# Editing & Proofreading

Bowker, COMM 390

# Before You Start

Consider Your Audience:

- Will they need persuading?

- Is it for a technical audience?

- Is budget a deciding factor?

- Are there political implications?

- Use a tone appropriate to your audience and your company.

# Remember Your Purpose

▸ Keep the purpose of your report in mind.

 ▸ What is the problem to be solved or what issue are you addressing?

 ▸ Are you persuading, or merely presenting facts?

 ▸ Are you making a recommendation?

▸ For each <u>section</u> ask yourself:

 ▸ What is the purpose of the section?

 ▸ Does your heading reflect the purpose?

 ▸ Does everything in the section relate to the purpose and the heading?

# Develop a Readable Style

▸ Clean, clear, simple language

▸ When you are learning:

   ▸ Tend toward shorter sentences & shorter words

   ▸ Use a "Grade 10" reading level → with sophisticated ideas

▸ Why?

   ▸ People will understand your message better.

   ▸ People will remember what you said.

   ▸ Your reports will be easier to read and easier to write.
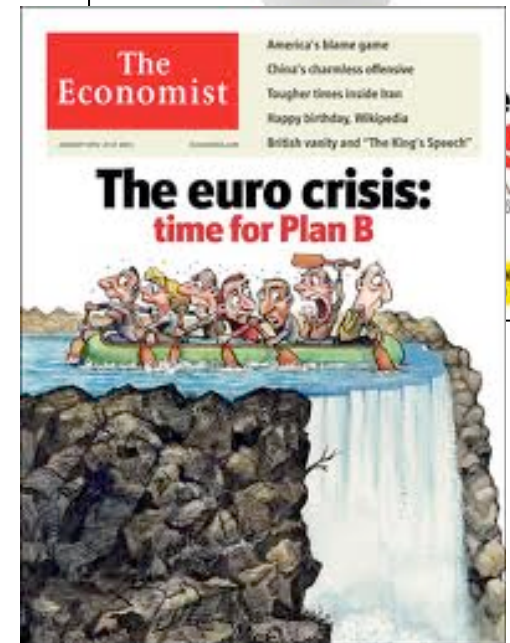
# Editors & Proofreaders

- ## An <u>editor</u> checks for content:
  - The development of your argument
  - Accuracy of content
  - Sufficient proof
  - Level of detail
  - Cuts unnecessary content

- ## A <u>proofreader</u> checks for technical details:
  - Grammar
  - Spelling
  - Punctuation
  - Formatting
  - Headings

# Editing for Content

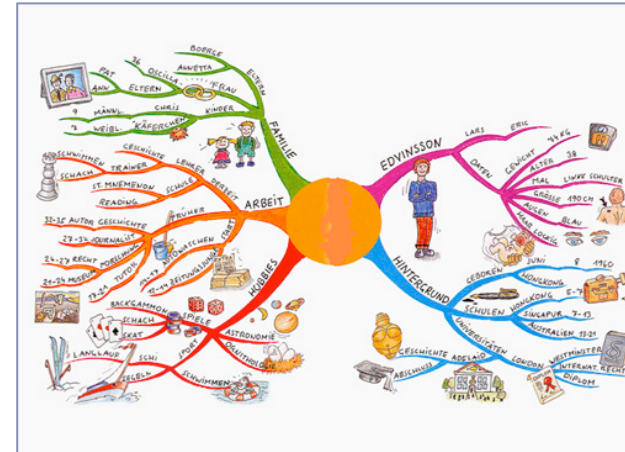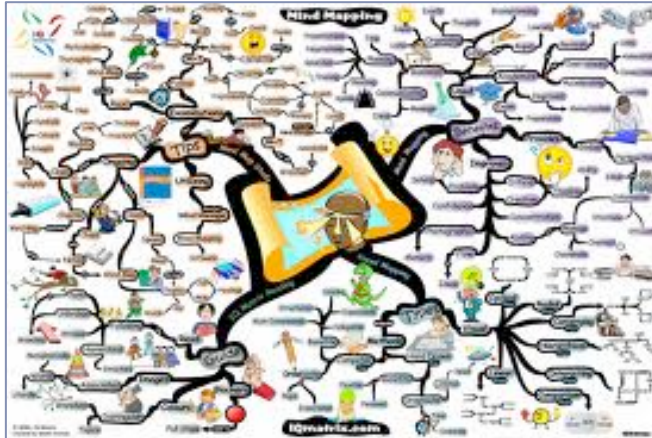# Background & Context

▸ Have you provided what the reader needs to know to understand your argument?

