



**A Little
About a
Lot and a
Lot About
a Little**

799 Tips Every
Editor Should
Know Before
Setting Foot
in a Newsroom

Edited by

Dan Reimold



**FEATURING ADVICE FROM NEARLY 200 EDITORS
IN ALL 50 STATES, CANADA, AND AUSTRALIA**



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INTRODUCTION

Editors occupy a truly unique place in the hierarchy of a modern news publication staff- involved in story ideation, planning, and packaging from beginning to published end, managing teams of reporters and other editors **on the front lines of the battlefield known as the newsroom**, all while juggling multiple tasks, working amid a myriad of deadlines, and taking unwarranted criticism and only a small percentage of public praise.

This professionally-oriented booklet, a follow-up to a similar work focused on reporting, aims to capture the ins-and-outs of these underappreciated **task-masters, project creators, story-shapers, and people-pleasers**. “A Little About a Lot and a Lot About a Little” specifically presents snippets of advice and basic truths from nearly 200 newspaper editors at publications in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and two foreign countries pertaining to a single open-ended question: What’s it really like to be an editor in the 21st century?

The journalists selected for inclusion in this work hold a variety of editing and management-related positions (including executive and managing editors, copy editors, section and editorial page editors, design and photography editors, and new media editors/directors). They hail from newspapers large and small, daily and weekly, alternative and mainstream, spanning a variety of areas– from The Anchorage Daily News in Alaska and The Rochester Sentinel in New York to The Vancouver Sun in Canada and The Fraser Coast Chronicle in Australia. The most well-known newspapers from which participating editors hail: The New York Times, The Boston Globe, The Baltimore Sun, The Chicago Tribune, The Detroit Free Press, The Dallas Morning News, The Providence Journal, The San Francisco Chronicle, The Seattle Post-Intelligencer, The Hartford Courant, The Sacramento Bee, and The Indianapolis Star.

On the whole, the main aim of “A Little About a Lot” is to provide **an introspective look at the life and work of those who normally cover everything but themselves**.

- Dan Reimold

Ph.D. Candidate &

Scripps Howard Teaching Fellow

Ohio University

“The motto I have lived by has been, as stated by Mark Twain: ‘I am not the editor of a newspaper, and shall always try to do right and be good, **so that God will not make me one.**’”

- Vicki Rettig,

**The Fort Wayne
News-Sentinel**



First Thoughts

**“A successful editor must know a little
about a lot and a lot about a little.”**

- Ed Scott,

**The Augusta
Chronicle**

“Editing is about extraordinarily long hours with limited resources, excessive drinking, high blood pressure, burnout, the perpetual odium of the public, and few positive outcomes. But when they do happen it makes all the above forgettable. I wouldn’t swap this job for **all the Scotch in Scotland or even the Bourbon in Kentucky.**”

- Ernie Paussa,

**The Fraser Coast
Chronicle**

“The responsibility is huge and the job overloaded, but being an editor keeps the reporter inside alive, makes one an important cog in the management success of the paper, is **good for the soul**, and puts more money in the wallet.”

- Joanne Sholley,

**The Sunbury
Daily Item**

“Editing: It is not just a job. **It’s a calling.**”

- John McIntyre,

The Baltimore Sun



Full Story Editing

“There is **never any excuse**
for a boring story.”

- Frank DePalma,

**The Chronicle
Herald**

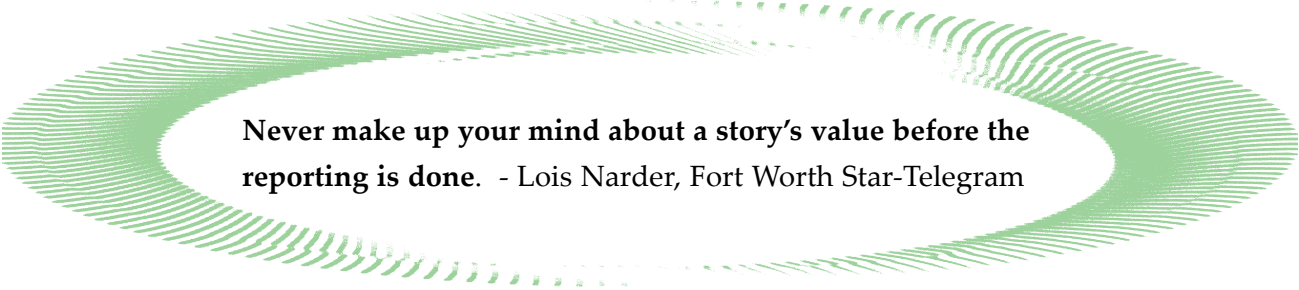
FRONTLINE EDITING

“JUST FIVE MINUTES OF COACHING A REPORTER ON THE FRONT-END OF A STORY WILL SAVE AN HOUR’S GRIEF ON THE BACK.”

- JIM BRADSHAW, THE LAFAYETTE DAILY ADVERTISER

I’m a big believer in front-line editing. **Talk with your reporters before** they sit down to write and you will get a much more coherent product in less time. Help them organize their thoughts while finding out what they do, and do not, have in their notebooks. (155)

In working on content, the best time to edit is **before any words have been written**. Work with your reporter at the start of the piece, to avoid problems later. Ask or answer questions such as: What’s the structure of the story? How many words? When is it due? Who are your sources? (193)



Never make up your mind about a story’s value before the reporting is done. - Lois Narder, Fort Worth Star-Telegram

Some line editors are good with language. Some are good at recognizing holes in stories and rewriting them, or suggesting how they should be rewritten. Few, however, are very good at what I consider to be the most important editing: the editing that takes place before the first word is written. It requires talking through ideas with reporters, getting them to think through their stories before they write, and posing questions that they might not think to ask. It means **engaging them in thoughtful dialogue** about their stories. Most important, it means showing reporters that you are their colleague more than their boss, with a common goal of getting the best story possible in the paper. (141)

Editors should do most of their work while the stories are being conceived and reported, not after they are written. This pre-planning saves time in the end, **prevents mistakes and communication misfires**, keeps the editor connected, and allows opportunities for the editor to teach, share, and reinforce news values and standards. (84)

Start editing a story before the reporter has conducted her first interview, and don't stop along the way— edit the reporting, the story shaping, and the boss's expectations of the story. (160)

Remember, **writers don't fully birth their children** until their stories are completed. They are much more receptive to change before they take "ownership." Know where the writer is in the process and take advantage of it. (160)

The most gratifying editing is done before you receive a writer's finished story— when you are talking about story angles, the best sources, and what kinds of art can help illustrate it. (178)

Try to do as much coaching upfront on stories as you can, in hopes that a few minutes talking ahead of time will save you time in the long run. Try to check in with reporters throughout the day and, on your best days, **assign specific editors to specific stories**, so the reporter knows who is following her. (3)

What to Ask Before They Sit Down to Write...

When your reporter comes back to the newsroom with a filled notebook and doesn't know where to start, sometimes it helps ask him: "What was the best quote?" Then, after he answers, tell him to use that as the lead quote, to treat that quote like a gem, and make the lede sentence its setting. (188)

When they get back from reporting and are planning their stories, ask your writers stupid questions. If they can't explain something verbally in a glib manner based upon their reporting legwork, they won't be able explain it in print either. (147)

On major stories, put a specific writing plan in place, which starts at least two weeks before publication of the story. First, reporters should talk through a potential story with editors, telling what they think the angle will be and who the sources are. Next, after the interview, reporters should explain what they found and go over any changes they want to make to the original plan. Third, reporters should file a brief outline, outlining what the story will be, with notes about accompanying art, sources, etc. This method allows time to **fill holes, answer dangling questions**, and make changes if necessary in a source or other story item. (102)

Give your reporters a sense ahead of time what length you want for the final stories they're writing, whenever possible. It will help guide the questions they'll ask in interviews and the amount of time they spend working on a piece. (80)

LINE EDITING

“Editors can always improve a writer’s work. As Mark Twain said, “Great writing is not what you put into it, but what you take out of it.”

- JOHN FELSHER, THE LAKE CHARLES AMERICAN PRESS

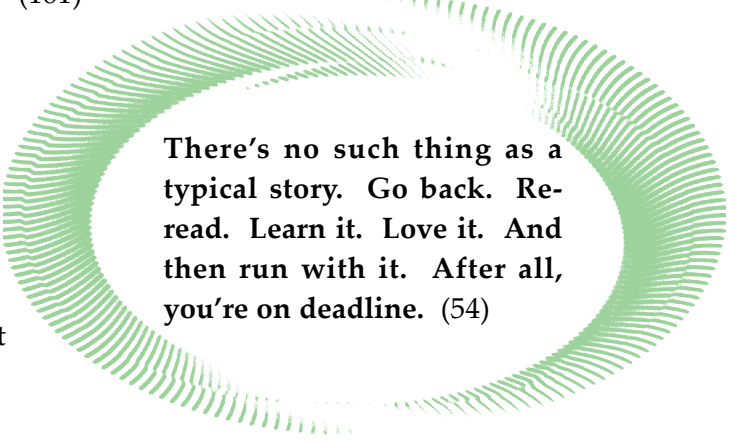
I divide editing into three types: content/line editing for overall thrust; copy editing for grammar, style, and detail; and pure proofreading. In editing a story, you need to know which roles you’re filling, and in some instances, realize it will be all three at the same time. If you have time, learn to look at the story in different ways, in the above order. (193)

Editing can contain as much **creative doubt** as writing. Don’t be discouraged if you read a piece that doesn’t work and think you have no idea how to make it better. The creative process works the same way. If you have time, put it aside and let your subconscious work on it. You may be surprised at the result. (160)

Editing stories will always take you longer than you think. Every story, no matter how mundane or “perfectly” written, can be improved upon. (161)

My advice, **only slightly tongue-in-cheek**, is to cut the first and last paragraphs from a story. It almost always makes it better. (164)

The smallest errors cause the biggest problems. Be precise. (21)



There’s no such thing as a typical story. Go back. Re-read. Learn it. Love it. And then run with it. After all, you’re on deadline. (54)

For all the preplanning that goes into each story, **you may be surprised** when you get the story and see that it is nothing like what you intended the reporter to make it. It’s at that point that you need to make hard judgments and ask tough questions: Is the story I now have before me the story we should run with? And if so, why? Did the reporter miss the point and turn in something we don’t want? If so, what suggestions can I make to **get the reporter back on track**? Am I viewing what’s been turned in broadly enough to let the story happen, without being too rigid toward my original premise? Am I keeping the story focused enough so that the reporter can tell that story, and within the given space and deadline parameters? (178)

Words & Phrases to Watch...

Some phrases that will drive an editor crazy: totally destroyed (just “destroyed” is enough); whether or not; dates back to 1940 (as if it could date forward to 1940); the victim was in critical condition after being electrocuted by a downed power line (a major miracle worth a follow-up, since electrocution implies death); first annual (something can only be annual after it’s been held more than once); the building was razed to the ground (just “razed” is enough); the use of the word “some” in a description, such as “some 30 or so volunteers attended” (just say “about 30”); the use of the spatial “over” instead of “more than,” such as “he spent over \$100 dollars on sneakers (should be “more than”); describing a budget as being in deficit before the end of the fiscal year and audit; and/or any other cliché, since they are a dime a dozen. (53)

The best/worst phrase I have ever encountered was in a Philadelphia newspaper many years ago. When I read it, I went over it again to make sure my eyes weren’t playing tricks on me. The police report noted that the “**victim was stabbed to death seven times.**” While tragic, my mental image of a killer reviving the victim and stabbing him to death again and again was amusing. (53)

I’m amazed at the **redundancies** that get into the paper, i.e. they “reduced down” the number of candidates or he “returned back” to his destination, etc. So my advice: Don’t be redundant. (59)

We once had a young female reporter cover a county commission meeting. Now this reporter had attended college, but as far as life experience, she was lacking. Anyway, she had the following quote in her story: “**This issue is a double-itch sore.**” Now you and I both know that she meant to say double-edged sword, but she swore he said what she wrote! To this day, we use this example to all editors as to why they must read every story carefully. The same reporter also reported that a course in the “Heimlich remover” was being offered at a local college. (74)

Prefer plain words over fancy ones: “Use” instead of “utilize”; “find” instead of “locate”; and “live” instead of “reside.” Prefer simple phrases and avoid redundancies. You can often tighten a story without having to cut out any information, simply by doing these things. (83A)

Always use “said” for attribution. (49)

One of the most common problems is the confusion of homonyms. It’s very easy to type “it’s” **when you mean “its”** or “there” when you mean “their.” (51)

Add needed background. **Make the complicated readable.** Editing is more than grammar, fact-checking, and spelling. (190)

The **beauty, and beasts**, of news stories lay in the little details. **Oops:** details. (6)

Learn why the simple declarative sentence is always **your best friend.** (21)

Fight journalese. Ask yourself: Why does this writer start a lede with eight modifiers before the subject? Why does she ALWAYS have fires sweeping through and explosions ripping through? Why does he put the time element in the most awkward place possible? Why does she locate the event “on the campus of the university” instead of simply “at the university?” (4)

Watch editorializing in news columns. Reporters too close to stories will sometimes throw a “finally” into the copy, such as: The council “finally” approved the budget. You can almost hear the exasperation in their voice. Left in, the reporter will get a reputation as being affiliated with one side in the battle de jour. The best you can hope for is that both sides say you are biased. (53)

Know what you’re editing. Research the topic, read clips, and interview the writers. (11)

Read Stories Again (and Again)...

As an editor, **you must** read each story three times before you pass it along. (13)

Find time to read through each story **at least twice.** It’s amazing what you miss the first time. (59)

Do a pencil check. Print out your story and check every name, brand name, geographic location, background, date, and fact. It’s best to do it as early as you can, but don’t let lateness stop you from doing it. (51)

Always put at least **two pairs of eyes** on every story. I’ve read sentences 10 times and didn’t notice a typo, but **my wife can spot it instantly.** (189)

Read a story first for grammar, spelling, and to gain a sense of what it’s about. **Read it again** for clarity, composition, and to get the pulse of it just before writing the great headline. (35)

When I first read a story **I don’t do any fixes.** I read for content, the lede, the flow, and to make sure there aren’t any gaps. Then I fix spelling, sentence structure, etc. (103)

After you have finished reading a story, ask yourself: “**What is the headline?**” If you cannot think of one, then the story isn’t clear enough. A story needs to be able to communicate its thrust in a sentence. (188)

Not every story is an investigative masterpiece. Most often, we need to report on little things going on in neighborhoods, schools, clubs, and businesses, because they are things that the readers really care about. But those stories need the same editing attention as the Sunday page-one story. (191)

When you have to significantly cut a story that presents opposing views, be sure each view is still accurately and adequately presented. (83)

If you make changes to a story, re-read it to make sure **you typed what you thought you typed**. There could’ve been a distraction— a phone call, someone stopping by your desk— and you may have dropped a word or not finished what you started. Always re-read. (25)

Know all the rules and routines so you can **immediately break them**. In daily newspapers, so much happens so quickly. In one day’s time, stories are conceived, reported, written, edited, and published. There’s plenty of room for mistakes, and it’s the editor’s job to make sure all this happens seamlessly. That often means making **decisions on the fly**. Knowing what’s important, what your newspaper’s expectations are, and how you need to go about meeting them allows you to decide what to cut or where to play what story without much thought. (41)

Write like people speak, David Ettlin said. Avoid writing in Washington Bureause, said Ettlin. In general, the verb shouldn’t be placed in front of the subject, as in the second sentence. People simply don’t talk that way. It has a very stilted tone, as if the writer had a superiority complex. Only place ‘said’ in front of a name when: (a) The name is followed by parenthetical manner, said Ettlin, a longtime newsroom pain in the butt; (b) You intend to change the rhythm of the narrative. If there are too many sentences that end with ‘he said,’ ‘she said,’ ‘Jones said,’ maybe it is time to break up that monotony with a ‘said Smith.’; (c) You want to stop the reader on a particular point, because placement of verb before subject can act like punctuation in slowing down or stopping a reader to impart critical information. - **David Ettlin**, The Baltimore Sun

If there’s a good quote from a key player, use it quickly, because it acts like shifting gears in a sporty car and creates the illusion of putting the storytelling in a voice other than the writer’s. (148)

If a story that stretches over time begins at the beginning chronologically, there probably hasn’t been enough critical thought put into it. It’s much better to take cues from the movies and start at the “**turning point**,” the moment when something really important happens. (160)

MAKING THE CUTS

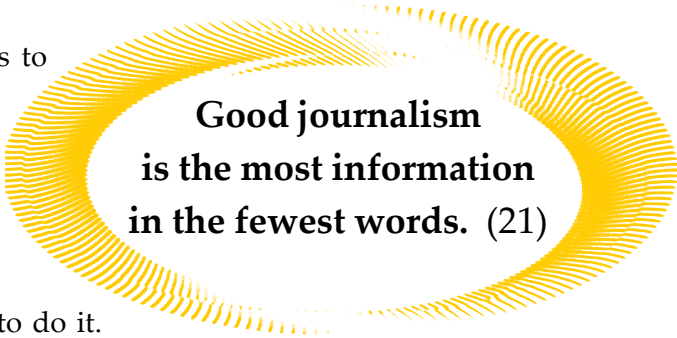
“When asked how long a story should be, say this: ‘As long as it needs to be and not one word longer.’”

- JOHN MURA, THE LOUISVILLE COURIER-JOURNAL

Repeat after me: The best stories are not always 25 inches long. Seriously, the art of writing tightly and concisely is just that: an art. Learn to spot places in stories where extra words are simply clutter. If it takes five words to say something, make sure the reporter uses five, not 10 or 20. Period. (130)

Keep in mind: People don’t have the patience to read more than 10 inches of text in a story. (144)

Always do whatever is needed to hold stories to one page. Readers do not read jumps, but we insist on using them so that the writer can bleed on and on about the minutia that only the sources care about. (191)

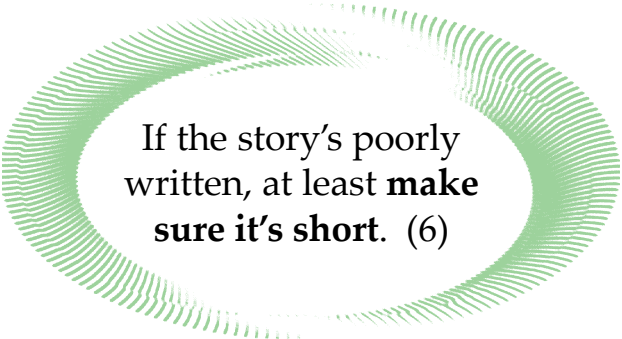


**Good journalism
is the most information
in the fewest words. (21)**

Chop. Chop. Chop. As editors, we all need to do it.

Writers are wedded to their words. We need to be engaged with them, by comparison, but also have the wisdom of when to eliminate at least a few. Shorter stories make more involved readers, so always ask yourself: What isn’t needed? (6)

Lengthwise, a good rule to tell your reporters to follow: Write it for what it’s worth. I’m always asked how long a story needs to be. I answer, “It needs to be as long as it needs to be.” Sometimes, a very detailed story only has to be 10 inches. Other times, it needs to be 40 inches. I hate when writers write to a specific length. It’s invariably either too short or long, neither of which helps the story. (6)



**If the story’s poorly
written, at least **make
sure it’s short.** (6)**

When writing quality suffers, remind writers that space in a newspaper is **at a premium**. As much as writers compete with other publications, they’re competing with each other for a spot in their own publication as well. Writers don’t always realize, or remember, that. (6)

Some writers tend to go for **quick and dirty** one-source pieces, with basically stock quotes. I hate that. I usually chop up those stories and make them really short. (6)

Keep it **short and simple**. In this profession, we need to remember people don't have time to read 50-inch essays on issues. (14)

Every story can be cut. (49)

Many beginners who struggle are unable or unwilling to live with the very real space constraints of the business. If you tell a reporter to write 15 inches, you need to stand firm that you won't be allowing 25, because that means more editing, more rewriting, and more time invested in both. Frequently, even the best reporters working on a big Sunday story will want to write 75 or 100 inches, when 40-45 inches is available in the newshole. You need to get reporters to understand that **less can be more**, if for nothing else than to save your own job. Editors who send stories to the copy desk that are longer than there is room for are viewed, rightfully so, as failures. (69)

If a 40-inch story can be told in 20 inches and **not lose its punch**, do it. Don't be afraid to edit tightly. (102)

Shorter, Tighter, Brighter...

