

Last updated February 2018

Definitions of editorial skills, compiled by Karen Sherlock with input from Editors Canada, *editors.ca*.

In all stages of editing, the editor is the reader's advocate. Read the story with fresh eyes, as though you know nothing about the topic or the University of Alberta.

Substantive or Structural Edit

Sometimes referred to as “first edit” on the comms team, this step might involve multiple revisions by the writer for long articles.

- 1) Review overall content and structure of an article or manuscript to ensure:
 - the focus and content adhere to the creative brief or assignment letter (unless the writer has a good reason to change direction)
 - the text follows a logical order
 - transitions make sense and aren't painfully clumsy
 - there are no “holes,” i.e., no obvious questions left unanswered
 - all facts and statements are attributed, i.e., the author is not acting as the expert
 - meaning is crystal clear (no jargon, superlatives or empty clichés)

- 2) When you're finished first edit, ask the writer to:
 - reorganize or rewrite the text as needed
 - clarify any muddy language or meaning
 - find additional facts or information, including asking the subject additional questions
 - review your changes to confirm accuracy, especially where you've changed words or whole sentences
 - rewrite your suggested wording in his or her own voice (particularly if it's a guest article)

- 3) Depending on deadlines and the state of the writer's revisions, you might need to reorganize or rewrite portions of the text yourself.
 - Make sure your changes don't eliminate the writer's style or voice.
 - Use the writer's language where possible.
 - Change only what is necessary and serves the reader; use the checklist as your guide.
 - Ask yourself: are your changes personal preference or necessary from a reader's point of view?

Copy Edit

Note: If you encounter major questions or problems — missing information, factual inconsistency, jargon — send them back to the first editor to resolve with the writer and source.

Read line by line to:

Leading with purpose.

- edit for grammar, spelling, punctuation and other mechanics of style
- check for internal consistency of facts
- clarify meaning (if you're unsure, ask original editor to take it back to writer)
- eliminate jargon, repetition and unnecessary words
- catch common misspellings
- catch words that are commonly switched or misused (flaunt/flout, between/among)
- ensure adherence to style guides
- tighten up and smooth sentences
- remove passive voice and "institution speak" as much as possible
- ensure measurements are in metric except where CP designates otherwise
- tweak for voice and tone based on publication
- add key messages, if necessary

Fact Check/Reference Check/Degree Check

- Find three reputable sources to confirm every fact, if possible. Don't believe the top item in the Google search list!
- Check all proper nouns (names of individuals, companies, organizations, countries, etc.) for correct spelling and full official names or titles. Don't presume a source knows the correct name.
- Confirm all dates, historical facts, statistics, numbers, phone numbers, math equations.
- Ensure statistics are as up-to-date as possible, interpreted properly and attributed properly. (Follow any stats or facts all the way to the original source or study, not a media report.)
- Where sources are provided by the author, check that the manuscript accurately interprets and words the facts.
- Confirm degree information in Advance and on official websites. Confirm correct degree style the yellow column of [ADM_StyleGuides_DegreeCodes](#).

Proofreading

Ideally, proofreading is done at the final design stage, i.e., on a page proof, PDF or web page. Remember, you're the last set of eyes before it gets to readers.

- Stick to egregious errors as much as possible. Choices about wording and voice have already been made. Lisa Cook's triad: illegal, embarrassing or immoral.
- Be clear to indicate actual errors versus advice on improving a sentence. On a tight deadline, only the essentials can be corrected sometimes.
- If you run across a sentence that cannot be easily fixed with a small change (that should be rare at this stage), underline it and make a comment such as "awkward" or "unclear."
N.B.: Ideally, if a change is made at this stage, someone should check against changes to ensure no new errors have been introduced.
- Be specific and clear with your markup about where the error is and how to fix it. Use standard proofreading marks or at least write legibly!

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Checklist:

1. Read text slowly and carefully, sounding out each word aloud or in your head.
 2. Pay special attention to headlines, captions and other display text (read them letter by letter, two or three times).
 3. Make sure the hed, dek, captions and pull quotes are not redundant, i.e., they don't say the same thing or use the same words.
 4. Make sure names are spelled the same in display text and main text.
 5. Watch for:
 - adherence to style guides
 - common errors in spelling, punctuation or usage
 - unnecessary capitalization
 - bold-face alumni names (pubs only)
 - missing or unnecessary punctuation
 - missing or duplicate words, especially at line breaks
 - bad breaks in type at line breaks (run your eye down the right side of the text to look for bad breaks)
 - single words that are "orphaned" at the end of a paragraph, leaving most of the line white; or single lines of text that are "widowed" at the top or bottom of a column
 - correct captions and photo credits
 - alignment of headlines, photos, gutters, etc.
 - adherence to templates or mock-up designs
- 4) For some materials, the proofreader is also responsible for:
- cross-referencing table of contents
 - checking phone numbers, email addresses
 - checking page and column breaks
 - checking for type running off the page
 - ensuring consistency of display copy treatment
 - checking page numbers and folio dates

Confirm whether any of these are your responsibility and/or let the client know that you haven't done them.