helps the editor on duty to, bring different parts together. Slug is an identification mark or tag. It is often the key word in a story and is written on top left or right of a page.