



# EDITING YOUR OWN WORK

**GERRI BERENDZEN**

@gerrib

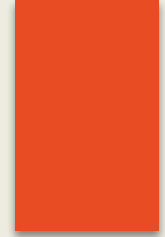
American Copy Editors Society Executive Committee member;

Editorial advisor, University Daily Kansan; University of Kansas School of Journalism and Mass Communication

Presented at  
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# Do you plan to be an editor?

## ACES can help.



### ACES SCHOLARSHIPS: APPLY BY NOV. 15, 2017

- ▶ The **\$3,000 Bill Walsh scholarship** is new this year, in honor of the late author and Washington Post copy editor. The scholarship will be awarded to an applicant who demonstrates a talent and passion for language and aspires to pursue the craft of editing the news.
- ▶ ACES also will award the **\$2,500 Aubespain scholarship** and **four \$1,500 scholarships**. Open to students with a commitment to a career in the editing of written materials.
- ▶ You must be enrolled as a college junior or senior or graduate student during the summer or fall term in 2017.
- ▶ **HOW DO I APPLY?** Go to [aceseditors.com](http://aceseditors.com), click on the Awards tab, and follow the links.

# EDITING MATTERS

## WHAT CUSTOMERS HATE ABOUT YOUR BRAND IN SOCIAL MEDIA



- ▶ Disruptive Communications research found 42.5 percent of those polled say spelling or grammar mistakes damage brand on social media.

# EDITING MATTERS



- ▶ A study of 1,700 adult online dates found that 43 percent of users consider bad grammar decidedly unattractive and 35 percent think good grammar is appealing.
- ▶ Grammarly research found that fewer grammar errors in LinkedIn profiles meant more promotions, better jobs.
- ▶ **ACES-sponsored research found:**
  - Dedicated readers (an hour or more a day) have higher standards.
  - They are more concerned about professionalism and grammar.
  - They don't grade you on AP style, but they do grade you for being inconsistent on style points within a story.



# ARE YOU YOUR BEST EDITOR?



- ▶ NOT REALLY.

You may actually be the worst at seeing your own mistakes, noticing your omissions and seeing the problems with your flow or content choices.

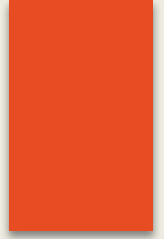
- ▶ But in every situation, you should be your first editor.
- ▶ And, unfortunately, today you will often find yourself in a position where you have to your only editor.

# HOW MISTAKES HAPPEN

- ▶ Carelessness
- ▶ Focus error
- ▶ Reliance on the wrong resources.
- ▶ Lack of time



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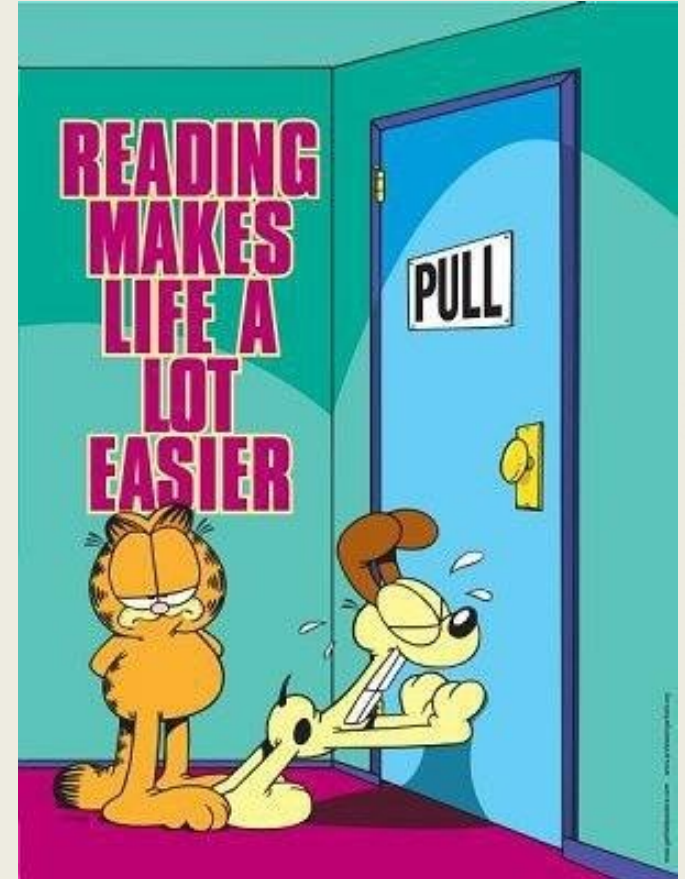
- ▶ Lack of resources
- ▶ Selfishness
- ▶ Hubris
- ▶ Brain lock