Editors should encourage reporters to write **shorter, tighter, and brighter**. After all, readers normally will scan only the first two or three paragraphs of an article and, unless it's compelling, will not read past the jump. Remember: **shorter, tighter, and brighter**. Consider the long-running popularity of Reader's Digest and then tell yourself: **It can be done**. I don't know how many times I have laughed or shed tears over a piece in Reader's Digest when I've felt nothing for a longer newspaper article on the same subject. The old show business maxim, **leave them wanting more**, works here if all the questions are answered and the story is told well.

- C.J. Putnam, Wyoming Tribune-Eagle

SPELLING & GRAMMAR

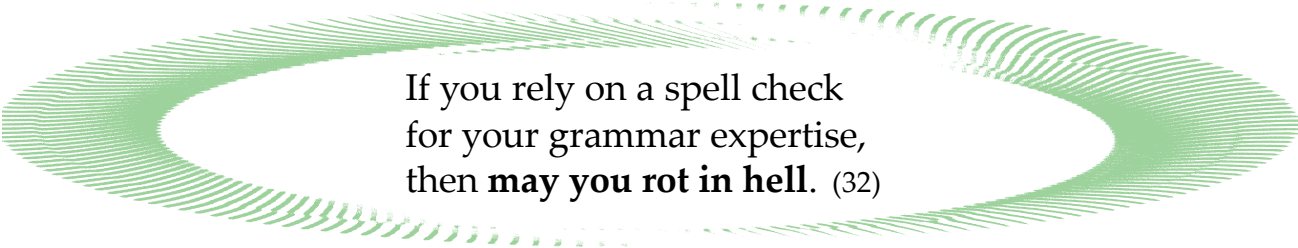
“We spell lots of words right every day, but when we spell one wrong, especially in large type, it’s a knife to the heart. Make sure all words are spelled right.”

- JOHN SMALLEY, THE LA CROSSE TRIBUNE

Readers will forgive incorrect punctuation, **but they do not forget** incorrect spelling of a person’s name, incorrect facts (like those that occur between the story and a photo cutline written by another person) or an incorrect headline. (102)

Freshmen reporters are sometimes unfamiliar with the spellings and geography of an area. I have fixed the spellings on many names. In our town, people with similar sounding names have different spellings: Gencarelli and Gencarella, Johnson and Johnsen, Pellegrino and Pelligrino, Gardiner and Gardner. The list is long. I once saw a photo caption describe a scene of vultures sitting in trees along a field “that abutted Maxson Street.” In reality, the street was a half-mile away, meaning vultures were instead soon enough circling the desk of the editor who let the mistake slide. (53)

Don’t run spell check on the copy until you have completely finished editing it yourself. (33)



If you rely on a spell check
for your grammar expertise,
then **may you rot in hell.** (32)

The most common mistakes I see have to do with **the use (or misuse) of the comma.** (33)

Never let spell check do your work for you, or you may end up running a story in which holiday traffic was backed up at the nearby toolbox (when you meant tollbooth, of course.) (44)

Readers won’t believe much you tell them about cats **if you can’t spell cat** correctly. (21)

Flawless grammar and spelling are not simply an option. They are the reader’s **first impression** of the paper’s credibility. (191)

Realize the importance of spelling. It is important not only to communication and the newspaper's image but, in the case of names, literally **could be worth millions in libel damages**. I remember one former co-worker who thought he was above care in spelling. After he had misspelled the name of a deceased person in an obituary three times in three separate paragraphs, the editors on the copy desk lost all confidence in him, and he was gone inside six months. (176)

Always **triple-check names**, but remember that spellchecking is no substitute for proofreading. (147)

S-P-E-L-L-C-H-E-C-K

You need to master the fundamentals. That includes spelling, **for crying out loud**. You need to know, for example, whether it's "traveling" or "travelling," and the rule that governs the decision. (100)

A recurring mistake I keep seeing is the use of **"their" instead of the singular "its"** when referring to a council or board. Correct: "The Town Council will review its budget tonight. Or: "The Boy Scout troop will meet at its hall." (53)

Know how to spell "embarrass," "harass," "accommodate," and "impostor." (49)

Learn the difference between the words chastise and castigate, the rule governing the phrases 'compare with' vs. 'compared to,' and why the word **'shambles' is misused most of the time**. (4)

You must love the language, because that is how we tell our stories, and so you must be the kind of person who wonders which is right: "The train is moving backwards" or "The train is moving backward." (32)

Remember: One name misspelled in the agate at the bottom of the **annual accordion festival** results will negate any trust that the rest of the newspaper may have generated. (191)

Make sure **subjects and verbs** agree. (21)

WORKING WITH NUMBERS

“Editors with numbers are like children with loaded guns. We screw up simple percentages, basic arithmetical calculations, and misinterpret and misuse random sample survey data.”

- TIMOTHY BUNN, THE SYRACUSE POST-STANDARD

Do the math, because readers will. If a story says something changed 20 percent in one year, make sure it's not really just 10 percent. (186)

Most people get into journalism because they like to write and read and neither of those endeavors has exact answers. Math does. And **math counts to our readers**. Most of the time it's no more than standard algebra, but our frequent inability to compute this sort of thing creates errors in our paper that not only undermines our credibility, it has taxpayers **hooking the hose up** to the exhaust pipe of the family car. (18)

Along with basic math, statistics must be an area better understood by editors. For example, if we say Candidate A is leading Candidate B 54 percent to 46 percent, with a four-point margin of error, we mean the real results could be 50-50 or 58-42 or something in between. How many journalists know this stuff? I'm confident **it's not enough**. (18)

For journalists, it should often come down to **a question of money**. For instance, how many journalists understand the difference between the economic concepts of the present value of money and current value of money? If more did, we'd have had more truthful and comprehensible stories about the phony Social Security insolvency right around the corner. How many journalists know the rate of growth of the American economy in the last 40 years? How many journalists have taken courses in economics? (18)

Always, Always, Always do the math. If a story says someone was sentenced to 175 months in prison, but the lede says nearly five instead of 15 years, you have a problem. I know this one from experience. My slotter caught that mistake in a story I read recently, and left me rather red-faced. I'd fudged on doing the math because I was pressed for time. **DON'T FUDGE**. (72)

In a budget story, do the math. It sounds silly, but **don't trust the reporter**. (53)

If you have any ability with numbers, you would assume that everyone knows that million and billion are not the same value with a slightly different pronunciation. That assumption would be wrong. Always be on the lookout for **numerical indiscretions**. (143)

QUESTION EVERYTHING

“Don’t settle for being pretty sure you’re right. Make darn sure you’re right, completely. One factual mistake can undermine the credibility of an entire story or your reputation as an editor or your newspaper’s credibility in the community.”

- RICK STEWART, THE OGDEN STANDARD-EXAMINER

Never trust what you’re reading. Always **verify, verify, verify**. (132A)

Err on the side of caution. If you’re not sure about something, check with the editor or writer before you sign off on it and send it to press. (143A)

If you work with obituaries at all, be sure to VERIFY everything (check with funeral home, anatomy board, cremation societies, etc.). We so far haven’t been stung with anyone who didn’t really die, but we did have an obit run once for a man who was a woman years ago (who knew George was a girl when there was no reference to sex?). We also had someone once call in **an obit for his dog**, a fact we luckily caught at the last moment. We had to empathize with his sorrow, but quickly directed him to “notices.” (150A)

Question everything. Then ask yourself what you forgot to question. (181A)

Verification should be **emphasized and re-emphasized**. Take time to check each fact. Having it right is better than having it fast. If you can do both, great. (172A)

Never assume anything. (160A)

If something seems odd, look into it. Ask the question. Follow up. Document what you did so it can’t come back to **bite you in the ass**. (187A)

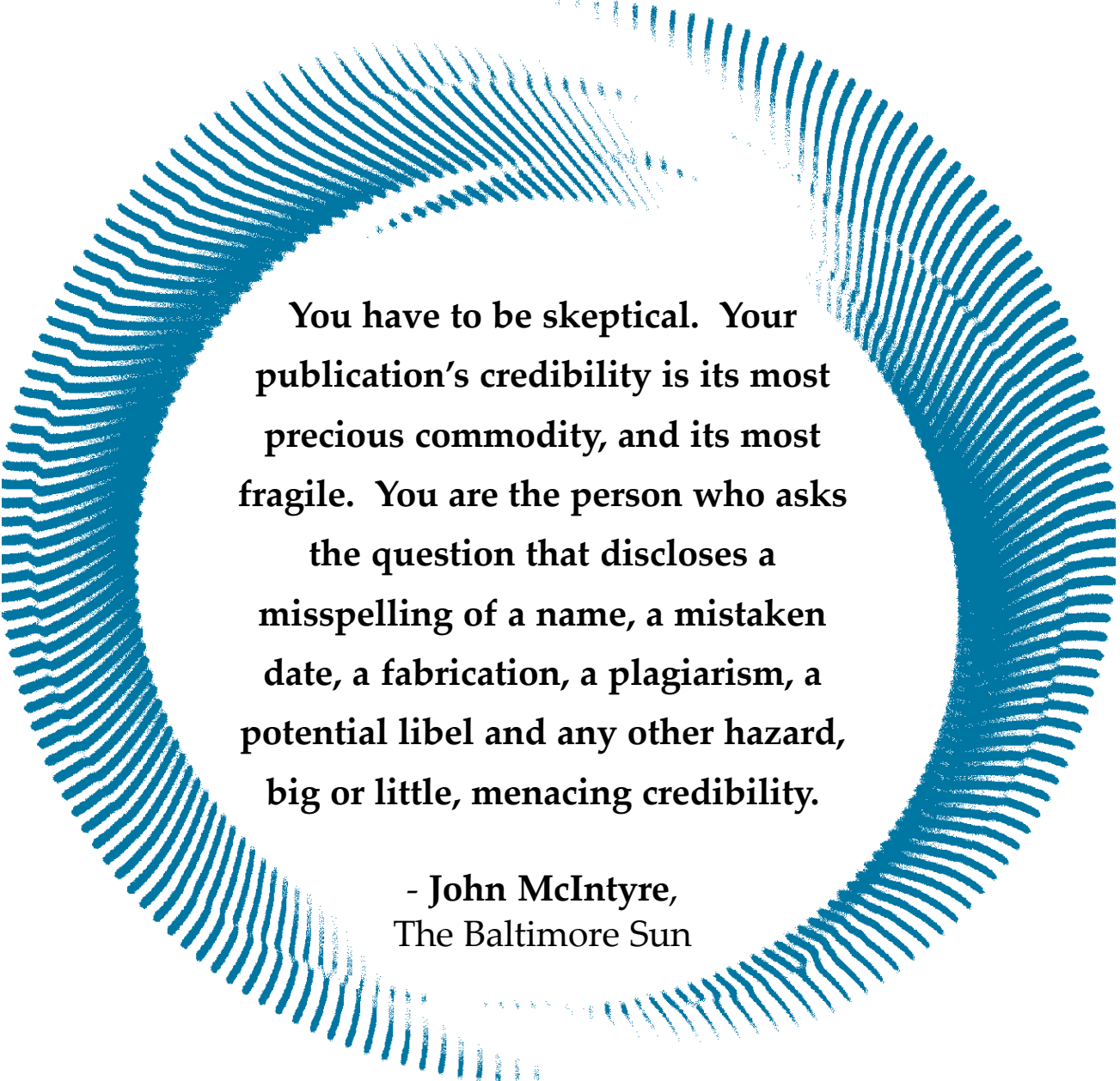
Don’t rely on the next guy to catch a mistake and prevent you from **looking like an idiot**. Of course it is his job. But if you’re not doing yours, how can you be sure he is doing his? (13A)

Never be afraid to question something. The time you don't is the time you make a mistake. (35)

There's no such thing as a dumb question. It's better to ask and feel silly with one person than be embarrassed in front of 300,000 readers. (65)

Don't believe everything you find on the Web. Just as you need to check print sources for credibility, you *really* need to check online sources. (65)

Don't glaze over copy simply because you think the reporter knows what he is writing about. Many errors don't get caught by younger editors because they "trust" the source of the copy or defer to age or rank. (76)



You have to be skeptical. Your publication's credibility is its most precious commodity, and its most fragile. You are the person who asks the question that discloses a misspelling of a name, a mistaken date, a fabrication, a plagiarism, a potential libel and any other hazard, big or little, menacing credibility.

**- John McIntyre,
The Baltimore Sun**

Trust Your Gut...

If you ask yourself, “Should I ...” you probably should. **Make the extra phone call**, double check that bit of info with the reporter, look up that spelling just in case, etc. (41)

If a word **strikes you as odd**, it probably is, so look it up to make sure that the reporter is using the right one. (51)

Listen to your inner alarm. If you suspect something is wrong, it almost certainly is. Don’t allow yourself to think: “It’s probably OK.” It almost certainly is not OK and it is your duty to fix it. (13)

It’s not feasible for us to check every fact in every story every night, but we do need the alertness and judgment to notice things that don’t seem right and to follow up on them thoroughly. (121)

Trust your gut. If it seems wrong, or you stumble over the writer’s words, or you are left with a question in your mind, it can be written in a better way. (161)

If you aren’t sure about something, news style, meaning of a word, or name of a place or person, **look it up or find someone who knows** what you don’t. If you have to look a style point up 50 times because you aren’t sure, that’s what you do. (112)

If you don’t know what certain words mean, look them up or **ask around** until you find out. This goes for everything from clichés to technical jargon. (13)

If you don’t understand what you are editing, **chances are** the readers won’t either. Talk to the reporter and/or appropriate editors to clarify what you are editing. If it is knowledge that you lack, ask appropriate editors if they can explain what you don’t know or point you to a book, information source or a person who can. (112)

Don’t be afraid to ask questions of senior editors to whom you report. Better to be safe than sorry. **There are no “stupid” questions**, though some editors will act like there are. Just keep asking. (112)

DON'T OVERDO IT

“Don’t over-edit. Seasoned reporters have their own styles and new reporters should have the opportunity to develop their styles. Carbon copy is boring.”

- MARSHA MILLER, THE DAILY ARDMOREITE

The best advice I ever received about editing was from a former colleague, Jeff Davison, who died a few years ago. Jeff, the best editor I ever worked with, said there are two rules for editing: 1) Never change anything without a good reason and 2) **“I like it better this way” is not a good reason.** (131)

Don’t presume you know the story better than your reporter. That means **don’t go rewriting copy without running it by the reporter**, and whenever possible, have the reporter do the rewrite himself. That’s not always feasible when deadlines are looming, but you run the risk of editing errors into the story if you don’t verify the changes with the writer. The writer also learns more by re-doing the story rather than having you re-do it. (154)

It’s important to allow reporters to maintain pride of ownership in a story. In other words, don’t edit capriciously. **Have a reason for any change you make**, and be able to articulate it. Don’t just substitute your voice for theirs. Give reporters the time, when possible, to rework stories on their own. I’ll never forget the editor who would pick up a story to edit, and immediately insert more than a half-dozen snippets from his own lexicon. This told the reporters that he had determined their work was subpar– and that they were too incompetent to fix it– which is the ultimate mark of a subpar editor. (155)

You have the ultimate authority over a story, but such power should be used very sparingly. One rule that has stood me in good stead: “If I can’t explain to the writer why my change improves the story, I shouldn’t do it.” Or, as my first boss told me when I was a rookie editor: **“Lose a battle now and then. It’s good for morale.”** (160)

The more times you touch a story, the less you are able to see it with fresh eyes. (160)

Edit to keep the voice of writer. **Don’t insert your own voice.** (32)

Try not to wring the life put into a story by a writer out of it simply to “fit” the paper’s style. In other words, a different voice can be a good thing. It might attract different readers. (162)

Don't Add ~~Mistakes~~ Mistakes Into Copy

The adage “Do no harm” certainly applies to the art of editing. Editing a mistake into a story is possibly the worst sin an editor can commit. When this gets done, it’s usually done in a hurry, on deadline, without asking the reporter. We certainly see stories all the time that are a mess, but in the end, an editor has to remember whose name is on it. A single incident of editing a mistake into a story can sometimes be enough to rupture an editor-reporter relationship for good. (158)

Never screw up someone else’s copy. Don’t insert errors. It sounds silly, but it happens more often than we care to think. (179)

As an editor, you have the responsibility to edit reporters’ work carefully and conscientiously. If you create an error in a story, **apologize, and learn from your mistake.** (20)

If you work for a daily newspaper, keep it in perspective: **There’s another paper tomorrow,** and even the New York Times runs corrections all the time. (90)

Make a story better, **or leave it alone.** (25)

Resist rewriting. Prefer discussing with reporters what you feel needs to be rewritten, and let them do it. They’ll learn something, mainly that copy can be improved with a bit more effort. **You might miss the ego trip** of taking over a story, but you’ll get satisfaction from being a better editor. (30)

Editing a story without the people involved is really easy. You can rewrite ledes, rearrange paragraphs, add information you found on your own, etc. But somebody worked on that story, and you have to respect your reporters. Yes, **sometimes they file crap,** but they worked really hard on that crap. So work with them, and respect their voice and vision. (41)

An editor’s writing style may be terrific, but that doesn’t preclude a different style from being equally good. **Edit what needs editing,** but avoid making every story read the way you would have written it. (37)

THINK OF READERS

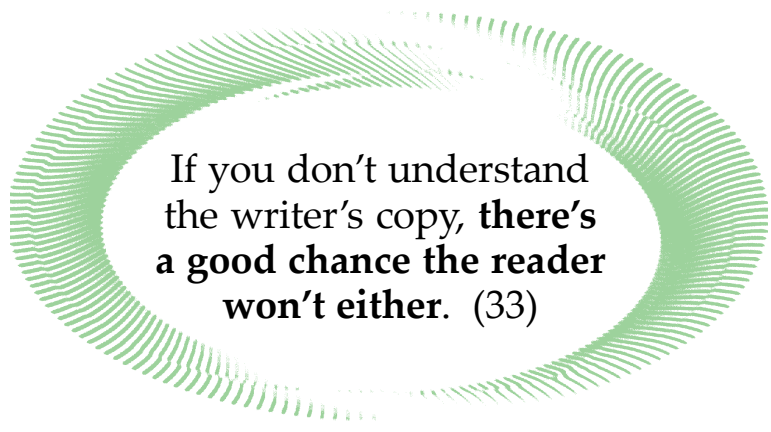
“We want people to spend as much time each day with us, the publication, as possible. That is our mission. Produce insightful efforts that people want to read. ”

- JEFF HENDRICKSON, THE COLUMBUS LEDGER-ENQUIRER

Editors need to answer the question: How does a paper engage a reader? Make them think. Make them know you relate. **Make the paper fun**, and not just through half-hearted attempts to make people think you are hip or folksy. (55)

Remember the reader first. Ask yourself: Will this story help them, interest them, inform them, amuse them, offend them or prompt some other action? If it’s an action you wish to get, great. If it’s an action you don’t want, such as offending them, look again at the necessity and then look carefully at presentation. If warranted, explain the decision if you ultimately publish what they will find offensive. (162)

Interaction with readers is of vital importance. Editors must remember they are producing the paper for their readers and not themselves. They must never forget this. (152)



Remember that whatever community you are reporting on means the world to your readers, and should be the capitol of the world for your publication. (162)

Think of the reader when you edit. It’s so easy to think about everything else, but as an editor you have the power and responsibility to decide what readers are going to see or read. It’s hard to put aside your personal feelings, interests or experiences. You need to rely on them and maybe they’ll help form your opinion, but the final choices always have to be made with the readers in mind. On most days, this is the hardest part of the job. (165)

An editor’s goal is to make sure reporters **tell readers what readers want to know** and, if you want to tell readers something readers should know, also mention why the readers should want to know it. (178)

I was in the middle of Congo, where a complicated conflict was playing out, which I was reporting on for The New York Times. I was sitting down to write after a long day of reporting and was a little unsure where to begin. I called an editor, a particularly good one, but one who was clearly busy at that moment with Iraq and other conflicts breaking out around the world. She listened as I explained the ins and outs of what was going on in Congo. Her advice was simple: **“Take the reader by the hand.”** She was saying that the average reader knows little about Congo and that I must take that into consideration. Her few words guided me as I wrote a story that numerous readers later commented had clarified Congo’s chaos for them for the first time.

