

Another Take on Editing: Three New Levels

These three editing levels ensure your writing informs and garners results

THE ADVANTAGES OF WORKING WITH AN editor kept burgeoning. First there were the nine tasks of an editor, then the five levels of editing that incorporated these tasks, and finally the five extraordinary tasks that an editor could perform.

So much to consider, organize, implement, and assess. The manager was just beginning to get a handle on all this information when the team leader walked into the office.

"I've discovered another way to establish editing levels," the team leader said.



"There's more?" came the incredulous query.

"Just a different way of looking at it." Pause. "Perhaps a better way of looking at it, actually."

The team leader produced a copy of *Levels of Technical Editing*[§] to review.

"After a little research, I've discovered this small guidebook. It takes a bit of a different tack with the levels of editing."

"Why do we need another method?" asked the manager. "I haven't even wrapped my arms around all this editing stuff, and now you want to change it?"

"I think, after I explain all this, you'll see that this adds another set of choices for us, and doesn't scuttle what we have already discussed."

"Okay," conceded the manager. "Tell me why there is a need for another take on the levels of editing."

[§] *Levels of Technical Editing*, by David E Nadziejka, ELS, published by the Council of Biology Editors.

Here's what the team leader passed on to the manager.

Issues with a system of levels. A levels system has many benefits, although they are essentially based on how fast a document can be edited. The five editing levels enable us to:

- ◆ Estimate the tasks that need to be accomplished within a given amount of time or money.
- ◆ Demystify what an editor can do for us, enumerating the exact tasks for each editing level.
- ◆ Maintain a uniform system for editing our documents.

These are great when we are facing a critical deadline. In those cases, we can choose from one of the five levels of editing we discussed earlier. Understand, however, that except at the highest level of edit, the actual content of a document is not being edited.

For any other reason, such as when the schedule permits or when the writer is inexperienced, we should implement these three levels of editing because they all deal with editing actual content.

Some points about this new levels system. There are a couple of points to make about this levels system:

- ◆ First, these levels are for editors working directly with our writers to perform a substantive edit to their documents. This is the majority of the type of editing we need.
- ◆ Second, it's best to choose editors who know about our industry so they are more capable of recognizing misstatements and errors in logic.

Three new levels of editing. The guidebook calls these new levels the Rush Edit, the Standard Edit, and the Revision Edit. And as with the previous five levels, these levels are cumulative in their editorial tasks.

1. Rush Edit. While still subject to considerations of budget and time, the Rush Edit focuses on three areas, in this order of importance: content, policy, and copyediting. The purpose of a Rush Edit

is to ensure that the author's work is accurate. An editor would spend the most time on the key areas of a document—the abstract, executive summary, introduction, conclusion, figures and tables (and their resultant text), and summary paragraphs—and edit them when they are ambiguous, contradictory, incomprehensible, or incorrect.

The editor then aims at correcting policy issues and copy editing.

2. Standard Edit. The purpose of a Standard Edit is to perform a complete edit of a document. Of course, we must first have the time in our schedule, which we usually do. A Standard Edit focuses on five areas: content, style, language, integrity, and policy. In this level, an editor spends whatever time it takes to completely edit a document. The end result is a cogent document with a clear flow of information, accurate and correct information, precise text and rational thought with a logical flow, grammatically impeccable. In other words, a document that makes the original author proud.

3. Revision Edit. This level is a much more than editing because an editor would assume the work of the writer by crafting and developing the document through several iterations. This is the best level when a document is drafted by several authors. As required, an editor would evaluate the focus of the document, reorganize it, delete sections while writing others; revise; and rewrite.

The better option. For the team, these three levels integrated all nine editorial tasks as well as the five extraordinary tasks, and presented the better options for producing documents that garner the expected results. 🌟

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