**When you are dead, you don't know that you are dead. It is difficult only for the others.**

**It is the same when you are stupid.**

# TIPS FOR EDITING YOUR OWN WORK

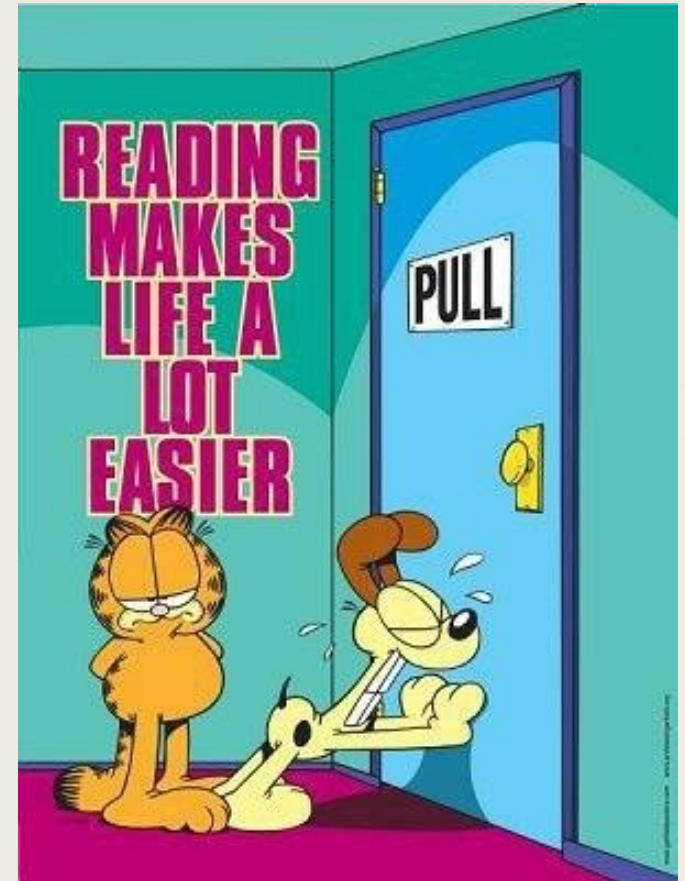
- ▶ Read your work.





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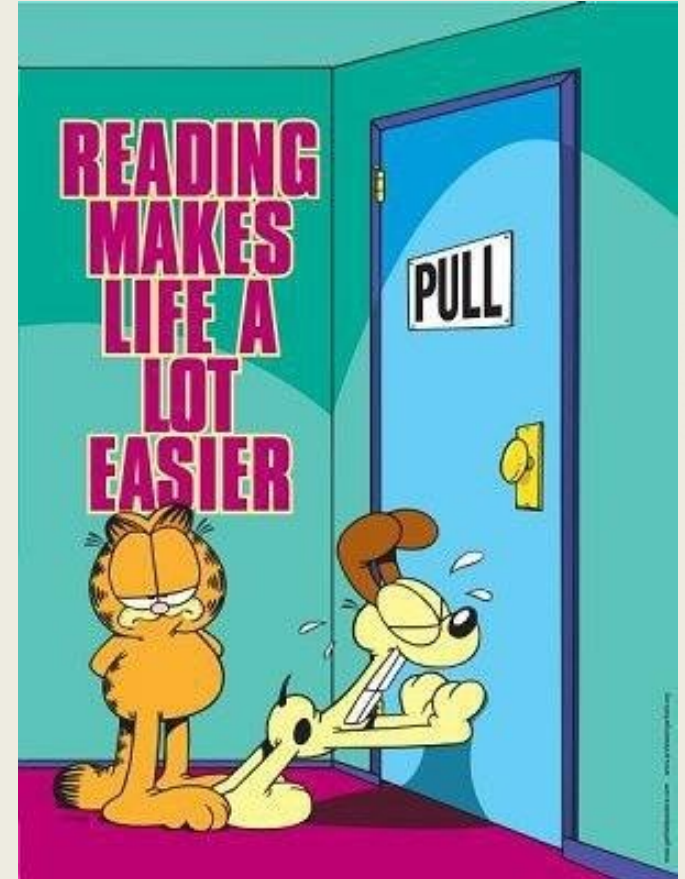
- ▶ Read your work.
- ▶ Read it again.



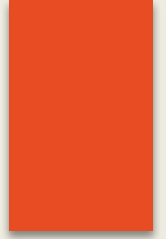


# TIPS FOR EDITING YOUR OWN WORK

- ▶ Read your work.
- ▶ Read it again.
- ▶ Read it in a different way.