- **Marc Lacey**, New York Times

Editors should try to think like readers. Too often, editors use an institutional model, doing the same thing in the same way without really asking themselves whether what they are doing is the best way to serve their audience. If they try to move out of their role in the newsroom and into the place of their readers– to see what stories are **interesting or boring**, to ask questions readers will ask and make sure they are answered, to write and present stories in the most engaging way, to make sure it’s immediately clear why stories are useful and worth the readers’ valuable and limited time– then they will be far more likely to be successful. (172)

Readers who are trying to get down some eggs, dress the kids, and hurry off to work don’t have the time or energy to absorb a difficult news story. They will just skip over it and miss the relevance of the day’s news. Pretty soon the paper has no value. So, no matter how much sweat and effort a writer puts into the perfect lede, it gets some editing help if it does not read quickly and easily to me the first time. (191)

Ask yourself: Does the story tell me, the reader, why I should care? Why I should keep reading? If it doesn’t, it should. (25)

One thing I learned early on was **the meaning of a “good” story**. I confused important with good. One test of a good story is whether people are apt to talk about it with others. (58)

If you have respect for your readers, you will make **better word choices**, and it will be more important to you to be clear. You will try harder without even realizing it. (63)

When you need to explain things to readers, explain it the way you would explain something to your parents. **Don't ever talk down to them.** (63)

Along with the regular readers, always think of **the ones who will be affected by the stories** you're helping to publish. The next time a really lurid story just stops you in your tracks, or you see something tabloid-like on television, try substituting your own name for the perpetrator's or defendant's name, just to get an idea of how it would feel to see some of those things said about you. Or **imagine how your granddaddy**, or the little brother who idolizes you, might feel to read them. As an editor, I guarantee that it will make you think about the type of coverage your paper is providing. (63)

The best thing we can do is think about the reader, not about our internal schedules, our routines, our desires for greatness. It is very easy to edit and produce a newspaper for journalists, which doesn't connect at all with readers. Think about the reader, and always ask: **What does this mean to them?** (78)

Everything you do should be done with readers in mind. Ask yourself: **Is this a reader-friendly** design? Is this lede understandable? Will the reader really want to read 20 inches on this? And, my personal favorite that applies to every fact in a story: Why are you telling me this? (81)

Keep readers in the forefront of decisions. We're working for them. Ask yourself: Will the readers find the information valuable? Is it presented in a way that will engage them? Is the broader relevance to readers discussed? It should be explicit in every story why readers are getting this information. (84)

Even if a story doesn't interest you, remember that **there are probably hundreds, if not thousands**, of readers who will be interested when it hits newsstands. (132)

The only people who care about **bake sales and club meetings** are people going to those events. Don't bore your readers by making it a feature story. (144)

Readers want to know how a story pertains to them, so let them know that upfront. **Don't hide it** on the jump. (144)

Keep in mind that **the average reader spends maybe 20 minutes a day** with the newspaper. If the story plays too cute or takes too long to get to the point, they're gone. (148)

There are an awful lot of stories written about things that are not happening: Government delays report; No decision from jury; City council refers report to committee; Space shuttle launch has been delayed, etc. **Look for real news** that's affecting readers in making story selections, not non-events. (109)

MAKE IT PERSONAL...

“People want to read about interesting people doing interesting things. Tell your reporters to go find some.”

- BILL WHITE, THE ANCHORAGE DAILY NEWS

All stories are people stories. No matter how lame and boring the subject, people are involved. If they care, I probably can be made to care, too. **It’s like writing about a lost dog.** At first glance, big deal. But if you write about the three little kids crying because their dog is gone, then **it’s a page-one story.**

- Dan Mayfield, The Albuquerque Journal

If the story isn’t about a human being, then it should be. (156)

W.S. Wilson always tells me, **“Names is news.”** It’s bad grammar, I know, but it doesn’t hide the important lesson, which is that people read the newspaper to find out what is going on around them. So putting in local names whenever possible is good. (80)

Editors need to push for more harder-hitting stories that **relate to real people.** It should not just be about covering the city council meeting, talking to the councilors, and writing a story. Instead, make sure reporters tell people how the water rights issues addressed will affect them. This is even better if your reporter can do this story before the meeting, so that readers can get involved in the outcome. (55)

BUT NOT TOO PERSONAL

“Be brutal. Don’t get attached to any story, because it may get killed. Pet projects exist only off deadline.”

- DAVID BRAUHN, THE WALLA WALLA UNION BULLETIN

Do not fall in love with a story. Getting too personal with a specific piece will only break your heart once it goes through a few editors and a designer. (144)

Copy editors can’t get too attached to their work. Sometimes, after you’ve spent a fair amount of time on one story, design, etc., the priorities shift. **News breaks, and the page has to be remade**, since a new story is coming. That is what’s exciting about the work of a copy editor. (20)

Cut copy without remorse. Make a quick decision and follow your gut. If you let yourself get attached, only toil and trouble will follow. (76)

One thing about editing I didn’t count on **was the stress** of reading about tragedy, war, and crime all the time. When you **get bogged down** reading about something such as 9/11, you eventually start to take on some of the **post-traumatic stress disorder effects** as if you’ve been there. It can be very tough not to get too personally attached to people and events you’re reading about.

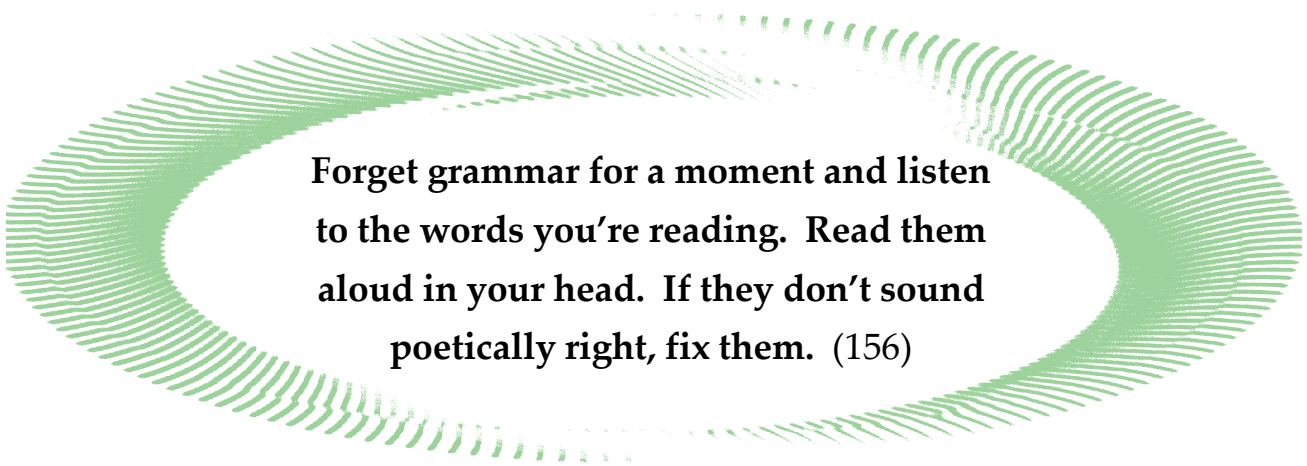
- **Chris Johnson**, The Columbus Ledger-Enquirer

THINKING LYRICALLY

“Always remember: A well-written story is lyrical. It has a cadence that carries and can thrill a reader.”

- DAVID ETTLIN, THE BALTIMORE SUN

Beyond checking for accuracy and completeness, copy editors should listen to the words in a story, not just look at them. Whether you **read the words out loud** or in your head, you will get a **sense of the rhythm of a sentence**, not just its content. **The cadence** of a sentence is a very important component of good writing and provides another reason for readers to buy the paper. (139)



Forget grammar for a moment and listen to the words you're reading. Read them aloud in your head. If they don't sound poetically right, fix them. (156)

Read ledes out loud. **If you stumble on one**, rewrite it. (188)

You must have an ear for the rhythm of words and be willing to **secretly imbed the meter of poetry** into a lede now and then, on purpose. (32)

As an editor, it's important to remember that great writing does not always have to be the lyrical, flowery prose of essayists and novelists. It can be **economic with its language** and simple in its construction, yet still draw powerful, vivid pictures. (117)

Edit news writing so that it is **reminiscent of the voice of a violin**: At times staccato and harsh, at others soft and melodic, but always vibrant and compelling. (117)

SPORTS EDITING


“Games are won and lost by human beings, whether as individuals or on teams. Always be sure the human element is emphasized in sports stories.”

- VAL TSOUTSOURIS, THE ROCHESTER SENTINEL

Especially in the sports department, **avoid clichés**. It's a big problem in sports writing. The more popular ones of recent times are “made a statement” and “dug themselves a hole.” If the reporter complains that the interviewee talked in clichés, tell them next time to ask follow-ups and force that person to talk more candidly. (153)

Just because a team leads 1-0 after the first inning or scores the first basket in the first quarter does not mean they are going to win. **It's a long game**. So don't write a headline or construct a layout or let your reporter predict a story angle until after the final buzzer sounds. (153)

Sportswriters have become **too artsy-fartsy** in recent years. Make sure that when they're writing a game story they get to the point quickly. (153)



**The more boring the game,
the more quotes your reporter should use. (153)**

Make sure reporters **do NOT talk about a game chronologically**. Talk about it from the most important play to the least important. Sometimes the most important play is a shot at the buzzer. Sometimes it is a pre-game injury. Start at the point where it was obvious that the winning team was going to win and the losing team was going to lose and go from there. (153)

The **differences between sports and news** in both writing and editing **are like those of the Cubs and White Sox** or the Yankees and Mets. They may be in the same city, but they don't play by the same rules and they both think more highly of themselves than they should. One constant remains: They both use the same dictionary. (156)



People Matters

“Great editors are part coach, part cheerleader, part rabbi, part teacher, part laborer, and always a full partner. **It’s a great calling.**”

- John Mura,

**The Louisville
Courier-Journal**

PEOPLE SKILLS

“College textbooks are all about AP style, writing styles, etc. What they don’t tell you: Editing is 90 percent managing and dealing with people and 10 percent actually editing copy.”

- SALLY MAHAN, THE DETROIT FREE PRESS

Remember that **the higher up the ladder you climb**, the less important your journalism skills become and the much more vitally important your people skills become. (124)

Editor’s duties fall into two primary areas: technical and relational. The technical arena includes all the nuts and bolts of reporting, writing and story development— everything from what stories to take on and how to structure attribution to style choices and how to write better ledes. The relational side has to do with people skills— **how to bring people along so that they’re really learning the craft**, how to pre-edit and edit in ways that allow reporters to feel they are part of the process, and how to inspire confidence in yourself and others. (125)

Your journalism training must take second place to **your sense about people**. They want to be led at times, and at others left alone, and you need to know that going in. (16)

Play around. **Laugh a lot.** Have fun. Throw things.

Get upset. Cry. Cuss. Be emotional, not boring. (76)

For some reason, there’s a pervasive notion on a copy desk that says if you can spot a misplaced capital letter from 20 feet away, your awful personality doesn’t matter. This assertion is simply not true. Copy desk work is collaborative. To do it effectively, you need to be able to **play well with others**. (143)

Control your emotions. As an editor, allow yourself **five tantrums or crying fits per year**. That’s it. Your co-workers won’t be able to stand you with any more than that. (153)

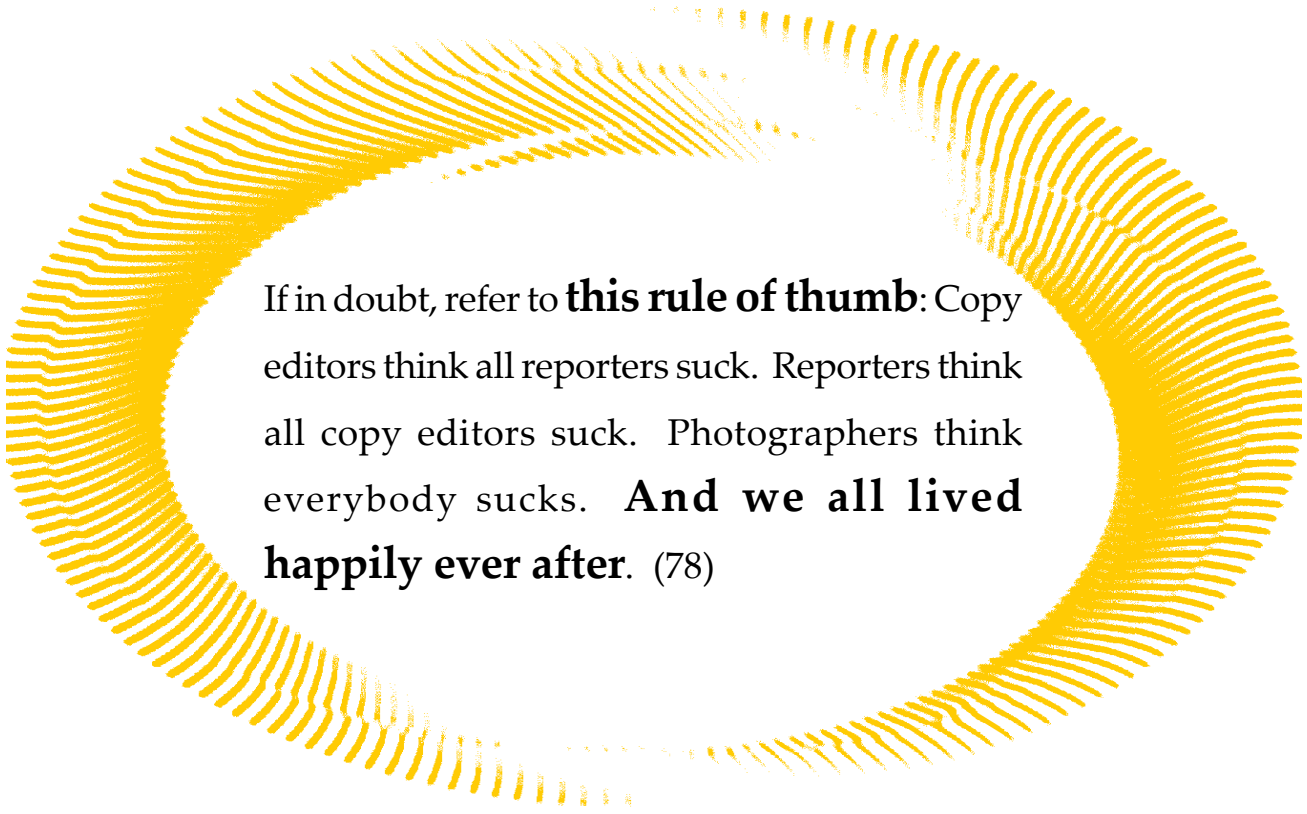
In the practice of editing, **I probably use my psychology minor** more than my journalism major. The subtle “people skills” are surely not something taught in school, but it’s often the thing that tends, if done poorly, to overwhelm even the best journalism skills. (158)

Copy editors are perfectionists by nature. **Creating a harmonious atmosphere** in a room full of often stubborn, yet intelligent, people is one goal. Not all copy editors share the same sense of humor either, or the same political views, which makes for a fragile environment at times. Go into the job realizing this, and be empathetic toward others. (22)

You must love people. **This business isn't about cold type**, to use a metaphor of the past. It's about warm-blooded mammals with the power of reason and searching souls. Readers get angry at their newspaper, sometimes because the truth makes them angry, sometimes because we are ignoring things we should not, sometimes because we are paying attention to things we should not, sometimes because we are missing key facts, sometimes because we have published typos, and sometimes because we have tossed their paper into **the only mud puddle in their whole driveway**. We must love people, love being in their company, and love listening to them. The newspaper is theirs. (32)

Editing is as much about working on people as it is about working on copy. So **make sure you like working with people** and sharing responsibility for their failures and successes. (42)

Being an editor means finding out the best way to work with each individual around you. **It's a lot more people-management** than most people realize. (41)



If in doubt, refer to **this rule of thumb**: Copy editors think all reporters suck. Reporters think all copy editors suck. Photographers think everybody sucks. **And we all lived happily ever after.** (78)

You Are Who You Know...

Be nice to everyone you meet along the way. There is only **one degree of separation** in American daily journalism. If you piss off one person, you can poison relationships over decades and thousands of miles. (17)

The news business is quite **close-knit, possibly even incestuous**. When on the job or especially thinking about leaving a job, don't burn any bridges. Today's co-worker could be tomorrow's boss. (48)

Talent is important, but personal relationships are more crucial to success. In journalism, **you are who you know**. (17)

The hardest thing about being an editor is not in respect to doing good journalism, but in managing people. To that end, the more that aspiring editors know about personality types, communication techniques, and other general management skills, **the better off they will be**. (50)

The young reporters who come into newsrooms knowing how to find a way to be useful will do well. And a first step toward that usefulness is the knowledge, that from the moment you arrive, you have to work with the other editors. **You don't necessarily have to like everyone**, but you must respect your peers and superiors and the roles that they play. (56)

If you can't find **the middle ground** with your newsroom colleagues, you will fail. It's tough and I'm still learning, but the hardest part of this job is establishing and maintaining honest communication, good will, and mutual respect with the people just across the room. (61)

It really does take a team to put out the paper on a daily basis. Appreciate, cooperate with, and rely on your co-workers. You need each other. (83)

MANAGEMENT SKILLS

“College textbooks are all about AP style, writing styles, etc. What they don’t tell you: Editing is 90 percent managing and dealing with people and 10 percent actually editing copy.”

- SALLY MAHAN, THE DETROIT FREE PRESS

Editors are first and foremost managers, but that’s lost on many and not emphasized as a training element often enough. (7)

Editing writing is the **smallest part** of an editor’s job. Being a good leader is the main part. (153)

Sometimes being a news editor has little to do with editing. Often, it’s more about scheduling, planning, **massaging egos, juggling** a room full of reporters, everything BUT editing. It often is just about being a manager. (86)

Remember, you’re the boss. It sucks sometimes, but you’ll be supervising people who were your friends and the dynamics change. You’ll lose friends. That’s life. **Welcome to the world of growing up.** (170)

As for management, the hardest thing is when everyone wants to **take vacation the same week** and you have to say no to half of them. (95)

As an editor, you have the power to help people achieve their goals. So be sure to use your power for good. As a department head, I’m trying to help people do work they find interesting, learn their next job on the job, and be understanding and flexible when their **real life intrudes.** (177)

The most important job of any newsroom manager is to build trust with the staff you oversee. **People in the business of words** are usually *very* attached to their own, and so can be difficult when they see them changed. If staffers have trust in a manager, it makes it easier to make needed changes. (180)

MINIMIZE MICRO-MANAGEMENT

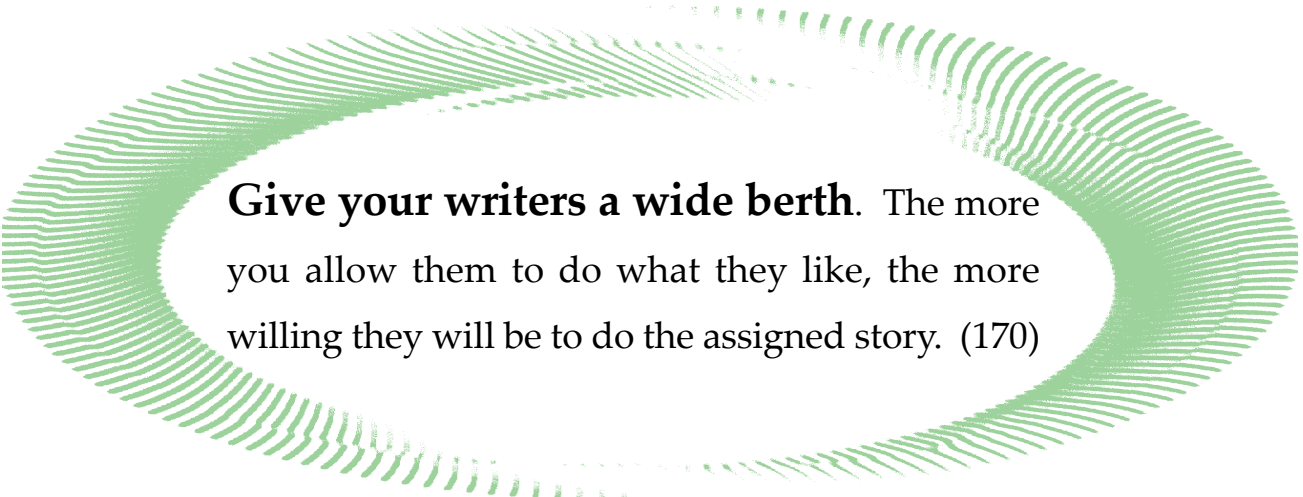
“Journalistic objectivity is at best a myth and at worst a dangerous lie. We all have opinions, different backgrounds, and different beliefs. The key is to be fair. Be painfully fair.”

