

The purpose of editing is to correct any mistakes, delete all unnecessary words, and ensure the message is clearly communicated to the target audience. To reach people in an age when most have cultivated a short attention span, you must find the quickest way of saying everything you need to, while ensuring it's correct and still makes sense.

Here are some pointers that will help:

~ **Take a break from your writing**

It's easy to become *blind* to mistakes in your writing if you don't take a break from it. When you come back to it in a day or more, you will be more like someone reading it for the first time.

~ **Don't get *precious* about what you wrote**

Every word must earn its place. People will read pages and pages of type if it keeps their interest, but won't read one paragraph if it's long winded. If the words are prattle and don't deal with the needs, wants and desires of the reader, you will lose their attention and the response you were aiming for.

~ **Don't trust Spell Check**

Use human eyes to proof read.
This poem passed Spell Check:

Spell-checking Is Grate!

*Eye halve a spelling chequer
It came with my pea sea
It plainly marques four my revue
Miss steaks eye kin knot sea.

Eye strike a key and type a word
And weight four it two say
Weather eye am wrong oar write
It shows me strait a weigh.

As soon as a mist ache is maid
It nose bee fore two long*

*And eye can put the error rite
Its rare lea ever wrong.*

*Eye have run this poem threw it
I am shore your pleased two no
Its letter perfect awl the weigh
My checquer tolled me sew.*

Author unknown

~ **Don't worry too much about perfect Queen's English**

The English language is living and evolving. What was correct English 50 years ago can now be wrong. Chaucer wrote *Canterbury Tales* using perfect English in about 1400AD. Here is an extract:

Heere bigynneth the Knyghtes Tale

*Whilom, as olde stories tellen us,
Ther was a duc that highte Theseus;
Of Atthenes he was lord and governour,
And in his tyme swich a conquerour,
That gretter was ther noon under the
sonne.*

~ **How important is Spelling and Grammar?**

Some audiences make harsh judgements about businesses which use poor spelling and grammar.

So, even though your text should be written in everyday language and not perfect Queen's English, it's still important to show you're competent in what you do. If you are slack in spelling and grammar, readers may suspect you are as slack in all areas of business.

Buy a good dictionary and a book on English usage, and use them.

~ **Check ALL details**

Are you **sure** that's the right phone number and address or PO Box or email address? Are you **sure** that's the right price or size?

~ **Have someone else read it**

Make sure it's someone who will be objective and honest and won't simply tell you it's great no matter how confusing it is.

Ask them, "***Is this easy to read? Does this make sense?***"

You're not after their opinion on how it should be written, just if it makes sense to them, or where it doesn't.

If it doesn't make sense to them change it! If it doesn't make sense to one person it won't make sense to others, and you'll lose readers and potential sales or responses.

Sometimes, all you need to do to change something so it makes sense is rephrase the sentence or split one long sentence into two.

~ **Words to avoid**

Your writing should represent you as an expert in your product, service or topic. Speaking with authority builds trust with your reader. Words such as *if, maybe, possibly, might, could, may* and *perhaps* show you aren't an expert or authority. Therefore, unless there are valid reasons to do otherwise, use positive words such as *when, definitely, will, certain* and *would*.

~ **Start sentences with a verb**

The subconscious mind acts on commands. Verbs tell people what to do, and create in their mind images of them doing something. So where possible start sentences with a verb, e.g. *Create, Discover, Open, Turn, Throw, Break, Stand, Build, Unleash, Come, Go*.

~ **Break up large areas of text**

A lot of type together looks bland, boring, and too hard to read.

To overcome this you can

- Break long paragraphs into smaller ones
- Use sub-headings
- Use bullet points
- Highlight strong and important

words or phrases with **bold**, underline, CAPITALS, or *italics*.

~ **Change Written words into Spoken words**

Often we write differently than we talk. We use words and phrases when we write that we wouldn't use if we were speaking to a person. We say "*You'll make loads more money!*" but we write "*You will greatly increase your profits.*"

It's even okay to use exclamation marks! They convey your excitement. But only use one!!!!!! (*Multiple exclamation marks look untidy and unprofessional.*)

~ **What have you missed?**

Is there anything your reader might need to know which you have missed? E.g. If you are asking them to pay online, did you provide account details? If you are asking them to phone you direct, did you provide your direct number?

~ **Standardise the Style**

Whatever style choices you make regarding spelling, abbreviations or numbering etc, keep it the same throughout.

Beware of these Common Writing Mistakes

Apostrophes

There are only two times you should use an apostrophe:

1) To replace a missing letter or letters, e.g.

Don't (Do not)

It's (It is)

They'll (They will)

Fish 'n' Chips (Fish and Chips)

2) Possessive nouns, e.g.

John's girlfriend

Shirley's kids

Les' job

When to **NOT** use an apostrophe:

1) Possessive pronouns, e.g.

Its engine stalled.

Ours

Yours

Hers

Theirs

2) Plurals, e.g.

In the 70s

Send for the DVDs

Homonyms

This is when the wrong word is used even though it sounds the same, e.g.

\$150 is to much.

(Should be *too*.)

It will be there turn next.

(Should be *their*.)

Order your stationary from us.

(Should be *stationery*.)

Your doing a great job.

(Should be *You're*.)

Ellipsis

An ellipsis is the name of a punctuation mark which is made with three full stops... It usually represents that unnecessary words have been left out, or that you need to stay tuned because there is more to follow.

More than three dots is not a correct punctuation mark.

Long Sentences

A sentence should make only one point. You can often tell where one sentence should end and another begin – usually where you see the words *however, because, or, as, while, or that*.

Redundancies

He was raising it up. Raising can only be up. 'Up' is redundant.

The dog fetched the ball back. Fetching can only be to bring back. 'Back' is redundant.

Australian or American Spelling

Some Australian and American words are spelled differently. Spell words to suit the reader, e.g.

Colour/Color

Favourite/Favorite

Centre/Center

Standardise/Standardize

Tyre/Tire

Double Meanings

Don't go elsewhere to be cheated.

Come here first.

Tired of cleaning yourself?

Let us do it for you.

We do not tear your clothing with machinery. We do it carefully by hand.

Verbosity

If you can delete a word or say something in another way using fewer words without losing the meaning, do so.

Spaces after a Full Stop

In the days of typewriters which evenly spaced letters, a double space at the end of a sentence made it easier to read. These days however, computers automatically adjust the spacing on letters so there is no need for double spacing. In fact, double spacing can now make type look untidy.

For tips on Visual Design see:

Visual Design Basics