

Copy-Editing

Copy editors are responsible for catching spelling errors, grammar issues, cut-off words, run-on sentences, anything that doesn't make sense, and much more.

- Hyphens connect; dashes separate
- Ellipses are only used to indicate missing words – NOT pauses.
- Commas = pause for breath
- Semi-colon = two related, complete thoughts
- “and” indicates dependence
- Colon = what followed was explained before colon
- Period = full stop
- Exclamation point: Use rarely
- Comma “splices” actually are two separate sentences
- Pronouns refer to the most previous noun
- “It” and “That” can be pronouns
- Rule of thumb: noun/pronoun/noun/pronoun
- “Its/It’s” violates grammatical rule for possessives: “It’s” is only used as a contraction for “It is”
 - “That” is usually unnecessary
 - If “that” refers to people, change it to “who”
 - That/Which – which takes a comma; that doesn’t
 - “off of” – delete the “of” since he did not jump off of the bridge
 - Change “will be” to “is to be.” You’re not a prophet.
 - Watch that subject and verb agree
 - Don’t split infinitives
 - Write as much as possible in active voice.
 - Abbreviate months when they have dates, but not if they don’t. November 2009 but Nov. 10, 2010.
 - Do not use “th” after a date, as in Nov. 10th; it’s just Nov. 7.
 - Time is written this way: 9:30 a.m. 11 p.m.
 - Rule is time, day, date, place – 7 p.m. Wednesday, June 10, in the lobby of Grand Theater.
 - Spell out days of week; Abbreviate all months but March, April, May, June, July.
- Use AP Style Guide for journalistic abbreviations of states.
- Use last name on second reference.
- Do not use “Dr.” as a title. Use whatever the title is after the name ie: John Smith, DMin., or call him a “physician” if that’s what he is.
 - Doublecheck all names – of cities and states as well as people and buildings.
 - Doublecheck the math.
 - Attribute all facts. Attribute everything! You are not the sources of the information; state who is ie: the new computers will arrive Thursday, Schmidt said.
 - Use “said” most all the time. Don’t get clever with “commented, noted” etc. Okay to use “explained” or “continued” for variety.

- Rule of thumb is proper noun, pronoun, proper noun, pronoun.
- Watch those pronouns; they quite easily lead to lack of clarity.
- People do not believe, think, feel, understand. They SAY they do.
- Do not editorialize. If a value judgment is made, make sure you attribute that. “It was a hot day” is a value judgment. “The courthouse thermometer read 105 degrees” is a fact.
- Reporters are observers, not participants. Write always as if watching the action, even if you’re a central player.