- RICHARD SCHNEIDER, THE JACKSON SUN

The best editors realize the mark of a leader is in developing people, **not in always being in charge.** (17)

Editors should realize that not everyone will approach an assignment the way they would. (62)

Choose your battles carefully. In the quest to be objective, there can be many subjective approaches. That can lead to conflicts and disagreements, some of them very passionate. You're not going to get your way every time. Choose the battles for which you have a good chance to prevail. For the others, quietly make your point and move on. (81)



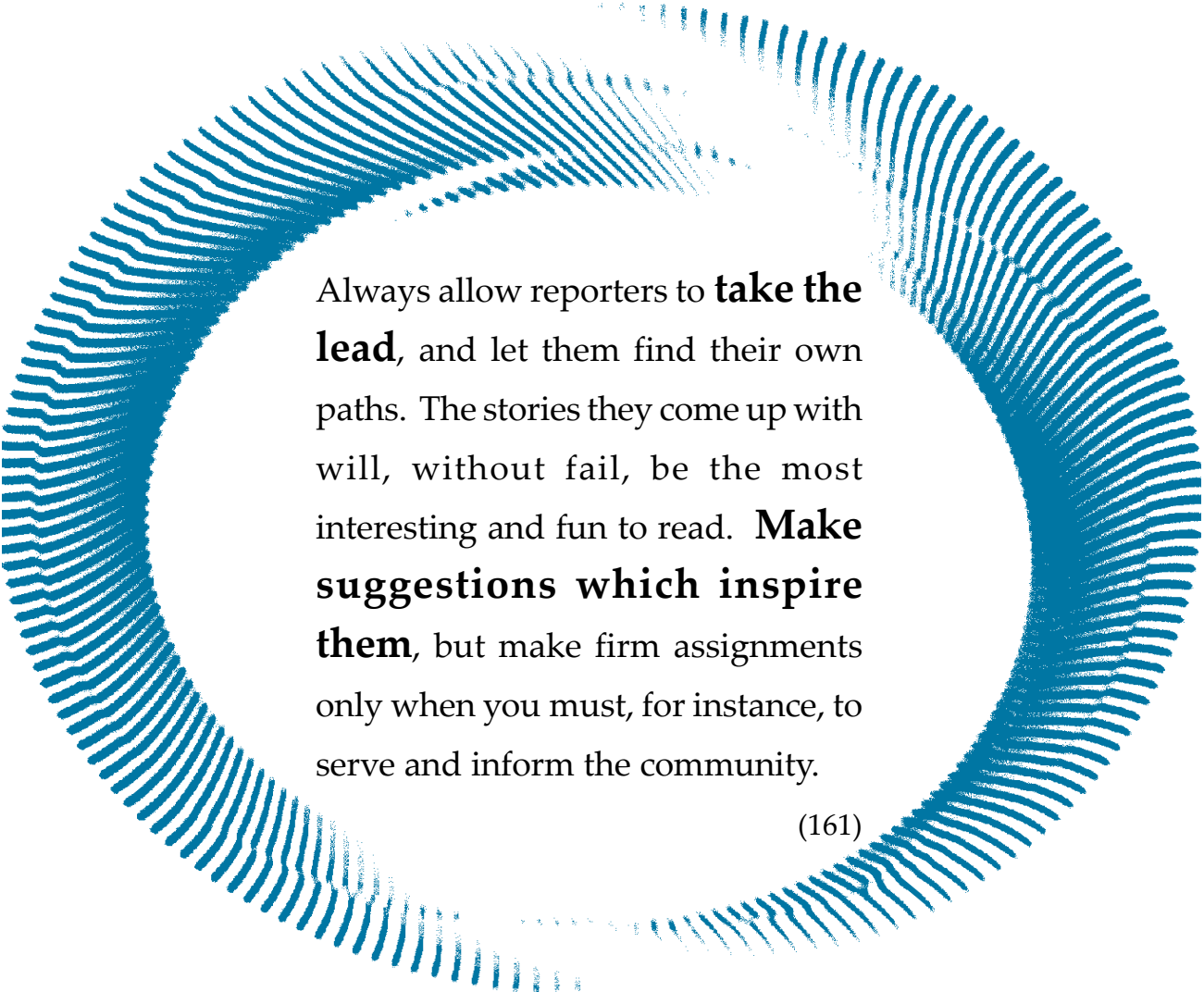
Give your writers a wide berth. The more you allow them to do what they like, the more willing they will be to do the assigned story. (170)

Fight the urge to put your own personal stamp on every piece of everyone else's work. Yes, you might be able to do a better job, but that's not the objective, is it? Instead of micro-managing your colleagues, provide them with a clear vision of what you expect (repeat as necessary), then get out of the way. Make it easier for them to ask for forgiveness than to beg for permission. (124)

The secret to success as executive editor boils down to this: Hire good people, train them well and, when the big news hits, **turn them loose backed** by all the resources you can gather. The result will be very good journalism. (166)

When I was appointed to my current position a few years ago, never having held a senior management position in the newsroom before, I wrote to Pete Weitzel, one of my former managing editors, long since retired. I asked him what I needed to know about becoming The Herald's executive editor, a position into which I **catapulted** after a career spent mostly as a political reporter and columnist. Pete replied a few days later in a letter that contained a single anecdote about one of The Herald's **legendary editors**, Lee Hills, who led the newspaper in the 1950s and '60s. As Pete recalled, Mr. Hills had made a speech to a local civic club in Miami one day and called for questions. One man raised his hand and asked, "What exactly does the executive editor at The Miami Herald do?" Pete wrote that Hills pondered the question for a few seconds, and then replied: "Let me give you an example. **When a hurricane** is drawing a direct bead on Miami, my job is to make sure that there's plenty of **hot coffee in the newsroom.**" At first blush, that answer sounded flippant and it got a good laugh, Pete said. But the more Pete thought about it, the more he came to realize that, behind it, was the most important lesson that a newsroom manager could learn: **When the big story breaks**, it's too late for the executive editor to teach reporters how to report, photographers how to shoot or editors how to edit. They need to already know those skills and to have honed them over many years. So the executive editor's job at that point is to see to it that the reporters, photographers, and editors involved in that breaking story have the resources that they need to get the job done. Providing hot coffee was Lee Hills' metaphor for those resources.

- **Tom Fiedler**, Executive Editor, The Miami Herald



Always allow reporters to **take the lead**, and let them find their own paths. The stories they come up with will, without fail, be the most interesting and fun to read. **Make suggestions which inspire them**, but make firm assignments only when you must, for instance, to serve and inform the community.

(161)

Too often, editors have preconceived notions about what a story is before launching a reporter to cover it. I tell reporters to communicate quickly with an editor if the reality of an event conflicts with what an editor thinks it was going to be. Over time, editors need to develop relationships enabling them to **trust the eyes and ears of their reporters**. It is damn hard to write a news story, much less its lede, based on an editor's preconceived notion of what it has to be, as opposed to what it really was. (148)

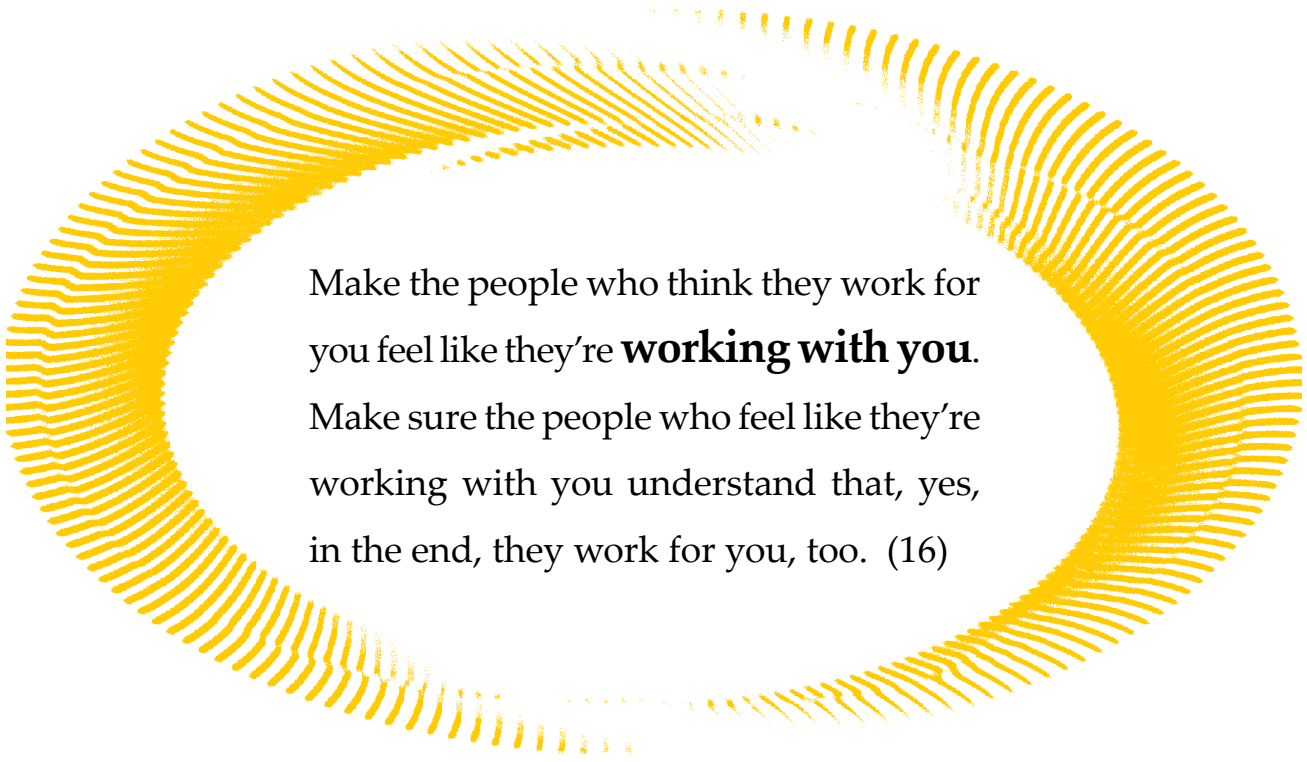
Give reporters leeway. Let them go after the stories they come up with even if you have doubts sometimes. One of my reporters wanted to do a story on baseball great Ted Williams' son, who was playing really low-level pro baseball. I thought: Why would our readers care even if it is a team that visits our market? But he came up with a great story because he worked on it with enthusiasm. It's a lot harder to get reporters motivated for a story that comes from the top and in which they had little input at the start. (190)

Managing journalists is not like managing normal, sane people. Every journalist believes he is creative, self-motivated, and works better if the only way he knows he is being managed is that he gets a check every two weeks. The trick is to lead, not direct, by tending to specific needs such as training, budget, feedback, etc., and keeping a focus on the larger staff issues. (8)

Editors rarely can terrify people into their best work. Nor can they leave them alone to their own devices. The best editors are those who can make a story suggestion to a reporter and engage in a conversation that ends with the reporter congratulating herself for coming up with such an innovative idea. (158)

I was thrown into a job once where all my staff was older than me by at least 10 years. They immediately treated me with respect because I took the time to talk through stories with them and to show them what I thought could be better and let them find the way. **Always give reporters the chance to make something better on their own** and don't make drastic changes without working through them with him or her. (41)

The reporters who get in your face are the ones to value most. They'll be the best watchdogs. The editors who try to control everything wind up with reporters who won't take initiative. (62)



Make the people who think they work for you feel like they're **working with you**. Make sure the people who feel like they're working with you understand that, yes, in the end, they work for you, too. (16)

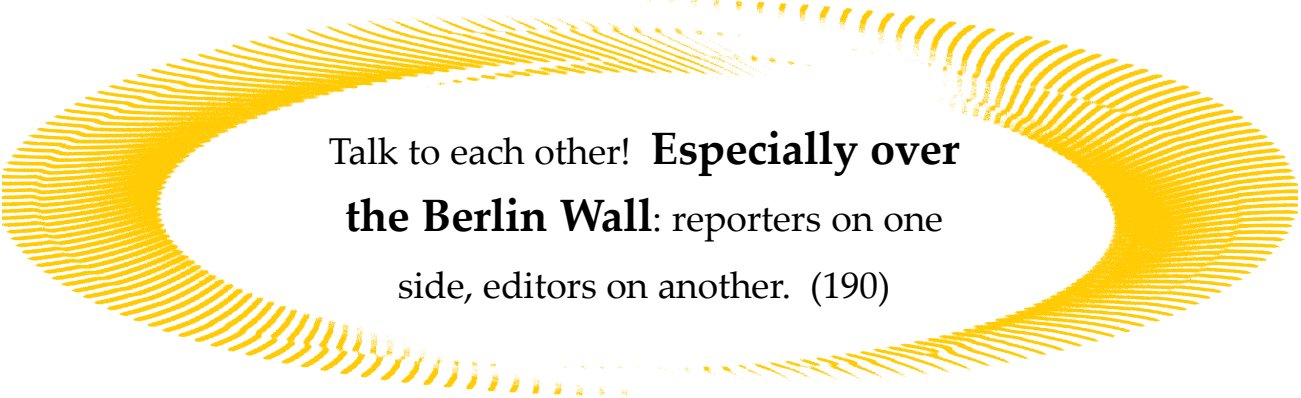
COMMUNICATION SKILLS

“Communication is definitely the key. The reporter, photographer, and designer need to put aside their pride and work as one unit.”

- SAMUEL MORGAN, THE SAVANNAH MORNING NEWS

Talk to your supervisor. Talk to your coworkers. Talk to your customers. In a newsroom, it is very important to communicate. (80)

Communication is king. It covers a multitude of sins. If you communicate well and seek clarity, you’ll help the process immeasurably. If not sure about something, whether it’s a fact in a story, or where a story is going, simply ask. (48)



Talk to each other! **Especially over the Berlin Wall:** reporters on one side, editors on another. (190)

I was training a correspondent and asked for a story about the future of a stretch of highway that was poised to become a new commercial strip. I asked her to find out *what* was going to be built on that stretch of highway, as some commercial development had already started along this two- to three-mile stretch and a long-existing golf course already was there. She turned in a story that told me the city was thinking of rebuilding the highway at some point and that, when it did, it would use a certain kind of **reinforced concrete with paved shoulders** and a certain grade, with access drives and turn lanes. I was confused. She didn’t mention anything about the potential developments though. Why? Because, she said, I had asked her to find out *what* was going to be built on that stretch of highway and she thought she was delivering on the assignment by telling me exactly what materials and road plans would be used and included in the building of the highway. The lesson: **Be precise when communicating with reporters**, down to the who, where, when, why and, most important, *what*. (178)

Inter-departmental Communication

Embrace inter-communication among departments. This one can be tough. Depending on the paper, it's not uncommon to have **some heated run-ins**. (142)

The smaller the paper, the more important it is you get along with people in other sections and departments. We employ about 12 to 15 people, and if people hate you, going to work is not fun. (153)

One thing that isn't stressed in journalism textbooks: the importance of **building positive relationships with individuals from other departments** at your newspaper. The news itself will always be held to the highest standard and cannot be influenced by folks from advertising or circulation, but listening and learning from folks in other departments is a key to understanding the community in which you live and learning what is important. (2)

You need to have an environment **where there is a constant dialogue**. When people are already talking to each other, it allows them to offer constructive criticism. This means if a coworker is putting together a page that looks crappy, I'm free to tell them so (although probably with slightly different wording). **The last thing you should do is go silent**. (10)

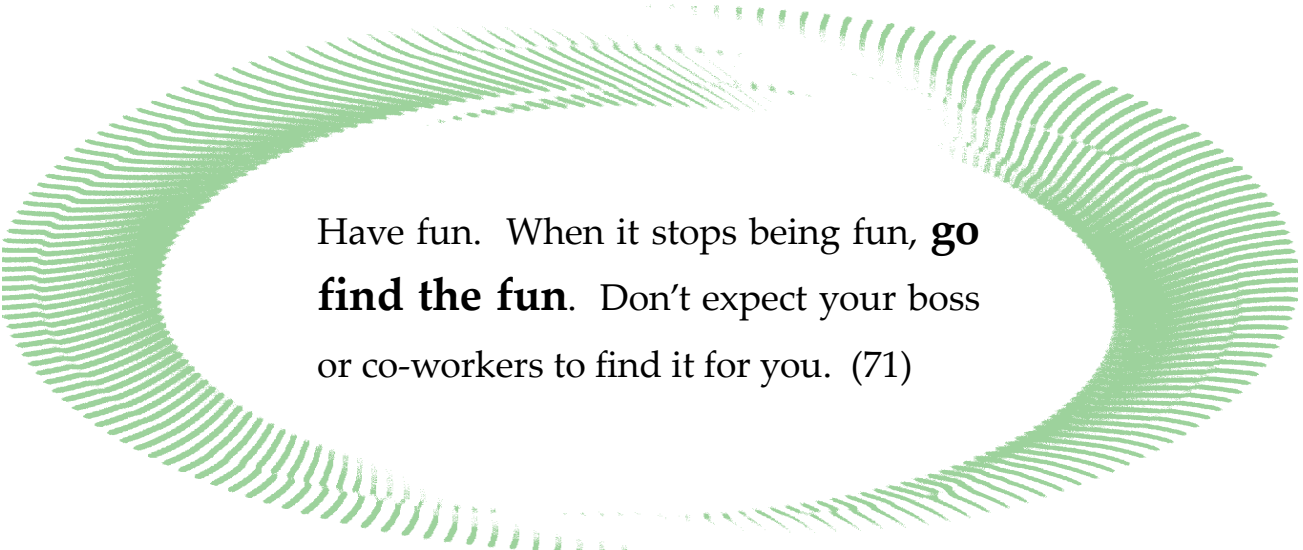
PROMOTING FUN

“Have fun. Make sure your reporters and other editors know that too. Tell them, ‘Yes, it’s possible to have fun.’ But for now, get back to work. After all, you’re on deadline.”

- CHRISTOPHER GRIMM, THE PEORIA JOURNAL STAR

If you are a newsroom leader, try to have fun with your co-workers. Laugh a lot, **be a little silly sometimes**. Make the newsroom a fun place to be. Yes, news often is *Serious Business*, but that doesn’t mean we have to be **all work and no play all the time**. (124)

Have some fun in the newsroom. It will show and have a positive impact on staffers, and **readers will notice the difference** in the passion behind the paper put out. (162)



Have fun. When it stops being fun, **go find the fun**. Don’t expect your boss or co-workers to find it for you. (71)

Don’t let newsroom fun work its way into the newspaper when it isn’t appropriate. If you do, the aftermath likely will be anything but fun. (162)

If it isn’t fun, do something else. You’ll spend more hours in the newsroom than you do with your family, so if you aren’t having fun at it, you’re in danger of becoming a **worn-out cynic**. (46)

DEALING WITH THE BOSS

“Realize that your executive editor is neither a complete idiot, nor a total genius.”

