

# PRINT MATTERS

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## Tip 1s for Editorial excellence!

There's something very rewarding about the editing process: developing a great article concept, conveying that idea to a writer and fine-tuning the resulting piece to perfection. That said, editing is far from easy. Communication can break down between editors and writers, resulting in material that strays from your original vision.

And the responsibility of making sure each submitted article is accurate and fit for publication can be daunting, to say the least. With this in mind, we asked a few editors to share their thoughts on the topic.

### Keep cool

When Lillian Lorenzi of Rochester, Mich. was asked to advise a group of General Motors engineers on editing an automotive publication, she encouraged them not to stress out about it. The engineers didn't have a journalism background, but as readers, they already had a sense of what makes good copy.

"The guiding principle for me, as you're reading through the text and information, is does the text flow and is it readable?" said Lorenzi, an editor of more than 25 years and owner of the consulting firm PR Works. "People get completely bogged down by whether every comma is in the right place. You're not writing for English professors. They're not going to go through with an editor's pen."

Instead of worrying about minutia, focus on readability. Watch for run-on sentences and confusing wording. "Keep the sentences short and simple. Keep your paragraphs short, too — down to two or three sentences. Keep it easy for your readers to work through the material."

If you are relying on writers without an English or communications background, take proactive measures. "It's not a bad idea for them to have a basic English or style guide," Lorenzi said. "That can be helpful if you want to make sure things are consistent, like times and measurements."

It's also helpful to give yourself plenty of time to review copy, said Katherine Adams, a freelance writer who is also editor of Houston-based *Change Magazine*. "When I have too much to read I click off. Sometimes I need to stop for a minute. Go look at something else, and then come back to it."



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## Be clear

As the editor, you're more likely to get the product you want when you communicate clearly with the writer, said Gus Morgan, a former *Houston Chronicle* editor who is now a communications lead consultant for Shell Oil Co. Morgan recommends providing specific guidelines with each writing assignment.

"Don't leave your writer guessing about what you want," he said. "Give your writer a deadline and a word count. Tell them how many sources you want. And take the time to discuss what you want in an article. By clarifying what you want upfront, you minimize the risk of having to send the story back to them for a rewrite."

Philadelphia-area freelance writer and editor Lori Widmer agrees guidelines are important. "I've gotten one-word assignments, and I've gotten paragraphs and paragraphs," Widmer says. "For me, the sweet spot is right in the middle. Then I have some flexibility in how to present the idea. I do like when editors send me a little of what they want to see in a piece."

It also can help to provide the writer with a list of suggested questions and to specify the tone you want for the

article, Adams said. "Writing is a collaboration. No one is above direction."

Feedback can be valuable as well, Morgan said. "Tell your writers what they did right. Tell them what they did wrong. That's the only way they will get better. Some writers are just more talented than others, but that doesn't mean an inexperienced writer can't be great. They just need to practice. As an editor, you are their coach and guide."

## Find balance

When she's wearing her editor's hat, Widmer believes in a light touch. "I try to edit only for accuracy and clarity," she said. "The goal is to maintain the writer's voice. If the writer reads it and can't see the edits, my work is done."

Widmer has edited her share of technical articles. As a rule, she tries to keep the jargon to a minimum. "Sometimes there are buzzwords that are right for the situation. But, especially in trade magazines, we get trapped in the notion that the more buzzwords we have, the smarter we will look, and that's not true."

Adams said she always encourages editors and writers to limit technical talk and acronyms in their work, even if their readers are likely to know what

they're writing about. "Jargon and acronyms are stumbling blocks to the eye," Adams said. "They interrupt the flow of the story. It also makes the reader feel as if he's being lectured rather than reading for pleasure or to learn something. The reader didn't pick up your publication because he wanted a textbook."

Whether your writers are professionals or volunteers, view them as valuable resources. "Be respectful," Widmer said. "You may not be able to pay them what they're worth, but if you treat them like the professionals they are, they'll treat you well."

It always is worthwhile for editors to take the time to cultivate a good rapport with promising writers, Morgan added. "If you find a writer with potential, take the time to groom him or her so you may develop a mutually beneficial, long-lasting working relationship."

Ultimately, editing does not have to be a challenging experience. With solid guidelines in place for you and your writers, you should be able to consistently produce high quality copy for your publication with minimal stress. 



# One on one

**JPA profile:** Crystal Stadel, mail clerk  
**Number of years with JPA:** 2 ½ years

**Why she loves JPA:** “When I signed on, I didn’t know I was going to be doing a lot of billing,” Stadel said. “It turned out to be great, because I’m really good with numbers. That’s what I like, doing what I enjoy. It makes the day go faster.”



Jim and Crystal Stadel are working on getting Sparky to say ‘DA BEARS.’

**Family life:** Stadel and her husband, Jim Stadel, have been married since 1991. The Stadels go camping most weekends during the summer with their five Shih Tzu: Murphy, Willow, Reese, Sparky and Mila. They got the dogs — now members of the family — from Stadel’s mom, a Shih Tzu breeder. “They’re really easy to camp with,” Stadel said. “We love to walk them.” Each of the dogs has a unique

personality. “Murphy is really laid back. Willow keeps to herself. Reese and Mila like to play together, and Sparky is a real momma’s boy.” In addition to camping, the Stadels enjoy watching football and are big fans of the Chicago Bears and the University of Illinois Illini.

**Hobbies:** Stadel enjoys cooking, and she is an avid gardener. When they’re in season, colorful blooms fill her backyard. “I have over 200 daylilies alone,” Stadel said. When she gets home from work, she almost always heads out to the garden to care for her flowers. “It’s a big stress-reliever,” she said.

**One cool fact:** Stadel and her husband have made a number of trips to Orange County, California to visit Crystal’s brother Chad. “Everything there is so different,” Stadel said. “It’s a big change when you’re coming from a small town. There are 14 lanes of traffic on the freeway.” Whenever possible, she and Jim stay in a hotel on the beach when they visit. “We fall asleep to the sound of the waves.” Stadel added that her second brother, Champ, is a police officer in Bolingbrook, Ill. 



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## RECIPE

### Apple Cheesecake

2 packages of crescent rolls	1 egg
2 packages of cream cheese	¼ teaspoon cinnamon
1 ½ cups sugar	4 apples, peeled and sliced
1 teaspoon vanilla	

Spread the crescent rolls on the bottom of a 9 x13 inch pan. Next, whip the cream cheese and 1 cup of sugar with the vanilla and egg yolk, and then spread over the rolls. Spread the apples over the cream cheese, and then spread the package of crescent rolls on top, adding the egg white on top of that. Next, mix ½ cup sugar with the cinnamon and sprinkle on top. Bake at 350 degrees for 30 minutes.

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