▸ Have you addressed: Who, What, Where, When, Why?

▸ Is the project problem clear?

▸ Is the project goal clear?

▸ Are your assumptions clear?

▸ A lot of background information is interesting, but not necessary for *this* story. Know what to cut.

**WHO?** **WHERE?** **WHY?**

**WHAT?** **WHEN?**
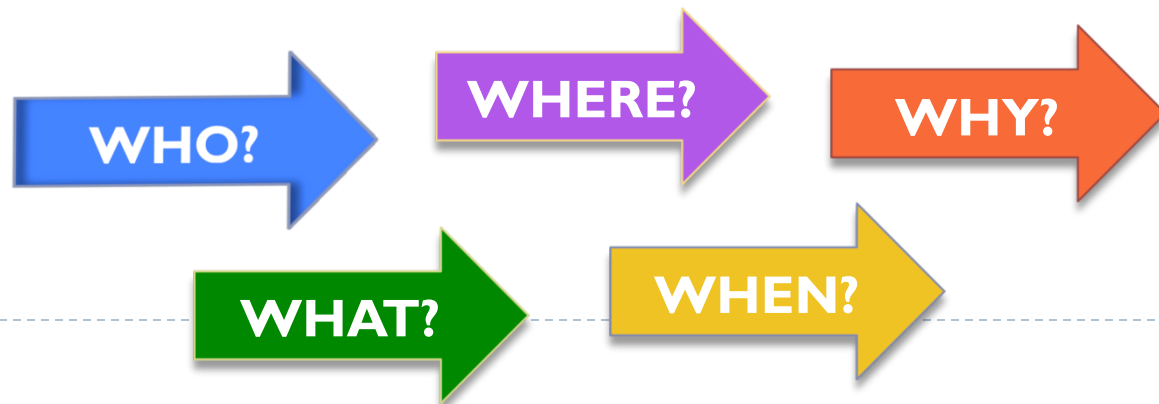
# Flow of Logic



▸ Ensure your argument flows naturally, with all your main points and supporting information organized in a logical order.

# A Properly Developed Argument

▸ Have you stated your assumptions?

▸ Is your position or premise very clear?

▸ Have you backed it up with a logical argument?

▸ And supported it with sufficient proof?

▸ The result should be a position that is compelling and believable.

Premise → Support → Conclusion

# Have You Provided Your Evidence?

- Specifics
- Data
- Statistics
- Illustrations
- Tables, charts & figures
- Examples
- Best practices
- Industry standards

- Comparisons
- Surveys
- Modeling
- Interviews
- Focus Group
- Quotes
- References
- Case Studies (strong)
- Anecdotes (weak)
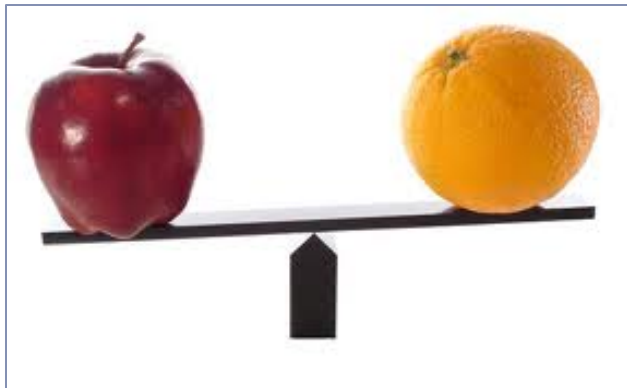
# Editing for Structure

# Paragraphs

- Should be <u>unified</u> – dealing with a single topic
- The <u>topic sentence</u> introduces the topic – in business this is usually explicit rather than implied
- The rest of the sentences explain the topic, making it clear
- Arranged in a logical order so the reader can understand the train of thought
- End with a strong concluding sentence.