- DOROTHY HERNANDEZ, THE DETROIT NEWS

When you find a good boss, treat him with the respect he deserves, and **don't let him go**. When you stumble upon a bad boss, remember, if you want things to change, you have to make him change. (142)

Learn how to manage your boss. **That doesn't mean sucking up**. It doesn't mean carrying out every suggestion as if it's a command from the ranking general. And it doesn't mean blaming your boss for everything distasteful you have to do. It means understanding your boss's priorities and values and aligning your general direction to fit, and helping your reporters understand what is expected out of the team and department. (158)

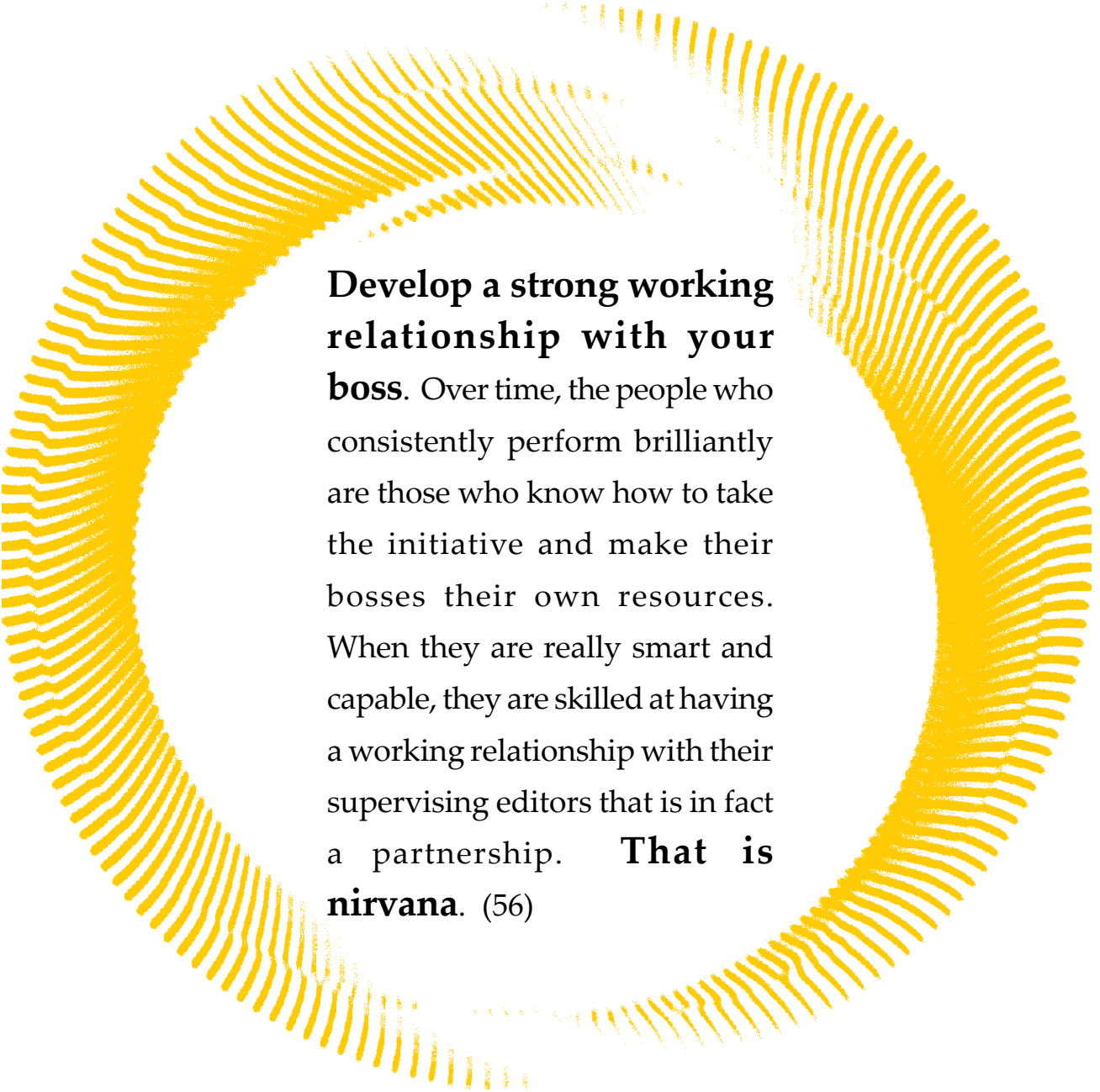


He may not be right, **but he's still your publisher**. (147)

Always be aware: It's not just about the words in the story. A big part of what you'll do as an editor will revolve around the **marketing of stories to the top editors for good placement** in the paper (such as starting a campaign to get a piece I believe in onto page A1) and also to the public. (177)

Every story needs, no, demands, an advocate, someone to fight for its importance and good placement in the paper to **the higher-ups**. Ninety-nine times out of 100, that advocate is going to be your boss. If you don't have that working relationship in place, there won't be a lot of advocacy going on. (56)

Argue your point like hell, like it really matters, but remember the publisher is the boss and has **the final word**. When you must, follow his argument, and hope for a better tomorrow. The good ones will always make it up to you. The bad ones will drive you to another publication. (98)



Develop a strong working relationship with your boss. Over time, the people who consistently perform brilliantly are those who know how to take the initiative and make their bosses their own resources. When they are really smart and capable, they are skilled at having a working relationship with their supervising editors that is in fact a partnership. **That is nirvana.** (56)

At your very first internship, begin by introducing yourself to your boss and getting to know him or her. You need to know what they expect. **Everything begins and ends with that boss.** It's not unusual for hiring editors to tell new hires that the job will be ABC, but the actual job turns out to be XYZ. Unless you start with clarifying what the boss expects of you, it could take days of futility for that to become clear. (56)

The social skills needed to work with your superior are underappreciated. You need to learn her working style. Is the editor **a control freak**, or not? Does the editor just like having you touch base from time to time? You can skip the awkward phase of figuring out these types of questions and get to the point much more quickly if, from the start, you know what the boss expects. (56)

DEALING WITH THE PUBLIC

“Listen to every reader who calls, even if it’s to tell you about the giant zucchini in her garden or the dazzling display of holiday lights on his street. Just listen.”

- PAUL CARTER, THE EUGENE REGISTER-GUARD

Remember the people you report and write about are *your* readers. Treat them fairly and kindly, no matter what their status is in life. **You want to keep every one of them.** They really do need you as much as you need them. They can get far too passionate about an issue and take it out on you. It’s the nature of the beast. Consider this response simply as human conditioning. (66)

Something about the written word stirs up people easily. A little empathy, humility, and humor go a long way in defusing tender situations. It’s OK to tell a reader, **“We messed up.** We should have done better” or “You know, you may be right” or “You have a valid point, but...” Treat them this way, listen, invite a civil discussion, and you’ll make more allies rather than enemies. (66)

It’s important to **be part of the community you serve.** Take part in events, volunteer, join a bowling league, and shop at Wal-Mart. Go where the readers go and experience their lives. **We tend to be better educated, younger, whiter, and more cynical than our readers.** In a way, we must escape ourselves if we want to produce a relevant product. (81)

I am still taken aback by the public reaction to stories that I thought were nothing out of the ordinary. We can write about, or publish photos of, people being killed or children being harmed in a dozen different ways and not hear a peep from anyone, but let us run a fashion photo of **a prom dress that’s strapless** and we get mail from every nut out there saying we’re promoting pre-marital sex. Go figure. (95)

Work to live, don't live to work. Get out in the community and get in touch with the people you write about and write for. (183)

E-mail has really changed the way the job works for all of us, but especially for those of us who accept freelance submissions. What was once five submissions a week by snail mail is now 10 a day, submitted electronically. This applies to press releases also, which arrive at the rate of 50 to 75 per day, as opposed to the former 10 in the mail. Mundane as it sounds, my biggest challenge has not been editing per se, but dealing with sheer volume. (114)

There are advantages to settling in and not simply looking for the next big challenge or promotion. While I appreciate the drive of many colleagues to reach the top in this profession, I worry about the fact that they often don't take time to put down roots and see what their readership and communities are all about. **The absolute best part of this profession** is the interaction and relationships we make with people, which also enables us to produce a publication more in tune with what they want. That seems hard to do **when it is time to pack the U-Haul** every two years and move to the next bigger place. (5)

You must live in your community, not apart from it. **Coach your kid's ball team.** Go to church. Join a neighborhood book club or poker group or both. This is all about demystifying the media for your community. You want to promote the notion that *we* are *you*. And it is about keeping you grounded. This is your audience. Hang with them enough to know what matters to them, including what they don't know that they need to know. (32)

Editors should understand that **PR plays into the profession** at times. My job involves working with the public, via community news, so it's a lot of public relations, as well as making sure the public understands that newspapers get to choose what we run in what they think is *their* newspaper. Glad they have a feeling of possession, but it's a fine line. (149)

Get to know your readers. This is hard sometimes for those of us who are behind the scenes, but take every opportunity to meet readers or to read e-mail from them. (51)

DON'T FORGET THE PHOTOGS

“Make sure you talk to your photographers, not just about assignments and photo play, but what they may have seen during their day. They are the only people in the newsroom who must get off their butts to do their jobs. They are a tremendous resource. Treat them like one.”

- JEN O'CALLAGHAN, THE NASHUA TELEGRAPH

As an editor, you want to inspire your photographers and help them embrace the attitude that they are **journalists who happen to work with cameras instead of notebooks**. Tell them: I want to hear that you attended the interview and asked pertinent questions. I want to look at a photographer's pictures and see a narrative unfold. I want photographers who will offer to provide text for picture stories they have developed on their own. I want photographers to never get called on a misspelled name. (61)

The circumstances of print journalism today (get it all in one shot and get out) have conditioned many photographers to work only to the point of achieving **the so-called “money shot.”** Digital cameras compound this mindset so that photographers quit looking once they think they have nailed an acceptable shot. Make sure they understand that's absolutely no good. I want to know that photographers are shooting to the last possible moment. Explain that you are most impressed by a photojournalist who's dissatisfied with the outcome of a shoot and goes back the next day. (61)

I'll never forget this quote from Charles Scott, a former journalism professor at Ohio University: “Photographers traditionally on most newspapers have been **treated as second-class citizens**. And the picture editors have been some sort of bastards in between who nobody understood.” I think his statement was true 25 years ago when I moved from being a reporter to the photo department. The good news is that these old perceptions are changing. In our newsroom, at least, the photo department is an essential part of every aspect of the process from story idea to design. The graphics department integrates photography, graphics, and page design. I feel understood in today's newsroom. As editor, make sure you promote this understanding. (61)

The first time I worked as a newspaper photo editor very early in my career I failed in a number of ways. Mostly I failed to recognize that few people in the newsroom really give a damn about **Photojournalism with a capital P**. They just want a picture, any picture. (61)

As editor, it's important to understand: Gifted photographers suffer a peculiar sort of angst. **It's a low-grade fever.** Their brains are filled with the great images they have seen, studied, and admired. They labor on, in small towns and big cities, convinced they are ready to **make a memorable photograph** or at least one that will be noticed and commented on, perhaps even one that will win a contest. They shoot and they shoot, and nothing happens. The pictures all seem mediocre. No editor has the easy answer to **shake a good shooter out of this malaise**, but at least we ought to recognize it and be willing to talk about it. Ultimately, a photographer has to **shoot her way out of trouble**. Photo editors help with good ideas, praise, and constructive critique. (61)

One of the chronic complaint-questions I hear from photographers: "**Why didn't my great photo get published?**" It's a hard lesson to learn, but the paper is not our vessel of publication to get our art circulated. It is not here for us. Rather, we are here solely to serve the needs of our readers and to that end we all get edited. Sometimes there is not enough room. Sometimes, although it might be **a crackerjack image**, the photo in question doesn't really illustrate what the story is about. No matter how good a photo is, sometimes it just doesn't work. So tell your photographers, in short, that we all get edited, get over it, and move on. (94)

Photographers often are obsessed with technicalities in their work. As editor, you want to remind them that while, yes, absolute **sharpness in a photo is a wonderful thing**, there are more important criteria for judging a photograph's worth. If a photo has emotional impact and insight into the human condition, for example, I can forgive technical errors. I don't think readers look at a compelling image and notice anything at all about the technical aspects of the photo. (61)

As a photography editor, you want to always keep the bar high and praise people who surpass it frequently. It is not possible to treat everyone fairly. It insults those driven to perform who bring **their 'A' game everyday**. Rather, coach the underachievers and give them the tools to succeed even if it means looking at their personal projects on your days off. Offer them the chance to step up their game and reap the benefits. (119)

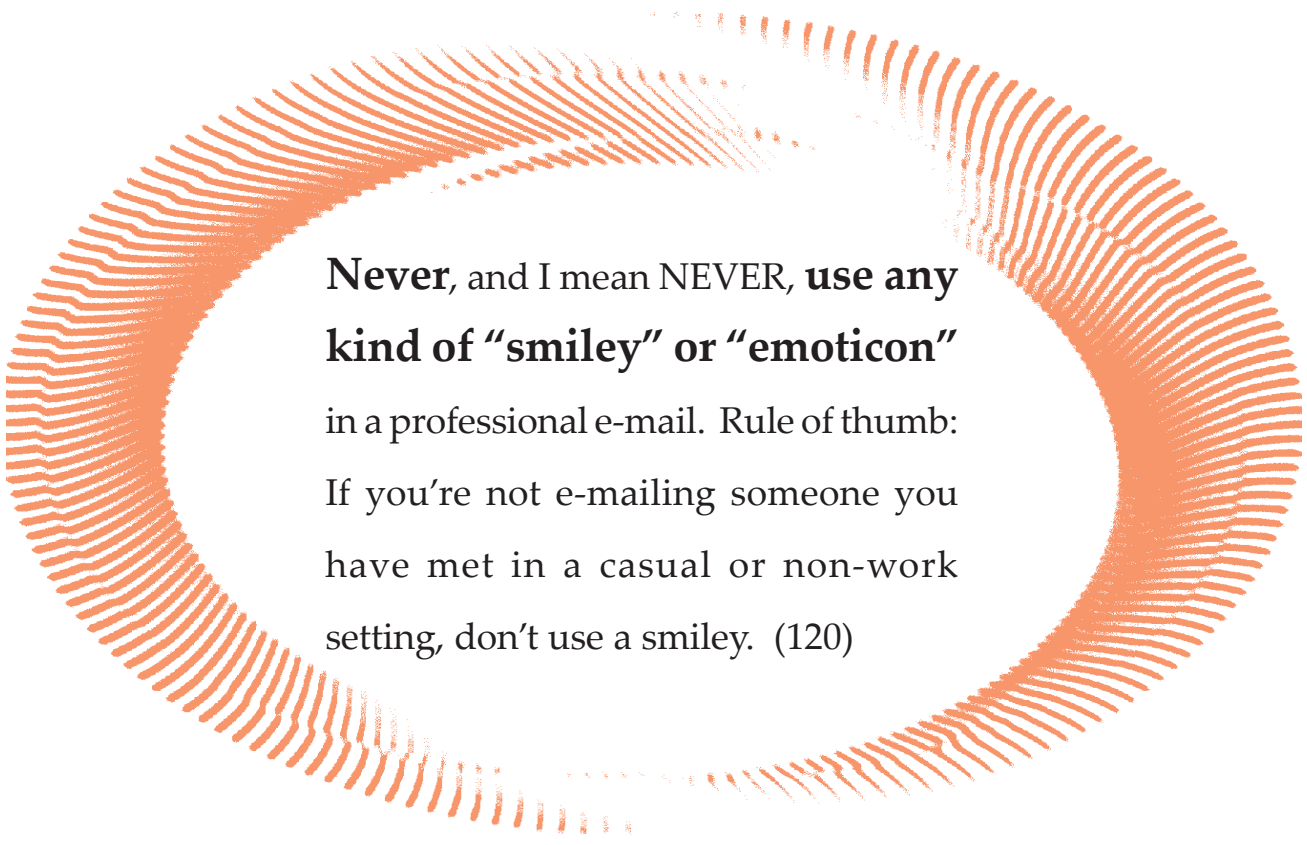
If you are writing out photo assignments, **more information** is always better. (44)

E-CORRESPONDENCE

“Bottom line: E-mail etiquette matters.”

- TODD VINES, ESSENTIAL KAUAI

As our field evolves, more of our correspondence, internally and otherwise, will be done electronically. However, it's one of those things still so new that **the emphasis on etiquette hasn't really reached our nation's newsrooms** or classrooms in earnest. This is something that should be discussed at length in your newsroom, and followed to a tee. (120)



Never, and I mean NEVER, **use any kind of “smiley” or “emoticon”** in a professional e-mail. Rule of thumb: If you're not e-mailing someone you have met in a casual or non-work setting, don't use a smiley. (120)

“Hi” is an awfully informal way to greet people for the first time, particularly if you're soliciting their help. **Think “old school.”** If you were to write a letter (we're talking pen and paper, here), you'd probably start with “greetings,” “good day,” “salutations,” or any number of things more formal than “hi.” Electronic communication should be no different. (120)

For professional correspondence, one should at the very least include his e-mail address at the bottom of a first contact e-mail message. It is a courtesy, and one that is too often forgotten. (120)

THIS ONE'S FOR HIRING

“The worst thing an executive or managing editor can do is fill a copy editing vacancy with someone who really wants to be a reporter. Sometimes it works out, but far more often it doesn’t. It isn’t fair to the paper, and it isn’t fair to the journalist in question.”

