

## 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.**

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. 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.

### **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