# EDITING YOUR OWN WORK



Merrill Perlmann, former director of copy editing at the New York Times, editing consultant and ACES board member, says:

*“The basic principle involved in self-editing is to get out of your own head. Every time you read it the same way, you read less of it and recite more of it from memory. This is how you miss errors.”*

# PROOFREADING TIPS 'N' TRICKS



- ▶ First, just read the material.
- ▶ Read the material aloud to yourself.
- ▶ Change something.

**Make the type bigger or change the font or **color**.**

- ▶ Always check the first sentence and the last paragraph.

# TIPS FOR EDITING YOUR OWN WORK

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- ▶ Put some distance between yourself and your writing.
- ▶ Look at your writing like a reader, not a writer.



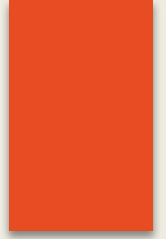
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- ▶ Use spellcheck, but use it carefully. That includes editing your spellcheckers dictionary.
- ▶ Invest in grammar or proofing software, like Grammarly, Lingofy, PerfectIt, WordRake or Edifix.

# TIPS FOR EDITING YOUR OWN WORK



## **Train yourself to be skeptical**

- ❖ Watch for qualifying statements.
- ❖ Practice critical thinking. One way to do this is keep a notebook of things you question or have issues with.
- ❖ Read a lot and read from a variety of sources. It will build your base of knowledge for spotting iffy statements.

# TIPS FOR EDITING YOUR OWN WORK

- ▶ When on deadline, edit the most important things first.

- ▶ Practice triage editing.

Ask yourself: Does this story need a Band-Aid or major surgery?



# WHAT IS TRIAGE EDITING?



- ▶ It's learning how to assess problems in copy, assign a value to those problems and do what needs to be done first in a deadline setting.
- ▶ What matters most to readers?



# What do you think readers think is the worst error?

- ▶ Accuracy
- ▶ Spelling
- ▶ Clarity
- ▶ Style
- ▶ Grammar



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2. Spelling
3. Grammar
4. Clarity
5. Style



# WHAT IS TRIAGE EDITING?



In a 2015 editing research study, Alyssa Appelman noted that on the list of errors that readers see often most ...

- ▶ Misspelled proper names was No. 1.
- ▶ Misspelled common nouns and incorrect verb agreement were Nos. 2 and 3.
- ▶ Yet some things that most often stress copy editors, like nonparallel construction and the proper use of a and an, ranked low for readers.

# WHAT IS TRIAGE EDITING?



▶ TRIAGE PRIORITIES ... in this order:

1. ACCURACY (Do the fact checking.)
2. CLARITY (Attack ambiguity, bridges in logic, questions of meaning. Remember, grammar can be part of clarity.)
3. HEADLINES AND DISPLAY TYPE (Remember, they sell the story.)
4. EFFICIENCY (Look for flow problems, redundancies and circuitousness.)
5. STYLE (It's polishing; on deadline it's less consequential. Ask yourself: Will this matter to the reader?)



# HINTS THAT SOMETHING NEEDS TO BE CHECKED

- ▶ What's corrected a lot.
- ▶ Numbers.
- ▶ Superlatives: first, last, most.





# HINTS THAT SOMETHING NEEDS TO BE CHECKED

- ▶ Coincidence
- ▶ Internal inconsistency
- ▶ Repetition
- ▶ Foreign languages

# PROOFREADING TIPS 'N' TRICKS



- ▶ Conjunctions and articles are the words most commonly duplicated in type.
- ▶ Check then/than/that and similar word pairs.
- ▶ Errors often travel in pairs.
- ▶ Check your changes.

# PROOFREADING TIPS 'N' TRICKS



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- ▶ Keep a list of commonly misspelled and misused words.
- ▶ Have a good reference library — whether in print or bookmarked online.
- ▶ Take an editing class.

# PROOFREADING TIPS 'N' TRICKS



## ▶ Ask for help.

Even on deadline, you can have a office mate, roommate or friend read over our shoulder or behind you online for quick fixes.

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Even on deadline, you can have a office mate, roommate or friend read over our shoulder or behind you online for quick fixes.

## ▶ Remember, it's better to be right than to be first and wrong.



## Contact info

- ▶ Twitter: @gerrrib
- ▶ [gberendzen.com](http://gberendzen.com)
- ▶ On LinkedIn: Gerri Berendzen
- ▶ Email: [gerri@aceseditor.org](mailto:gerri@aceseditor.org)