- STEVE BLUST, THE BEAUFORT GAZETTE

Too often in the real world, what happens is that good reporters are promoted to be editors. Yet, it’s important to understand that the two skills are not exactly interchangeable. I have seen many good reporters get sucked into this trap. They fall for the higher salary and position of power, yet are totally unprepared to manage and lead. Then they are stuck. Their bosses don’t want to **fire their star**, even though he is not doing well in his new job. And the reporter-turned-editor’s ego would be bruised by considering a return to the reporting ranks. I’ve seen a lot of good reporters ruined this way. The moral: **Hire and promote with caution.** (194)

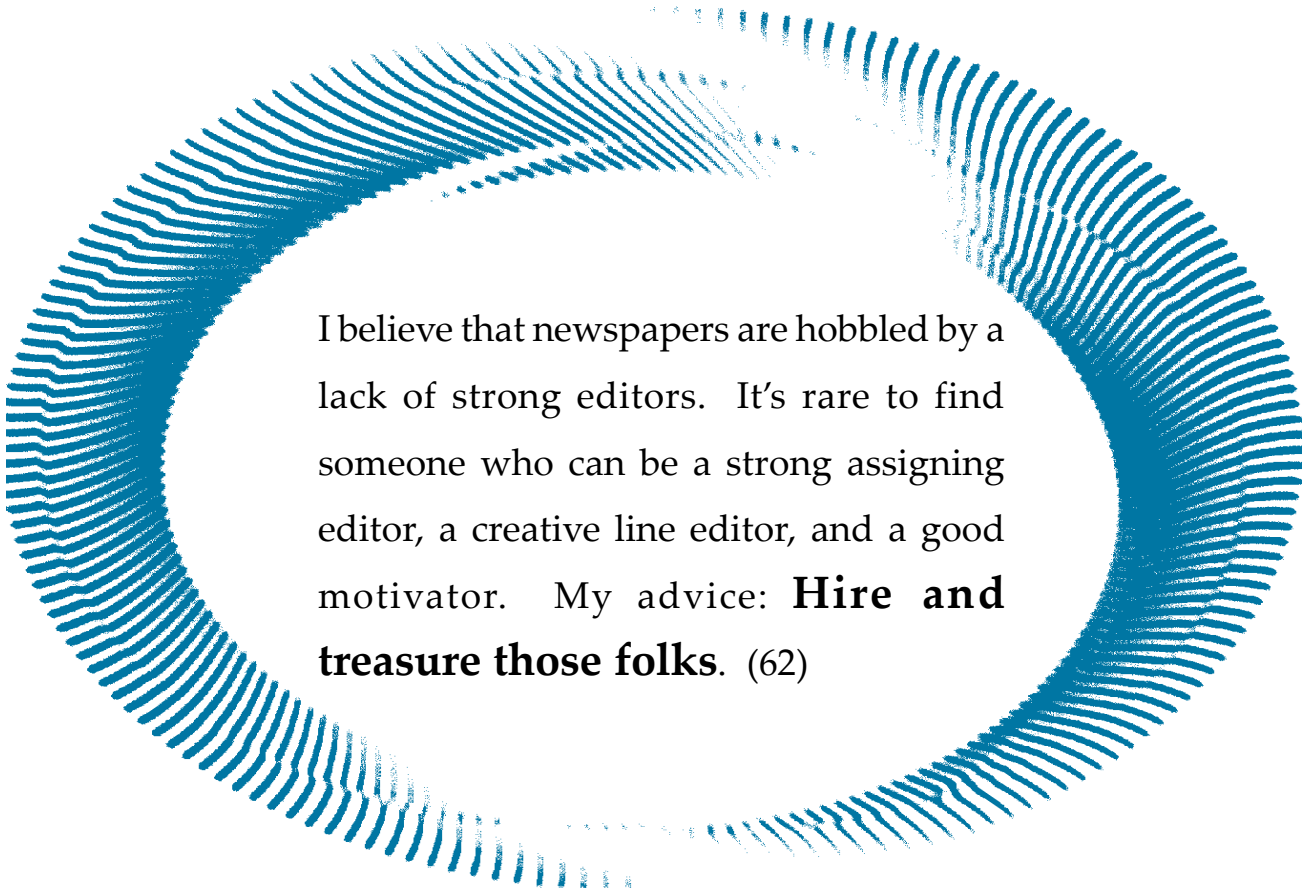
There is currently a battle brewing in the news business between hiring people who have the skills you need (and paying them well) and hiring “potential” talent in hopes you can teach them the skills you need (and thereby saving money on salaries). My experience tells me that despite all best intentions, there are usually never enough resources (money and time) to teach the “potential” talent the skills they need. And so, in the end, everyone becomes frustrated. (5)

Devote more time to human resource management than you want to. No newsroom is better than its people, and hiring is the most important thing you’ll do. If you pass on a bad lede, it’s one bad lede. If you approve travel for a story that doesn’t pan out, it’s one bad story. If you blow the budget, it’s a year in the red. If you make one bad hire, it’s a mistake that may last decades and become an albatross borne by your successor and colleagues long after you’re gone. (17)

A big part of whether editing is rewarding or not depends on the quality of your reporters. Good reporters make editing a joy. Lousy reporters make it a chore. Lesson: **Hiring good reporters is probably the most important thing you can do.** Look for reporters who can write and organize a story, who know news when they see it, and get joy out of finding stories. (28)

A lot of good journalism comes from hiring smartly. When filling an opening, **think about the qualities that you want** in a reporter that complement the team and move it ahead. Then be rigorous about screening applicants according to the criteria you identify. Although reporters can and do grow through experience, their fundamental traits— **aggressiveness, curiosity**, ability to see the larger story being told or **desire to experiment**— will be fairly fixed over time. (84)

Online news should be a 24/7 operation. At my paper currently, we have two staffers, including me, trying to accomplish that, and that's not enough. We do manage seven days a week with at least eight hours of coverage between us, but it is hell in any emergency or even vacation situation. Moral of the story: **Don't skimp on hiring online staff.** (79)



I believe that newspapers are hobbled by a lack of strong editors. It's rare to find someone who can be a strong assigning editor, a creative line editor, and a good motivator. My advice: **Hire and treasure those folks.** (62)

Working with Reporters

“Aspiring editors should realize they’ll be entering **a war of egos** with the writers they’re editing. Every professional writer suffers from an over-inflated ego, and the longer a person’s been writing, the less likely he’ll be willing to admit your editing is an attempt to improve his work **So proceed with caution.**”

- Adam Smith,

The Augusta
Chronicle

A COLLABORATIVE ART

“To be a good editor, you and the reporter must come together and mutually understand and be able to explain the central question or premise of a story.”

- TODD BILLIOT, THE (LA.) DAILY ADVERTISER

Editors don't always know best. **We have to trust our writers**, who are out on the streets, to give us the info we need. (6)

For writers who say they “never get to write anything good or fun,” I say it's their fault for not coming up with their own stories and selling them. **Make them an active partner** in the story ideation process and the results will be better ideas and happier reporters. (177)

Editing is a collaborative art. Think of us as all **chefs in a great restaurant**, trying to serve up the best possible dining experience for the reader, a true feast for the eyes and mind. (108)

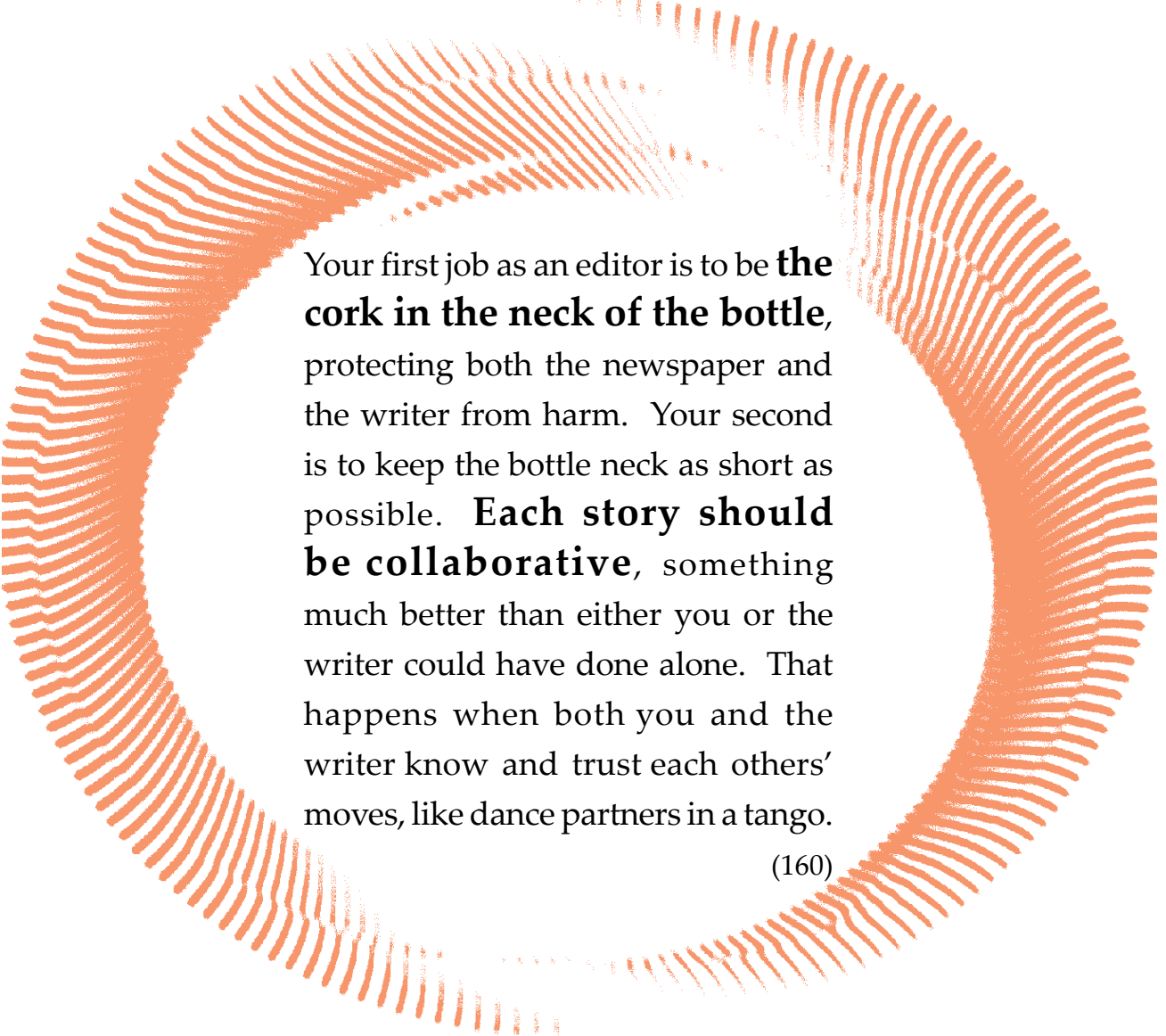
In some ways, since I've become an editor, I feel **I've moved to the “dark side,”** because I spend all my time in the office and live vicariously through others. I have always felt that the reporters, photographers, and graphics folks are the talent of the newspaper, and the rest is support staff to get the product out the door. That's not to give the talent any more credit, but they do bring the food to the table. Without them, there would be no meal. But, at the same time, **without the chefs who hang out in the kitchen** and help make it happen, the meal might be inedible. So really, it's collaborative effort all the way. (108)

Editors often have ideas, and often those ideas are right on the mark. But editors are **neither omniscient nor perfect**. Reporting and editing should be a team experience, and those partners in news need to learn from each other, story by story. (148)

Most good editors at one point have been reporters. A good editor feels reporters' pains. (96)

Realize that **reporters are not the enemy**. They are on your team and, if nothing else, you can make them look really good. (35)

Too many editors have too little respect for what reporters do. Reporters, at times, can be **royal pains in the ass**. That is part of what makes a good reporter. Instead of simply taking whatever a reporter gives them, as many editors do, so they don't have to deal with them, more editors need to ask the right questions and contribute to the creative process. The pain-in-the-ass quotient will inevitably go down, as reporters truly value a competent, caring editor. (141)



Your first job as an editor is to be **the cork in the neck of the bottle**, protecting both the newspaper and the writer from harm. Your second is to keep the bottle neck as short as possible. **Each story should be collaborative**, something much better than either you or the writer could have done alone. That happens when both you and the writer know and trust each others' moves, like dance partners in a tango.

(160)

I encourage and inspire writers to write about topics they care about, and to **“sell” their stories** to me, rather than the other way around. I don't always want to be the one who comes up with story ideas and then make the writers write them, because that's boring for me and for the reporters. I already know what I think about stuff. I want to exchange ideas, and learn from other people's perspectives and research. (177)

Find out why reporters do what they do. Why did they choose their lede? What are they trying to achieve? You don't have to have all the answers, just the questions to get reporters to think. **Collaborate with them** and you'll invariably be impressed by the results. (62)

Brainstorm story ideas with reporters. Good stories start with good ideas. Encourage reporters to develop them, but it helps if they have an editor they can explore them with. (30)

The Editor-Reporter Sitdown

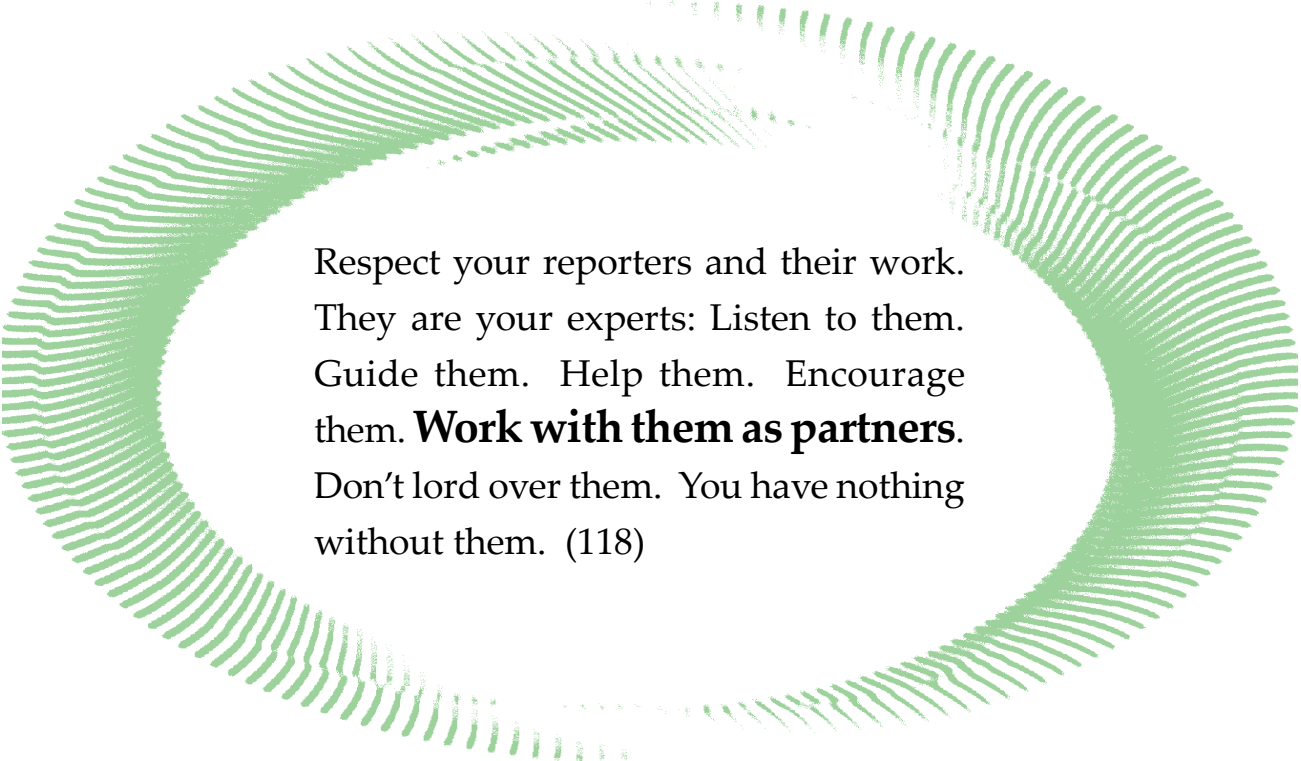
It's good for an editor to sometimes sit with a reporter while reading her story. Problems can be caught, questions can be answered faster, and the reporter can gain firsthand insight into the editing process, which can shape her work on future stories immensely. (142)

I prefer that reporters sit next to me while I edit, when possible. I want them to see pronouns that fail to agree with, or even fail to have, clear antecedents, incorrect subject-verb agreement, poor metaphors, adjectives that slant the news, and repetition and wordiness. It's simply about **making their current story better** and giving them some things to think about for their next one. (148)

Sit with writers either when editing or going over changes. **Body language will tell you things words won't.** That may save you from making a mistake. (160)

Young reporters really appreciate being able to sit down next to you as you edit their stories. You can explain why you are making changes to their stories, as you edit. It also gives **the reporters a chance** to make suggestions as you are editing their copy. (70)

Remember what a tough job it is to be a reporter. **You have to think on your feet.** You must try to balance editors' and readers' and sources' interests. You struggle to write a story to convey what you've learned. You take the kicks if anything is wrong. Then you get up and do it all again the next day. Without reporters, there is no newspaper. (62)



Respect your reporters and their work. They are your experts: Listen to them. Guide them. Help them. Encourage them. **Work with them as partners.** Don't lord over them. You have nothing without them. (118)

You have to decide if you are one of those editors who loves reporters or who resents reporters. If you resent them, you are destined to be **a codger-in-the-making**, perpetually ticked off by how lazy/sloppy/stupid you think they are; snide and negative about their work; and condescending in your communication with them. You won't ever try to understand their pressures, or their realities. Instead, you will be the editor who thinks calling the state's public health director really only takes a couple minutes. Your work will be unsatisfying, and while reporters will tolerate you— some may even respect you for your technical abilities— you will rarely get them to do their best work. If you are the kind of editor who loves reporters, by contrast, your approach will be collaborative. You're in the story business together, and you will see your role as helping them to tell the best story possible. You'll be the editor they turn to when they get back from an assignment and want to tell someone about a great interview. You'll be the editor whom reporters bounce story ideas off and the editor whose own story ideas are pursued instead of grudgingly accepted. You'll learn to allow them their voice in stories, even if it's not the voice you would have chosen, because it's their story. You will help them refine and focus that voice, but you won't make them smother it. **You'll teach them, but they won't feel like they're being taught.** (8)

PROVIDING FEEDBACK

“Give lots of feedback. Reporters often complain in surveys that they are underappreciated. Find a way to let them know that you appreciate their good work.”

- KRISTI ANGEL, THE BILLINGS GAZETTE

Try to give writers feedback— especially if a story was particularly well-done or if there were an inordinate amount of errors. (33)

Keep a list of bugaboos— clichés, common style and grammatical errors, ugly words, over-used lede devices, and other stale tricks you don’t like to see in the paper. Share the list with reporters. (30)

Every editor should have standards about certain words, phrases, and ledes that just don’t work for them. Don’t be afraid to let staffers on your watch know about **these pet peeves**, as long as they’re based on stylistically and grammatically sound principles. (138)

Talk to reporters face-to-face if at all possible. Even though your grasp of newspaper style, basic grammar, Journalism 101, and what makes a good story is better than most of the reporters you’ll be editing, don’t rub it in. Let them know what your issues are or why you want to change something (assuming there’s time) so it doesn’t become an *Us vs. Them* thing. (186)

Remember that most reporters want to do their job well. **Don’t be snide or sarcastic** about their errors or omissions. Don’t let others use them as a punching bag. (62)

Say good things about good work. Reporters always hear about their mistakes, but often don’t hear enough about the good, hard work they do everyday. (179)

Praise in public, criticize in private. (173)

Always take time to give the writer a copy of an edited story before it appears in the next day’s paper, and explain why you made the changes you did. Often, **reporters appreciate the feedback** and are more eager than we might believe to improve their writing. (72)

We probably don't coach enough and point out immediately the errors in copy to reporters, figuring they'll do better. Some never will without coaching. **A little feedback goes a long way.** (59)

If you notice problems in a story, **think about how they can be fixed** before you approach the reporter. It might not be the right path, but it gives you a jumping-off point. I'll never forget my time as a copy editor, approaching a state editor with my concerns about a story. I stated the problem and she countered, "So what do we need to do to fix it?" She taught me to have a proposed solution in hand before dumping a problem back down the line. (155)

Tact is one of the great tools any editor can have. To have errors pointed out is embarrassing to any reporter or editor. To have it done without grace and tact is humiliating. Mentoring of this kind should be handled quietly and diplomatically. (81)

Listen Up!