# Choose Words That Communicate

Strong Words

Familiar Words

Avoid Clichés

Minimize Jargon

▸ Ensure every word and every sentence is essential.

▸ If it doesn't have a job to do, or another word or sentence can do it better ⟶ remove it.

# Limit the Scope & Manage the Detail

- Ask yourself:
  - Does the reader need to know this?
  - Does this provide information necessary to understanding and answering the question or project problem?
- Too much detail is confusing – and can be boring or detract from what your main point.
- Appendixes are a good place for detail.

# What to include and what to take out

▸ Make your reports as short as possible. This will allow you to say as much as you need in the space allowed.

▸ All data and analysis should:

  ▸ Provide essential context, or

  ▸ Support your conclusion.

▸ Repetition can be effective, but too much is boring. If you have said it well enough the first time, you might refer back to a point, but you won't need to restate it.
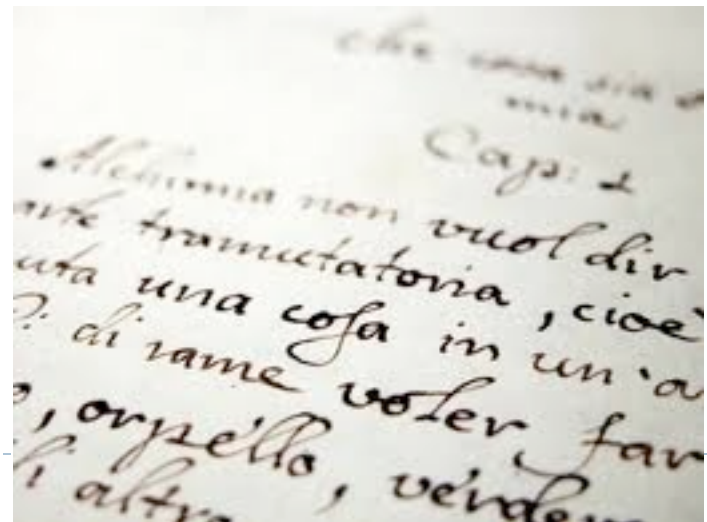
# Proofreading

# Check Your Sentences

▸ Is the meaning of each sentence clear?

▸ Have you chosen the proper words to express your ideas?

▸ If you use words that are not part of your normal vocabulary, you may misuse them, so check.

▸ Use words and phrases that are comfortable where the meaning is easily understood.

# Proofreading Tips

▸ Take a break before you start.

▸ Read it aloud.

▸ Print it before you proof it.

▸ Read slowly, and read every word.

▸ Look for inconsistencies.

▸ Proofread for only one type of error at a time.

▸ Underline anything you are not sure of, then come back to it with "fresh eyes."

Remember:  Proofreading is something you learn.

# Common Errors

▶ Prepositions (*to, in, with, for, beside, under, about, between, including….*)

▶ Conjunctions (*and, but, however, since, yet, because….*)

▶ Modifiers (*all, some, heavily, easily, only, merely…*)

▶ Pronouns (he, she, it, they, which, who, this, etc.)  To whom does it refer to?

▶ Too many or too few commas

▶ Watch for inconsistencies such as
*St.* or *Street, head office* or *Head Office*

# Jargon & Technical Language

▸ Jargon:  Imprecise catch phrases

▸ Technical language is necessary, jargon is not.

