

Editing for Non-editors: 10 Steps to Stronger Proposals



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Today's Topics

- What are two secrets to better editing?
- What are 10 steps to stronger proposals?
- What is editing *really* all about?

Introduction

- What are two secrets to better editing?

First, read.

Introduction

- Second, learn from the masters.

Introduction



Introduction



Introduction



Introduction



Introduction

- Second, learn from the masters.

Expect to revise.

Introduction

“[N]o one writes a perfect first draft. Revising and editing are essential for producing effective technical documents.”

Diana Reep

Technical Writing: Principles, Strategies, and Readings

Ten Steps to Stronger Proposals

**No. 10:
Eliminate Wordiness**

Eliminate Wordiness

- Use a “slash and burn” approach.
- Less equals more.

Eliminate Wordiness

“Provide an itemized list providing a detailed breakdown of contributions made in previous years.”

Eliminate Wordiness

“Provide an itemized list providing a detailed breakdown of previous years’ contributions made in previous years.”

Eliminate Wordiness

- Look for jargon and clichés and eliminate them:
 - As you may know
 - From this point forward
 - It stands to reason
 - With all due respect

Eliminate Wordiness

- Avoid stacked adjectives.

Eliminate Wordiness

“The fuel tanks are equipped with foam baffle systems fabricated from reticulated, polyether polyurethane, explosion suppressant, charcoal colored, type VI (coarse pore) conductive foam.”

Eliminate Wordiness

"The fuel tanks are equipped with foam baffle systems fabricated from reticulated, polyether polyurethane, explosion suppressant, charcoal colored, type VI (coarse pore) conductive foam."

Eliminate Wordiness

“The fuel tanks are equipped with foam baffle systems fabricated from reticulated, polyether polyurethane, explosion suppressant, charcoal colored, type VI (coarse pore) conductive foam.”

Eliminate Wordiness

- Stacked prepositions are another problem:

“This job instruction is not meant to cover the technical manual maintenance effort associated **with** a production contract **for** the period **of** time specified **in** the contract **for** maintenance **of** the technical manual.”

Eliminate Wordiness

“Stopway—A defined rectangular area **on** the ground **at** the end **of** a runway **in** the direction **of** take-off designated and prepared **by** the operating authority as a suitable area, capable **of** sustaining the weight **of** the aircraft, and **in** which the aircraft can be stopped **in** the case **of** an interrupted take-off.”

Eliminate Wordiness

“There is but one art, to omit.”

Robert Louis Stevenson

**No. 9:
Avoid Obtuse Language**

Avoid Obtuse Language

“Course 5 . . . concentrates on maneuvering the operating unit within the strategic plans and structure of the overall organization. . . . It applies the concepts of competition, negotiation, and cooperation to point to the ways of managing relations with all levels of the company.”

Avoid Obtuse Language

- Much obtuse writing is the result of using nominalizations:
 - Gave a presentation *versus* presented
 - Conducted a discussion *versus* discussed
 - Offered a suggestion *versus* suggested
 - Our expectation was *versus* we expected

Avoid Obtuse Language

“The green light is the indication that electrical activation has been initiated.”

Avoid Obtuse Language

- Shun “tion” words.

No. 8:
Check Punctuation

Check Punctuation



⌋



-



—

Check Punctuation

A black, stylized double quotation mark symbol.A short, thick black horizontal dash.A short, thick black horizontal dash.A black slanted slash mark.A small black vertical dash mark.A black slanted slash mark.A small black vertical dash mark.

Check Punctuation

Internet. That. Does. Not. Stop. And go.

Check Punctuation

- Incorrect punctuation may be
 - Missing
 - Misplaced
 - Unnecessary

Check Punctuation

For all programs except XYZ*, the administrator shall obtain a work order, and issue a labor authorizing document. . . .

*Name changed for privacy.

Check Punctuation

For all programs except XYZ* , the administrator shall obtain a work order , and issue a labor authorizing document. . . .

Check Punctuation

- Listen for the pauses.

**No. 7:
Check Pronouns**

Check Pronouns

The master electronic **copy** of all files shall be stored in **their** native format

Check Pronouns

The master electronic **copy** of all
shall be stored in **their** **its** native
format

Check Pronouns

Each **person** has **their** own bathroom and closet.

Check Pronouns

Each person has ~~their~~ his or her own bathroom and closet.

