

Editing Rules

MJMC Sem II paper 202

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Editing is the process of preparing language, images, or sound for presentation through correction, condensation, organization, and other modifications. A person who edits, especially professionally or as a hobby, is called an Editor.

The five basic rules of Editing are:

1. To process any story the sub-editor ensures the length and style laid down by the News Editor is followed.
2. To mark the news copy with setting instructions so clearly and carefully that there is no possibility of confusion or misunderstanding in the composing room
3. To ensure that everything that needs to be checked has been checked, that is, names, places, titles, dates and anything else that could possibly be wrong.
4. To write a headline that fits
5. To make sure, that the copy as edited is intelligible, easy to read and appetizing. Rewriting where it is not necessary is simply a waste of time and in a newspaper organization time is the most important factor. It is considered in bad taste as it is damaging to the morale of the reporter concerned and danger of committing mistakes is greater.

Editing Rule(1)

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 with reporting and writing, there are big-picture issues that editors must attend to before plunging ahead. As gatekeepers of a publication, editors must have a clear idea about what the mission is. For instance, the Junior Journal has decided to be a voice for children's issues, a chronicler of Junior Summit action and a vehicle for breaking down barriers of distance and prejudice. Without being too rigid, editors should be sure stories fulfill at least part of the mission.

So part of editing involves being missionaries and a part also involves being ambassadors of ideas.

Editing Rule(2)

What does it mean to be an ambassador of ideas Bearing in mind that an ambassador is one who exercises diplomacy, let us examine the issue of idea formulation. It is an 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. Diplomatically, of course!

Ask the writer what interests her or him What issues are writers passionate about What intrigues them What are they curious about What's "hot" where they live (event, trend or issue)

Editing requires good listening. The writer should be heard first, and then the editor responds. This then is the beginning of a conversation, be it online or by telephone or in person. 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 editing process. At 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.

Thus, the editing should generally take the form of questions readers might ask when they come to the story cold (How was he dressed When did she say that Where did it occur.)

What should go into a story, tend to stifle the conversation and the story. On the other hand, editors should speak up if there are gaps in the story that is, elements that make the story incomplete. And they should speak up when a story is too long, unclear, awkward, meandering, etc. It's a bit like pulling a wagon: the job is easier when two people are pulling, rather than one, especially when the two are pulling together.

Editing Rule(3)

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. Editors and reporters should be collaborators in the development of story ideas. Two minds are better than one. It doesn't matter who has the initial idea. What matters is how the idea is molded and framed into a better idea. Let's say someone wants to do a story on how to make bread. The editor might suggest providing some historical perspective, pointing out that before the 20th Century B.C. There was evidence Egyptians baked bread as did the Swiss Lake Dwellers in the early days of civilized Europe That might prompt the writer to recall religious connotations to bread: manna from heaven to feed the Israelites Jesus calling himself "the bread of life and the ritual of bread and wine being served in Christian traditions. Soon a simple fourparagraph story can become a story with substance. The point is that we shouldn't be satisfied with the first idea that comes to mind. That's only the beginning. We should turn it over in our minds, shape it, pull it apart, and push it back together again, just like kneading.

Editing Rule(9)

Lingo means jargon or slang language. The journalism trade is full of lingo. Some of it actually makes sense. We talk of "heads" for headlines (sometimes spell.) We refer to the story as "body" type. So you can think of a story as having a head and a body. The head is as important as the body. We need to put more thought into our heads, especially on the web, because readers are browsing fast. So the head has to say, "Hey, wait a minute: you need to look at my body."

The tone of the headline should reflect the tone of the story. Don't use funny or flippant headlines on serious stories. Most heads should contain a verb to connote action. The selection of nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs should be done with care. Choosing just the right word can illuminate.

A head in smaller type under the main headline is often called a subhead. Its purpose usually is to expand on the idea in the top headline or to interject a second thought. Generally the main head expresses a single thought or point. Editor's goal is twofold: To capture the essence of the story and to entice the reader into reading it. Believe that reporters should submit headlines on their stories. They know what they want to emphasize. However, editors

reserve the right to rewrite or polish the wording for the final headline. It's normal for an editor to write a half dozen, dozen or even more versions before being satisfied. You want to put your best head forward!

Editing Rule(5)

When you're in another country, you would have difficulty getting around without signs. More and more signs are minimizing the use of words and using symbols, because not everyone speaks the native language. So when you are driving and you see a sign with an arrow bending to the right, you know there's a curve ahead. Sometimes one has to look twice to distinguish between the signs for the ladies room and the men's room, but obviously these symbols are useful guides. The same is true with punctuation. It 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. Many books have been written about the rules of punctuation, but these points about commas are extremely useful:

Commas do not signal a pause so don't drop them into a sentence without areas In the beginning the writer did reporting(no comma after "in the beginning,because it is a phrase not a clause would you put in a comma if it were at the end of the sentence .(The same goes for an adverb that starts a sentence: no comma in:"Luckily I did my homework*X".In a series you have a choice as to whether to use two or three commas in the following sentence: She liked vanilla, chocolate, strawberry and chocolate chip. Newspapers generally don't use a comma after "strawberry*X:X because years ago type was handset, so they tried to avoid punctuation marks whenever possible. It saved time and labor. Most publications have stylebooks to provide consistency when usage and punctuation rules have variables, such as in the last example. Lacking a stylebook, the best thing you can do is use your common sense and think twice before you type a comma or other punctuation mark into a sentence. When in doubt, leave it out. No need to put a bump in the reader's road if you don't have to.