▸ Both:
   ▸ Take longer to read.
   ▸ Are harder to read.
   ▸ Are harder to write.
   ▸ Can make you seem detached or insensitive to your audience.
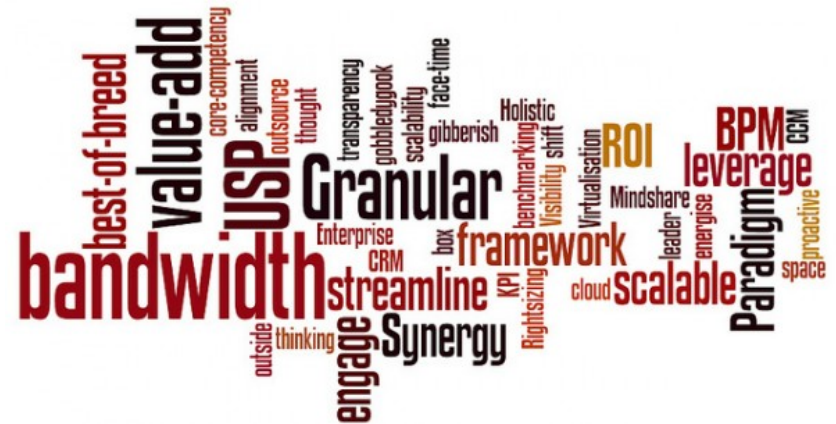
# Using Brackets  (a,b,c)  [d,e,f]  {g,h,i}

- Avoid them if you can
- Commas are better
- Can you ~~just~~ omit that information?
  - ~~Can you leave that information out?~~
- Good for identifying acronyms (UBC, BCIT)
- A slash should not have a space on either side. It's better to say "and" or "or" if possible. E.g. and/or.

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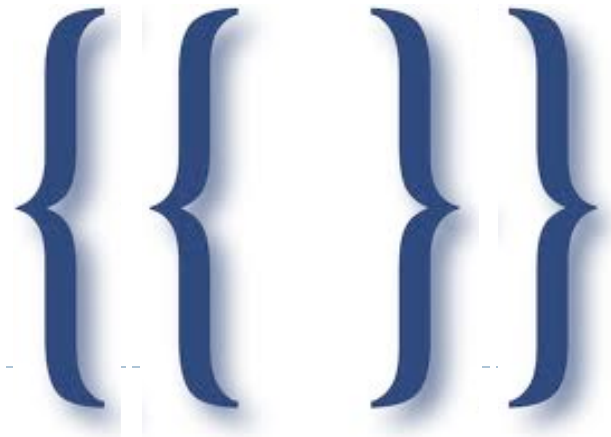
# Listen

▸ If a phrase catches your ear – it might be wrong

▸ Change your sentence if it:

   ▸ Sounds awkward

   ▸ Can't be read aloud fast

   ▸ You aren't sure

   ▸ <u>Would have to be read twice to be understood</u>

listen

# Perfect Grammar

- Check that you have a noun and a verb.
  - A doer & what it did
- Use your dictionary – over and over again.
- Use your grammar checker.
- When in doubt:  take it out.
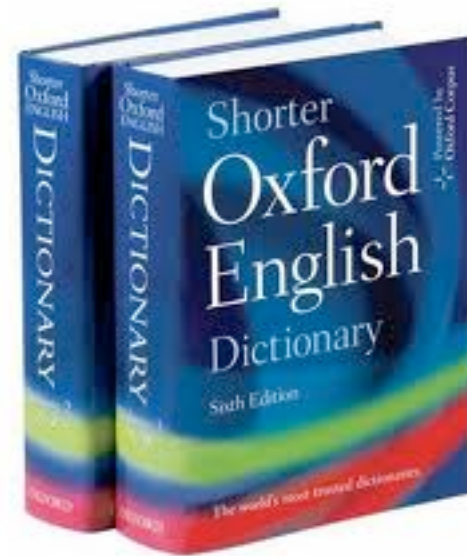
# Avoid

- Weak or imprecise phrases
  - say exactly what you mean:
  - "down market" ➜ poor economy
  - "easier said than done" ➜ difficult
  - "one off" ➜ singular occurrence, or will only happen once
- Clichés & Overused Phrases
  - "get traction" ➜ be understood, get acceptance
  - "calling the shots" ➜ in charge
  - "cost an arm and a leg" ➜ expensive
  - "synergy"
  - "paradigm shift"
  - "outside the box"
  - "too many chiefs, not enough Indians"

▸ Write consciously.  Trust you instincts.

breathe

# Practice

Use what you learn in this presentation to evaluate and improve your own work and that of the papers you peer edit.