Check Pronouns

- One equals one.

**No. 6:
Check for Subject-Verb
Agreement**

Subject-Verb Agreement

“ . . . the **proposal** for the manual requirements **are** developed and submitted . . . as follows:”

Subject-Verb Agreement

“ . . . the **proposal** for the manual requirements **are** **is** developed and submitted . . . as follows:”

Subject-Verb Agreement

- Collective nouns and indefinite pronouns are troublesome:

- Committee
- Group
- Majority
- Number
- Team
- Any
- More
- Most
- None
- Some

Subject-Verb Agreement

- Again, one equals one.

**No. 5:
Verify Internal
References**

Internal References

- Table of contents
- List of figures
- Text references
- Index references

Internal References

“[P]lease contact the . . . help desk at one of the following numbers:”

[End of Document]

Internal References

- Put yourself in your reader's shoes.

**No. 4:
Avoid Overcapitalizing**

Avoid Overcapitalizing

“Excessive use of capitals appears pompous and is inappropriate in technical writing When in doubt, leave it lower case.”

William S. Pfeiffer

Technical Writing: A Practical Approach

Avoid Overcapitalizing

I corresponded daily with Cross Function Teams including Accounts Receivable Staff, Sales Team, Business Unit Executives. . . .

Avoid Overcapitalizing

I corresponded daily with cross function teams including Accounts Receivable staff, sales team, business unit executives. . . .

Avoid Overcapitalizing

- "When in doubt. . . ."

BTW, FYI, avoid undefined abbreviations and acronyms.
TBH, not everyone understands them.
TMOT, FWIW, doing so is a complete WOMBAT. NO1 writes like this IRL.
YBS if you don't "read and heed" (TSTB), BC IMNSHO undefined abbreviations and acronyms are confusing and do not belong in business writing A3. KWIM?

TAFN

**No. 3:
Define Acronyms and
Abbreviations**

Define Acronyms

Define *every* acronym and abbreviation.

Define Acronyms

“But my readers will know this stuff.”

Define Acronyms

100 percent

**No. 2:
Check the Spelling**

Check Spelling

Poor spelling = Poor credibility

Check Spelling

- From a student email:

“ . . . it **donned** on me. . . . ”

Check Spelling

- From an ad in the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*:
“Education: **Tudors** needed.”

Check Spelling

- From an Atlanta Opera brochure:
"Tosca, is caught between the
poliitical captive she loves. . . ."

"Sung in Italian with English
traslations."

"Visit www.atlantaopera.org for all the
lastest news and developments."

Check Spelling

- From a Society for Technical Communication web page:
 - Is the style **consistant** and appropriate to the audience?
 - Are graphics **consistant** in style, and scope?

Check Spelling

“Misspelled words . . . cause readers to question the quality of the document and the professionalism of the writer.”

William S. Pfeiffer

Technical Writing: A Practical Approach

Check Spelling

- Use spell check
- Use grammar check
- Use another set of eyes

**And the most
important step?**

**No. 1:
Be Consistent**

Be Consistent

- Use consistent terms
- Use consistent capitalization
- Use consistent style

Be Consistent

- Use consistent terms:
 - Airplane
 - Aircraft
 - Plane
 - Ship
 - Pilot
 - Pilot Flying
 - Aircraft Commander

Be Consistent

- Use consistent capitalization:
 - The administrator may be requested to meet with **Finance**. The administrator will prepare a communiqué addressed to **finance**.

Be Consistent

- Use consistent capitalization:
 - All vendor-prepared manuals must be processed through the **Materiel Department** and issued on a **material department** notification form.

Be Consistent

- Use consistent style:
 - 180-degree *versus* 180°
 - 250 horsepower *versus* 250 hp
 - 12 months *versus* 12 mos

Be Consistent

- Use a style sheet:

A - B	C - D	E - F	G - H
I - J	K - L	M - N	O - P
Q - R	S	T - U	V - W
X - Z			

Be Consistent

- To be consistent in proposal writing, call *a* thing *one* thing.

Be Consistent

“Literature thrives on originality.
Technical writing, however, isn’t
literature.”

Judith A. Tarutz
Technical Editing

Conclusion

- What is editing *really* about?

Conclusion

- Keep your reader in mind—*always*.



What Questions Do You Have?



Thank you.

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