Getting reporters to do what you want them to do is the biggest challenge for an editor. Out of the 100 reporters I've managed over the years, maybe five were completely agreeable and ready to do whatever was asked of them. Learning how to get them to do what you want while making them believe it was their idea is the challenge. **It's done by listening** and asking the right questions. (87)

The ability to listen is key. An editor has to draw as much information as possible out of his reporters. (87)

The hardest part of being a good editor is listening. You're always pressed for time, always sure you know what the story will be, always dealing with reporters on the phone (which makes it even harder to really pay attention). The best skills you can have for this job are patience and listening. Reporters want to be led in the right direction and that often starts with letting them be heard. (3)

Always make eye contact and listen when people are talking to you. Let them know you are listening. I'm always distracted with the phone, incoming e-mail, etc., but I'm positive that people appreciate it when I really listen. (1)

Always take the time to explain to reporters why you are questioning or changing something they have written. If a reporter believes you are behaving arbitrarily, they won't like you. (72)

If a particular writer has a tendency to repeat the same misspelling or grammatical problem, **don't be afraid** to point it out to them. (33)

Keep reporters informed. They need to know assignments early, be aware of expectations both long and short term, and be told what else is taking place in the newsroom that might influence their work or that they might want to be involved in. If you have a problem with their job performance, they deserve to know and be involved in the solution. (62)

The most important thing: professional courtesy. As a copy editor, you are supposed to make sure the story is the best it can be and also consult with everyone involved about any changes so they won't be surprised when they open the newspaper the next day. If it's a small change, such as a grammatical error, then it's not necessary. But I always ask the originating editor first before changing anything and I offer a suggestion to fix it at the same time. (167)

Anyone editing copy and making significant changes: **Confer with the writer!** It's their byline, their work, so always run any significant changes past them. If it's a deleted comma, then no, but a new lede, yes. Maybe ask, "Would it work if we did such-and-such?" Or, at the least, if you have talked and come to loggerheads, say "Just an FYI, I know we disagree, but this story needs to say this and I'm going to need to make that change." We once had a new copy editor change a reporter's story. The reporter hit the roof the next morning because he had no idea changes would be made after the story left the assigning editor, and he clearly objected because the changes didn't make the story better. He never got the phone call. **Nobody likes surprises.** (25)

Editors should never make changes to a story or an assignment **in secret to avoid confrontation.** (62)

When you need to make changes to a reporter's story, call and negotiate with her, regardless of the time. It saves on the confrontations and the ulcers. (85)

The most important time in your relationship with a reporter is **when they want to talk.** No time is more important. This is when they are seeking you out. This is when they are most open to guidance and encouragement. **Never, never, never** answer the telephone when you are talking with a reporter. (118)

The Confidence Factor

In my early days as an editor, I learned some counter-intuitive lessons about the job. One lesson came shortly after I was promoted to city editor at a p.m. newspaper. A race riot broke out about 2 a.m., and by 3 a.m. I had almost all of my reporters on the scene. Bullets were flying. In the dark, no one knew exactly what was going on. Among my worries was whether I was putting reporters' lives at risk. But what the reporters needed was a cool and confident editor with a vision of what each reporter should do and how stories would come together. The message: **An editor must convey confidence and vision**, especially in the most chaotic situations. (62)

Don't be intimidated by reporters with big egos. Having confidence in what you bring to a story will help you keep cool while you ensure that needed changes are made and also will make reporters will feel secure that their story is **in safe hands**. (62)

Be confident, but **don't pretend to know more than you do**. A reporter can spot a know-it-all coming from a mile away. (72)

When providing reporters with feedback: **Follow the Golden Rule**. Reporters are vulnerable creatures because their personal thoughts and work are coming out in front of thousands of people. No matter how seasoned, a writer still worries at the end of the day about the story that has his name on top. Every editor should have worked as a reporter and **had his copy shredded** by an insensitive editor to know what that humiliation feels like. (108)

In the realm of providing feedback, **one of the most powerful weapons** you have as an editor is the power to say "no." By that I mean, you can help reporters get through the sandstorm of competing demands that a beat can produce by telling them that "no" you don't expect them to cover that meeting. **Don't burn your producers** out by taking advantage of the fact that they can cover several stories a day. Help them pick the ones that matter so that they can focus and not fret about what they are missing. (118)

KNOW YOUR REPORTERS

“Know your writer as well as you know your audience. This keeps errors down, because you know what’s likely to be wrong, and it helps you help the writer get her point across when the original is muddy.”

- WILLARD ST. JOHN, THE DETROIT FREE PRESS

Editors must be able to handle their writers’ personalities. **Each writer is different.** Some have an unbelievable work ethic, while others just get the job done but are more relaxed. Editors must be alert to these personalities and understand the importance of correct interaction. (152)

Know how to handle personalities and **know what makes people tick.** Some people do only what they’re told, while others do zilch of what they’re told and want to come up with everything on their own. Know how to reach your people, especially young people with little-to-no newsroom experience, without alienating them. (175)

Don’t talk to reporters only when you need something. **Get to know them as people.** Get to learn: What makes them tick? What do they care about? You are editing people, not stories. Acknowledge them in the newsroom. Provide psychological pay when they go above and beyond or overcome a hurdle. Thank them when they go home at night. (62)

Know who you are supposed to edit carefully, and whose work you should just read over for blatant mistakes. Your editor will guide you. (80)

Edit the person, not the story. (52)

You must understand that **columnists and writers are two different entities** entirely. Never, ever, mess with columnists’ copy. You don’t want to learn this the hard way. Always check before making any changes. They aren’t columnists for nothing and they’ll definitely scrutinize every little thing you do. (167)

Remember that few people really have an accurate understanding of their own abilities. You may think of someone as an absolute zero, but **they may think themselves a star.** Consider their self-view when approaching them about assignments, jobs, etc. (17)

Thomas Kochman, the Chicago-based anthropologist who writes and speaks about cross-cultural communications, presents an **eye-opening** lecture about how workplace conflict and management failures often grow out of cultural misunderstanding. Anglo managers are **often shocked** when they lose a top Hispanic staffer who took a pay cut and moved across country to be near his family, Kochman says. Or, they are **baffled** that following three days of bereavement leave for the death of a parent or sibling, an African-American staffer's performance and demeanor isn't back to normal. I like looking around the room and studying body language when Kochman gives that lecture to management groups. There are, of course, some blank stares and grimaces of disagreement. There are also expressions of excitement and realization. But I've also seen **signs of disbelief** on faces of managers of color, not so much questioning Tom's point, but expressing incredulity that no-brainer concepts were news to anyone. It is a reminder for me that **the challenges of a multicultural environment are real** for all who want to lead. You need to know your staff, their cultural backgrounds, and the habits and philosophies embedded within them. (64)

Reporters are a touchy group in general and most don't like to have their work changed in any way. An editor has to understand **all their staff's quirks** and what motivates each person. (87)

Make friends with reporters. There's no need to become best pals, but get to know the reporters as much as you can. (20)

Get to know reporters as individuals, as well as workers. Consider things (assignments, editing) **from the reporters' points-of-view** and stick up for them to those higher up the ladder. Some editors cave if their superiors lean on them. But reporters need to know that they are working for editors with backbone, those who will go to bat for them when needed. I was fortunate enough to work for one such editor. Reporters not only respected him and were loyal to him but really liked him as a person, to the point that when he left for another newspaper two reporters followed him there. He wouldn't pry, but he was interested in what was happening with us personally. I saw him go and find one reporter who had **a drinking problem** and take him home and then get him into a treatment program. He expected a lot from his reporters, and we were all willing to work as hard as we could for him because we wanted to meet his standards and saw him as a hard worker. And more important, we saw him as someone who cared. (171)

One temptation, I've discovered, is to go too often to the top reporters for important breaking-news stories. In my first year as an assistant city editor, I went too frequently to one of our best reporters with important stories. She finally told me she was starting to **dread seeing me coming**. The lesson: **Spread the wealth**, and don't become predictable. Know when your writers are overloaded or are hungering for more and provide assignments accordingly. (70)

REQUIRE ACCOUNTABILITY

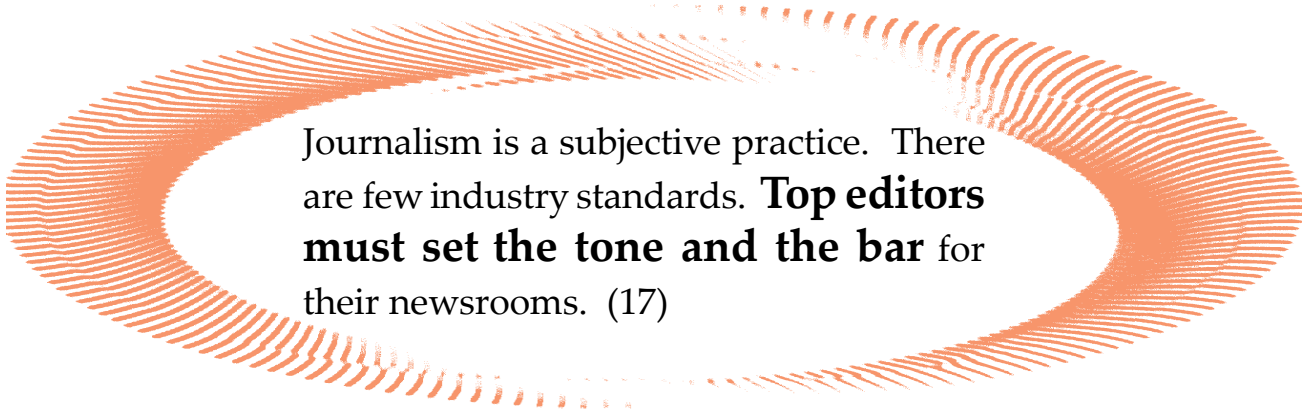
“Reporters are happiest when they work hard. When the pressure is off, morale suffers.”

- LOIS NARDER, THE FORT WORTH STAR-TELEGRAM

It can be great fun **to exercise your powers as an editor**, but you have to be diplomatic. It's not easy to tell coworkers that something isn't good enough, but you've got to be tough enough to do it and hold up the standard of quality. It's about making sure that people know you're not going to accept lameness, and that they have to extend themselves. We want a newspaper of which we can be proud, and it's the everyday stuff that you could “let go” but don't which makes a difference. People might grumble about it, but they'll respect you for it if it ultimately helps them produce their best work. (177)

Insist that your reporters let you know what stories they're working on, where they'll be, and who they're talking to. **That's called basic accountability** and is part and parcel of also expecting a reporter to let you know who his or her anonymous sources are when that situation arises, filling out expense reports accurately, and so on. (158)

Rule No. 1: Nobody does sh*t without a deadline. (88)



Journalism is a subjective practice. There are few industry standards. **Top editors must set the tone and the bar** for their newsrooms. (17)

Keep reporters fully engaged in work. Morale suffers when reporters don't have enough work to keep busy or when no editor seems to notice that they are goofing off. (62)

Challenge your reporters, not for the sake of challenging them, but to broaden their view of a story. (85)

Reporters are procrastinators by nature. We're taught to get the freshest news possible, which means doing things at the last minute. **Don't tell someone to get you a story whenever.** If you do, that's when you'll get it: whenever. (175)

Tell your reporters: In terms of scoops, a tie is a loss. **Get it first.** (68A)

Tackling Conflict

I once had to manage a very difficult employee at a newspaper in San Francisco. He had been a sportswriter, but I'd taken his beat away and put him on the sports copy desk instead. He continued to give me real headaches, always complaining about his situation and trashing other people in the department to make his case. One night, after another very difficult shift made more unpleasant by this same person, it occurred to me that it is not my job to keep him happy. **It's his job to keep ME happy.** Your first mission as a newsroom manager or editor of a section is to set a standard for excellence and direct everybody toward putting out the best section and best product possible. Anything an individual wants, in terms of special treatment, comes after that mission has been addressed. (24)

Don't take any crap. (110)

Tackle conflict head-on. Don't procrastinate. Get the problem out there and get it resolved. (1)

Never take action on a personnel matter **before you hear** what the subject has to say. (17)

Never discipline a subordinate in front of others. **Even a mild rebuke or cutting remark** is too much. (17)

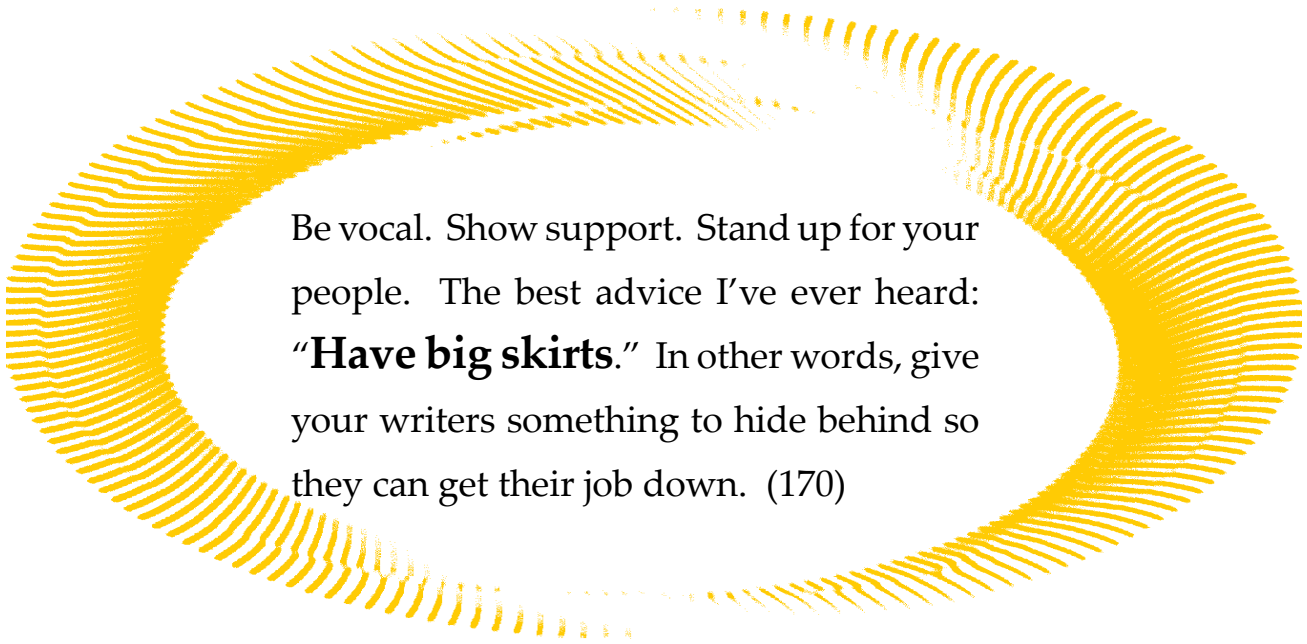
A large part of my job is making decisions, based on my experience and judgment, as well as through input from colleagues. But not everybody will always agree with the choices that I or we make. **So a good chunk of the job is managing conflict** with readers, reporters, and editors. When an issue is resolved with respect, it can be rewarding. Solving problems, engaging readers, helping reporters succeed and prosper: That's all fun. But when we can't resolve an issue, it can be frustrating. (54)

SHOW SUPPORT

“Reporters are generally pretty fragile. They need stroking and praise for specific work they have done. For example, not ‘Nice story, Bob!’ but praise for a specific turn-of-phrase or quote that they got.”

- SALLY MAHAN, THE DETROIT FREE PRESS

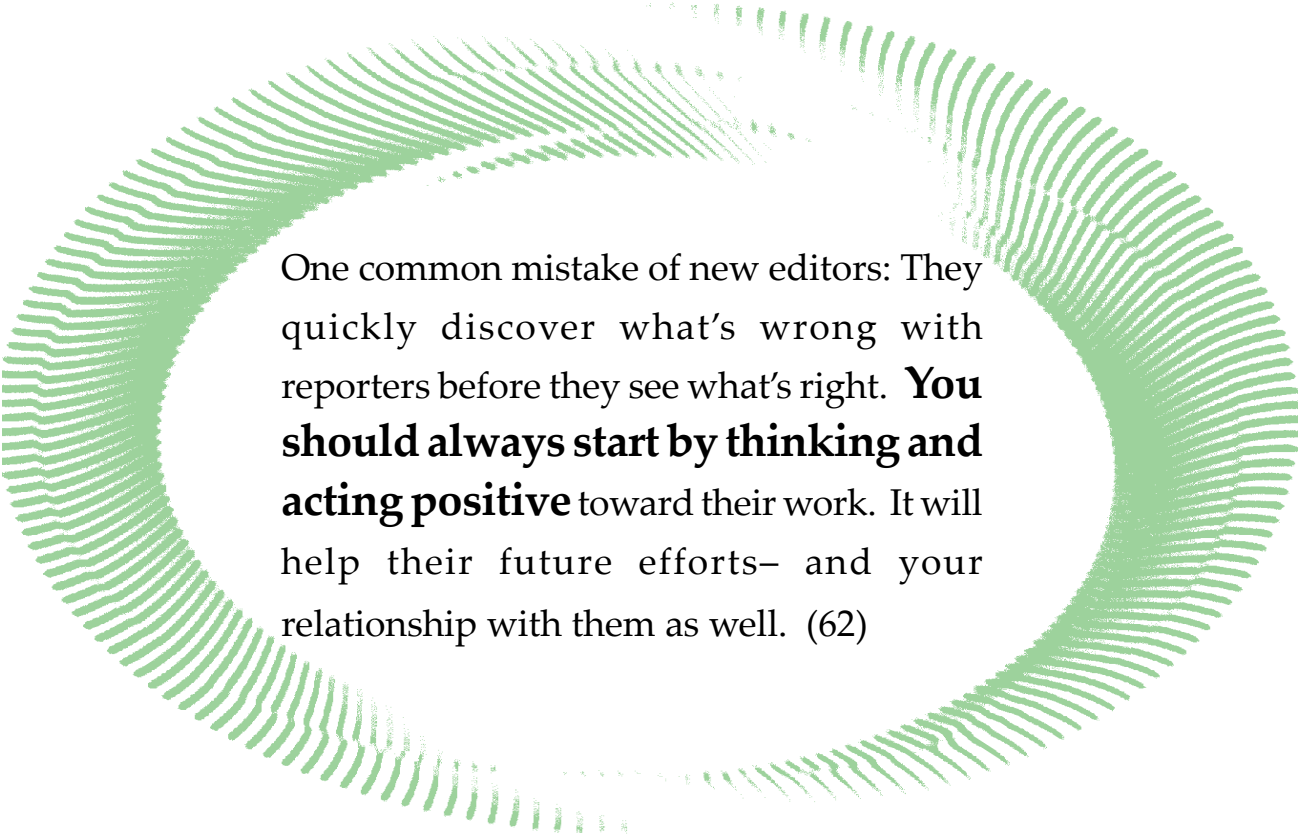
Editors should show their enthusiasm. We have no trouble telling reporters when they’ve screwed up, but we do seem to have trouble showing that we are excited by a great lede or a wonderful quote. What are we afraid of— that if reporters see we’re excited by the possibilities of a story that it will somehow result in less effort on their part? Every story I’ve ever worked on that went on to garner some kind of award was a story that I absolutely loved working on with the reporter— and I wanted them to know it. Enthusiasm and support really pays off in the end, for everyone. (8)



Be vocal. Show support. Stand up for your people. The best advice I’ve ever heard: **“Have big skirts.”** In other words, give your writers something to hide behind so they can get their job down. (170)

Encourage everyone under you to try something. If they have an idea, support it enthusiastically, even if you’re questioning it internally. The more excited someone is about an idea of his own, the better the results are likely to be. **Don’t impair their vision.** (37)

Editors must support their writers. They are, after all, a creative bunch, mostly unusual and non-conformists with fragile egos. **It’s easy to beat them into submission**, but then you don’t get the best of what they have to offer. Under fire, they retreat and second-guess everything, productivity goes down, and creativity dries up. Gentle support is a better way to motivate. (95)



One common mistake of new editors: They quickly discover what's wrong with reporters before they see what's right. **You should always start by thinking and acting positive** toward their work. It will help their future efforts— and your relationship with them as well. (62)

There are only two things that motivate people: **money and ego**. Everyone is on one side of that scale or the other. Salespeople tend to be money-motivated. Reporters are not. They are heavily ego driven. The secret to motivating reporters is to play to their egos— **praise them, praise them, praise them**. Make each one believe they're the very best. (37)

It's aggravating when reporters act like teenagers and expect you to pick up after them, cleaning up the writing, even tidying up the grammar, finding holes in the story and getting them filled, developing sidebars and graphics, etc. A good writer, who takes pride in his or her work and carries it to completion, on deadline, **makes a world of difference**, and should always be outwardly appreciated. (177)

Reporters' names are on the stories. Editors need to remember this and support them **when they want to take chances**. (106)

Show people that you appreciate their hard work, in whatever way is most meaningful to them. Some people want more money, some want time off, some want a certificate, and **some just want you to have noticed**. (17)

Your staff needs **pats on the back**, as well as being held accountable. (162)

Never be afraid to **fight for the newsroom** and stand up for your staff. (37)

The Complete Editor

“Pick one thing. Make it great. Pick one thing. Make it great. Pick one thing. Make it great. Pick one thing. Make it great. When you get to the end of the list, start over and do it again. This job is about persistence, patience, passion and, most of all, people.”

