

Editorial Graphics and Publishing Services

What is Editing?

Editing is a process whereby information created, and probably revised, by one or more writers is reviewed and evaluated before it is published.

Writers may have a hard time recognizing inconsistencies in their work, because they are so involved in it or close to it.

The editor's job is to make sure that the information is accurate, so as not to mislead the audience; and the article must be organized so that the information is both easy to find and logical!

Also, the "little things" like sentence structure, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation must be checked to make sure they conform to standards for American English so the audience can understand the information.

And, most important, an editor must ensure that there is consistency throughout the article and the publication. **Consistency is the cornerstone of intelligent editing.**

Know your audience. Put yourself in their place. Write so **they** will understand.

Before you start editing

- Prepare a style sheet
- Have your dictionary and the APA style manual within easy reach.

While you are editing

- **Use your dictionary** whenever you're not sure whether a word is correct, or whether it should be capitalized, hyphenated, or not used at all in a particular context.
- **Be consistent in your use of a style throughout the article. For example, if you use *cancelled* in a sentence, do not use *canceled* further on in the article.**
- **Watch out for the random use of different terms that means the same thing.**

It's always a good idea not to have too many editors for a publication. One or two pairs of eyes are enough to ensure consistency.

Proofreading

Proofreading is the process of reviewing and checking a document to make sure the changes have been made. Spelling, capitalization, and punctuation are checked again, as are the devices that help readers find information—headings, pagination, headers, and footers.

When proofreading your work, stay alert for problems in language, such as these:

- Nonstandard grammar (She don't talk good)
- Incorrect or missing punctuation (do'nt, don't)
- Inconsistent editorial style (in compound words, capitalization, abbreviation, and so on—for example: \$10 Bargains at *Thousand-Dollar Yard Sale*)
- Incorrect arithmetic (Profits Fall 150%)
- Factual errors (Freud's *Manual of Child Psychology*)

Grammar Notes

Subject/verb agreement

Singular nouns and pronouns take singular verbs.

The best *way out* is always through. (Robert Frost)

A total of 769 randomly selected adults *was* interviewed Wednesday for the poll.

Plural nouns and pronouns require a plural verb.

Her knobby little *hands were* like tools laid upon the Formica counter of the coffee bar. (Nadine Gordimer, *Something Out There*)

Those who stay at home all day *live* in a world of women. (Anita Brookner, *Brief Lives*)

Managing the department and *doing the weekly payroll require* attention to detail.

Some subjects can take either a singular or plural verb. Usually, the sentence structure will determine which verb is correct, but sometimes the meaning will be the determining factor.

When compound subjects are joined by *or* or *nor*, the verb agrees with the subject closer to the verb.

The staff members or the director *is* always available to answer questions.

The director or the staff members *are* always available to answer questions.

Placing the plural noun last in such constructions often makes the sentence read more smoothly

Other exceptions

Most grammarians prefer to use a plural verb with *none*.

None of the reporters were able to interview the defendant

Television is the chief way that most of us partake of the larger world,...*none of us completely escape* its influence. (The New Yorker, March 9, 1992)

Positive and negative subjects

When a positive subject is contrasted with a negative one, the verb should agree with the positive subject.

It is the president, not the vice presidents, *who makes* the final decision.

However, as you know, it's hard to establish rules to fit every situation, and in some cases, trying too hard to violate a rule violates common sense.

When all else fails, rephrase the sentence to avoid the problem.

Trimming the fat

Long sentences (20+ words) are harder to read. Avoid having too many. The idea is to be brief, unless you have a reason not to be.

Remember, there are ways of handling a sentence that make it easier to read, e.g., itemizing or listing. Punctuate and capitalize lists consistently!

References and Resources

The APA Style Manual

To use the APA Publication Manual effectively, you should be familiar with the contents of all the chapters before you begin writing. At least know what issues the manual covers. And, remember to use the index at the back.

The most useful chapter in the manual may be chapter 3—APA Editorial Style, and the sections on reference citations, reference lists, and appendix 3a—Elements and Examples of References in APA Style.

Webster's Dictionary

The New York Public Library Writer's Guide to Style and Usage. 838 pages, 6 1/4" x 9 1/2", hardcover, 1994, ISBN 0-06-270064-2, HarperCollins Publishers, \$38.50. The *Writer's Guide* answers common (and not-so-common) questions of style, grammar, and usage for writers and editors in every field—and goes on from there to cover all aspects of editing, production, and printing. The book's 18 authors share decades of real-life publications experience. It is truly a one-volume comprehensive editorial reference shelf.

Internet Resources

<telnet://database.carl.org> is a periodical index and document delivery service of CARL Corporation (which developed from the Colorado Alliance of Research Libraries). With it, you can search for articles from nearly 17,000 periodicals published in the past few years. The bibliographic information (authors, title, volume, issue, starting page, and sometimes even an abstract) is free. If you want the full text of the article (not available for all periodicals), you can set up an account and pay processing and copyright fees (usually US\$8 to US\$16 total) and have it faxed to you within 24 hours.

[Owl.english.purdue.edu](http://owl.english.purdue.edu) is the official writing lab for Purdue University students and others on the Internet. The “handouts” cover punctuation, parts of speech, research papers, reference formats, spelling (like the difference between its and it’s), general writing issues (like gender-neutral language), résumés, and business writing.

www.altavista.com (a search engine) allows you to search the full text of the documents in its huge database, and there are many ways to refine your search. For example, you can look for Web pages with a particular word or phrase in the title, for messages in a particular set of newsgroups or for pages that have links to a particular page. To get the most out of AltaVista, read its help pages carefully.

Style Sheets

To prevent inconsistencies, every editor and proofreader should have a handy guide to the preferred spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and other usage agreed on by the staff. Such an editorial style sheet need list only those examples that are peculiar to your particular publication. It need not duplicate the rules for correct spelling and usage. That is already covered in the APA style manual.

Most offices have some rules of distinctive capitalization or hyphenation. GPO, for example, recommends capitalizing such nouns as “Government” and “State.”

There are no hard and fast rules about the contents of such a style sheet since it is based on the personal preference of the staff. Frequent additions and corrections should keep it up to date. Constant use of a good editorial style sheet should help at every stage of editing and proofreading.