- Marisa Porto,

**The Wilmington
News Journal**

UPHOLDING ETHICS

“Journalistic objectivity is at best a myth and at worst a dangerous lie. We all have opinions, different backgrounds, and different beliefs. The key is to be fair. Be painfully fair.”

- RICHARD SCHNEIDER, THE JACKSON SUN

This should go without saying, but I'll say it anyway: **Always be honest.** If someone presses you to divulge confidential information, say, “I can't talk about that.” Don't lie. **Don't tell half-truths.** Don't say you don't know when you really do. If you deal in anything less than the absolute truth, your credibility will be destroyed when the truth comes out. (124)

Everyone should read the book or watch the film “Shattered Glass,” and then have a good discussion about it. It has to do with a reporter who is very clever and ambitious and who makes things up. It's a disturbing story **that hits closer to home** more than you'd ever imagine. (126)



Don't cheat, lie or steal and you'll sleep better. (71)

We take it for granted and assume that people going into journalism get into the business because of high ethical motives, a love of getting to the bottom of things, and exposing those who are less than truthful. Yet, this is obviously not always the case. As such, aspiring editors need to be told: You must tell the truth. Do not lie. Do not make up sources. **Do not fudge what you don't know.** Only report what you know, not what you think you know. (126)

Every other piece of editing-related advice is meaningless if we can't screen or discourage young people with **a propensity for taking the easy way out** to either stay away of journalism or truly learn about ethics, factual reporting and plagiarism— things my generation assumed we already knew. As we've all learned, you can no longer make that assumption. (126)

Be accurate, be thorough, be responsible, and pay attention to fairness. (162)

Compromise, but stick to your core values. (173)

Be honest with yourself and **the people you edit**. (11)

Treat people the way you want to be treated. Be honest. Even if you're delivering bad news, the person on the receiving end will appreciate the fact that you respected them enough to tell the truth. (17)

You must love precision and fact. You must value your credibility. Your commitment to fairness and balance must be absolute. In your own editing, and in overseeing the reporting and writing of others, much of what you are doing is upholding standards. Know your standards, **have faith in them**, and uphold them without fail. When you fail, learn and improve. (32)



A lot relies on sheer instinct.

If you use the doing-the-right-thing approach as your gyroscope, you're usually OK. (16)



Write your ethics, and the ethics of journalism, in blood. (71)

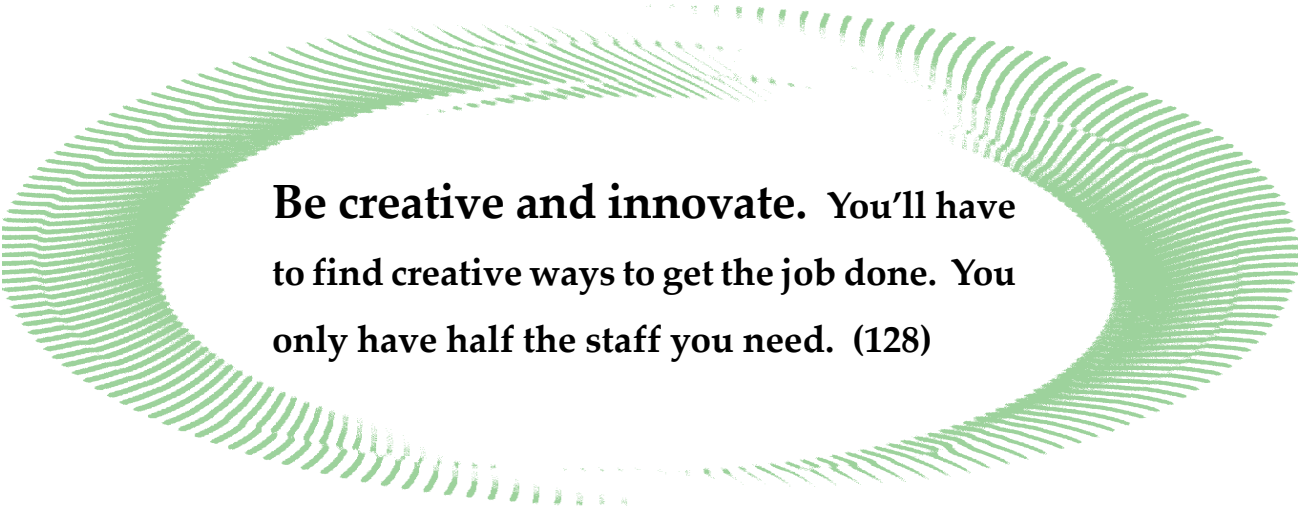
Be a person of integrity. Develop in your reporters an understanding that, among their sources, they should become known as individuals who can be trusted, who are interested in getting at the truth, and who keep their word. You want sources to trust your reporters so much that they'll turn to them to cover a story, even if it impacts them negatively, because they know they will be treated fairly. **This is more important than getting a "scoop."** (171)

BE CREATIVE

“Be creative. Don’t be afraid to take chances. Be flexible. Chances don’t always work.”

- CHRISTOPHER GRIMM, THE PEORIA JOURNAL STAR

Be bold. Take chances with your writing, your photos, your designs or your headlines. But **don’t take chances with other people’s reputations.** We can do a lot of harm, so take your job seriously. (51)



Be creative and innovate. You’ll have to find creative ways to get the job done. You only have half the staff you need. (128)

Editors must remember that each day is different. They might produce an award-winning layout one day, and then produce something that looks like a third grader was playing around with Quark the next day. But, they must **always experiment** because it never hurts. (152)

On what makes for a successful product: a sense of urgency, through breaking stories; ownership, through knowing your publication’s market inside out; and **the element of surprise**, with new, innovative ideas daily. (174)

Ask the following questions daily: How can we do things differently?

How can we make this special? What’s the story beneath the story? (174)

BE ACTIVE

“Be firm and be bold: The only thing worse than making the wrong decision is to make no decision at all.”

- JAMES WRIGHT, THE ALBANY TIMES UNION

Take on new challenges and offer up new ideas to better the product. Higher-level editors and publishers can and will take notice. (47)

Don't stay satisfied. Go for more, learn more, and **move up the ladder**. (47)

Be curious, intelligent, and engaged. Our calling is to tell people information that's interesting, relevant, and useful in their daily lives. We are usually front-row observers of life, but it is not a business for passive folks who can't **engage in the discussion of life**. (54)

We all get into this business because of **big dreams**, but only those who build their skills, as small as they may seem, get a chance to achieve those dreams. (69)

To work in newspapers, you have to love **the thrill of breaking news** and the adrenaline that comes with it. You have to be dogged in your planning. You have to love to know each day what you're doing and love checking duties off a to-do list. Newspaper journalism demands that both of these dynamics exist in the same person at the same job day after day. (2)

Always focus actively on **the task at hand**. Give your full attention to writing a headline or editing a story or proofing a page. It will help you avoid missing errors that you should spot. (20)

Come to work **ready to bring it**, prepared for any situation. Be the first in line for the big story. Volunteer. Offer story ideas. Offer layout and design ideas. Take the initiative. Step up! (174)

Get out of the office. If you have an interior office, spend as little time as possible in it. If you are in the newsroom, you are more accessible and actively involved in what's going on. (179)

An editor told me this once after I asked to do something: **“It's easier to ask for forgiveness than to ask for permission.”** (142)

Be active and engaged in your editing. I always try to enforce my will on the newspaper, instead of letting **the copy wash over me**. Good editors will see the front page in their mind's eye and mold it until they think it's as good as possible or as good as the content and looming deadline will allow. In the end, how good the paper looks is a measure of an editor's passion for his craft. (127)

BE PASSIONATE

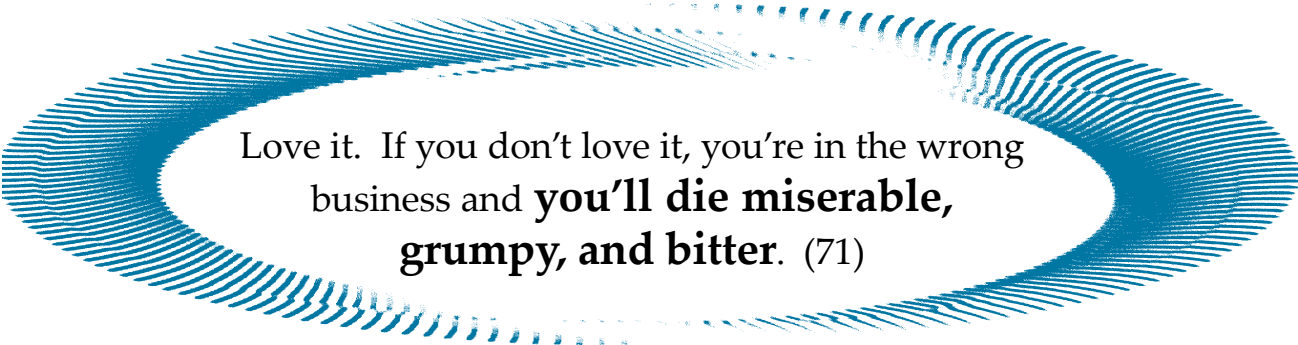
“Be passionate what you’re doing. It’s an important service to be editing the content that thousands of readers will see.”

- RICHARD KLEBAN, THE POUGHKEEPSIE JOURNAL

Be unflaggingly energetic and totally committed. (117)

First and foremost, you have to love the work. It pays OK, but won’t make you wealthy and you might even have to decide whether to buy new tires this month or next. **Loving the work will make it more than bearable.** It will make it a joy to do day after day. (32)

You must have a passion about being the first person **to stand on the roof and shout out** the news. You must love the scoop. Compete to win. Your readers deserve that from you. (32)



Love it. If you don’t love it, you’re in the wrong business and **you’ll die miserable, grumpy, and bitter.** (71)

If you lose your appreciation for the opportunity to make a difference, or if you never have it to begin with, it’s really best for you to find a different profession and **open a chair in the newsroom** for someone else. (46)

It’s an old, untrue cliché: The best journalists are hard-core cynics. In truth, the best journalists have a sense of curiosity, passion, and wonder about people, places, things, and events. Cynicism almost always will sentence you to mediocrity. (46)

You have to love what you’re doing to be any good at it. If you don’t love journalism, which is the process of gathering and disseminating information that you deem to be important for people to know, then find something you DO love and go do that instead. (99)

Don’t get into editing unless you really care. You must become consumed by the paper. **If you don’t care deeply** about the profession and your paper, editing is a huge mistake. (187)

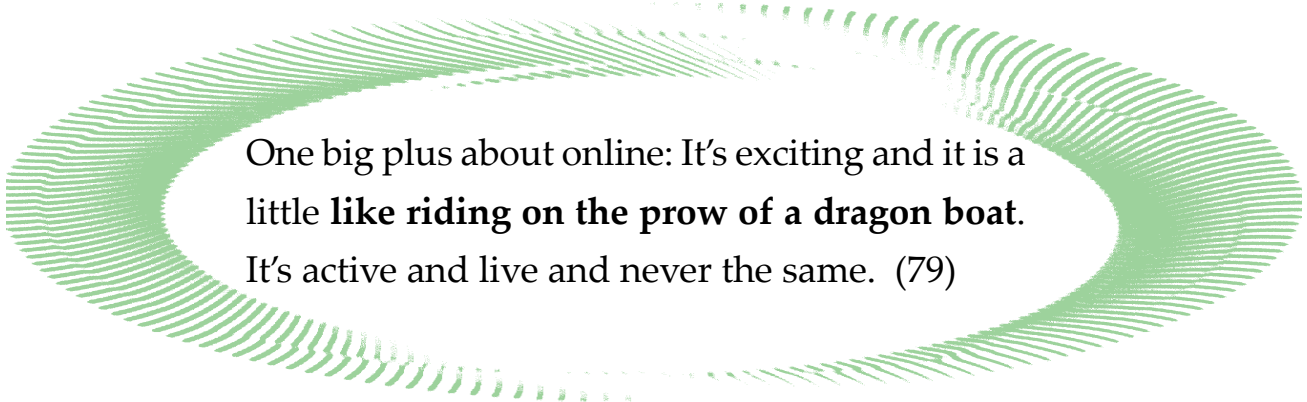
EMBRACING TECHNOLOGY

“Don’t be afraid of the Web. It presents opportunities beyond the limits of the printed page. Get savvy about technology. It will help you do a better job.”

- JEN O’CALLAGHAN, THE NASHUA TELEGRAPH

Learn your way around the Internet. Any opportunity to become better versed at computer skills in the research area is invaluable. In recent years, most papers have gone from digging through microfilm and clip-files to having very large and sometimes scary electronic capabilities at their fingertips. Knowledge of a computerized research technique or two is not only priceless for the profession, but you’d also be amazed at how it impresses your friends and neighbors. (130)

Learn as many computer programs pertaining to journalism as possible. The basics are Photoshop, InDesign, Quark, Freehand, and Illustrator. If you can put on a résumé that you are proficient with at least some of these programs, it makes you **a more attractive candidate**. (142)



One big plus about online: It’s exciting and it is a little **like riding on the prow of a dragon boat**. It’s active and live and never the same. (79)

Many print journalists are focused on the night deadline, the words in a story, and making sure they have a piece of supporting art. **Online journalism does not have as narrow a focus.** Deadlines are when the story is done, the words have to play well with other supporting resources such as video, audio, etc., and photography can play a bigger part of the storytelling. (184)

A big part of my job is convergence, and that’s how radio, TV, and the Web all work with the newspaper to provide really rounded, 21st-century-style coverage. It’s where the business is moving, and we should be training people to be prepared for it. (40)

For editors interested in the online world, it's important to remember that the competition online isn't necessarily from the newspaper across town. With the ability to provide news 24/7, the competition comes from TV and radio, in addition to **"armchair journalists" who publish blogs** and online-only editions. It can be a different mindset and a different environment and many journalists who move into online areas are not prepared for these types of situations. (184)

As an online editor, my relationship with reporters, photographers, and other editors is different than print-only editors. I'm often looking for material that is **off-schedule from what they are used to** and asking for resources that are not usually provided. Newsroom members obviously react differently to these kinds of situations. Some provide so much that you cannot even use it all online and some will barely provide anything. It takes the ability to promote what we can do and also be able to explain why not every good idea is feasible. (184)

Be sure to include the online arm of your publication in all big-picture and **future-goal discussions**, seminars, etc., to further incorporate it into the mainstream of the newsroom and to **break down the resistance to online**. (79)

There's a lot of room for online journalists to grow and mold the role of journalist in the online medium. Some reporters see online as a quick path to reaching editor level, but don't possess adequate knowledge of the differences between online and print, meaning many sites essentially become "shovelware," offering all the disadvantages of print without any of the advantages of the Web. (184)

Online journalism is very new in the scheme of things. People have been pumping out news essentially since presses were invented, so we know what roles an editor, copy editor, and reporter play. When I started as Online Content Producer/Editor, by contrast, there was little knowledge of what I would even do. **There's a great sense of exploration** as the roles of online editors develop across the news industry. (184)

The online world offers so many possibilities for telling stories in compelling ways, for delivering the news in a timely manner, for making information so accessible to so many people, but time, money, and staffing are big issues. (79)

Know your computer thoroughly. Learn every possible keyboard shortcut and practice doing things as fast as possible, because, more often than not, you will have to work even faster than that. (76)

Don't allow the online edition of your newspaper **to simply serve as shovelware**, or a regurgitation of what's already in the newspaper. For the first few years of most newspapers' sites, updating the news simply meant putting the stories from that day's paper on the Web, but not before 10 a.m. so rack sales wouldn't be hurt. There was no automated software, and sometimes even no Web editors. Now, with something of an online staff in place at most publications, and a bit more devotion to timely news, it's important to focus on the new and fresh and try to be the first to break a local or regional story, even if it **aggravates some of the more traditional editors**. Your readers will appreciate the timeliness and extra effort. (79)

Online-people: Don't get discouraged that no one still seems to know what to do with you. At my newspaper, we've bounced back and forth from a separate entity in the corporation to a part of the newsroom, back to a separate entity under the wing of a marketing person, back to the newsroom and at the moment our "site owner" is the vice president of circulation. **Finding a home and a champion for online** can be difficult in the newspaper world. (79)

If your newspaper wants to be "**the information provider of choice**" in your coverage area in even 10 years' time, editors have to realize that online will play a major role and they **must start building online credibility** with readers by being first with the news whenever possible and being accurate and fair. (79)

Whenever a young person joins our staff or job-shadowers appear, I ask them what their news source is, and also tell them not to say the newspaper just because they're sitting in a newspaper office. **Their response is seldom the newspaper**. It's often TV, but more and more becoming the Internet. You've got to cultivate those viewers and Web surfers and carve out the niche for local and regional news online that they're looking for. (79)

One of the oddities of online: In the vein of everything old is new again, it seems to have returned the newsroom to the days of "**hello, honey, give me rewrite,**" as reporters call or e-mail us with the freshest, most accurate news there is. (79)

Having an effective online news presence sometimes simply comes down to having **a warm body in a chair**. On a recent morning, for example, I awoke to find no new news stories on the Web site. Thinking that this was a technical glitch (which happens more often than I'd like to admit), I went about making the usual checks for problems, only to discover that it was the newsroom's error. Ever since one of our night editors left to take a job in another state, I have been pulling my hair out trying to get the newsroom to perform the simple task of preparing a handful of stories for publishing on the Web site each day. It's really not hard. Someone just has to sit down, make a list, and remember to do it. That morning, they did not. Ugh. (97)

Anyone wishing to work in the newspaper industry should be prepared for things to change in the near future. Newspapers will still be published as they always have been, but we now have to worry about getting that same content for online, which **opens up a whole new set of problems** and responsibilities. (97)

Future editors should have some knowledge of HTML, the Internet, and Web sites in general. I'd say someone with that extra bit of knowledge would be more appealing than **someone who can barely use e-mail**. (97)

As an online editor, my job is somewhat different from the other editors here at the paper. I often begin my day reading through the budgets of our various departments and writers, trying to decide which upcoming stories could benefit from or lend themselves to special treatment on the Web site (i.e. extra graphics, audio, video, links, etc.). Then I plan how to accomplish these things, whether it's asking a reporter to take a digital recorder to an event to get some audio or asking an online producer to put together a slideshow, etc. Because the Internet is still a relatively new idea for many writers and editors, I spend a lot of time reminding people of the potential our Web site has to add to their stories or projects. **Promoting the Web in the newsroom is always on my mind**. I meet daily with all the department heads talk about the day's paper and site and plan for the future. (113)

While basic knowledge of HTML and Web design tools is a necessity in any online editing position, the **most important skills are still with language**. A willingness and ability to learn new things is also vital. For example, we've recently started putting out a regular podcast, so suddenly audio production and broadcast interviewing skills are on my list of areas to improve in. (113)

The best thing about being an online editor right now is that newspapers on the Internet are still a **relatively open slate**. New ideas are encouraged and there is much less inertia to overcome to get something new going than there is in the traditional print format. It's challenging and exciting at the same time. (113)

Newspapers are changing, and a lot of people think this is a dying business. Circulation is plummeting across the country and everyone is panicking. The people who run newspapers have to figure out how to attract younger readers and to compete with the Internet and 24-hour news channels. I believe there will always be a need for a newspaper of some sort, but what form it will take is **anyone's guess**. (192)

Newspaper editors should **not be intimidated by the 24-hour news cycle** or by how much news appears to be available on television, radio, and the Internet. Daily newspapers do a much better overall job of reporting the news and keeping people informed. The only advantage TV and radio have over daily newspapers is that they are able to report breaking news at any time of the day or night. But daily newspapers are still capable of beating radio and television with a breaking story during their own news cycles, and doing a far better job of reporting those stories to boot. Newspaper reporters and editors should not stop doing that, and newspapers should not abdicate to other media the responsibility to do so. (83)

If young editors, and probably all journalists, bow to those who are comfortably settled into the way things have always been, **the industry will continue to bleed**. If they can't make a case for positive changes that help the paper reach out to younger audiences, they become **like so many sheep following the leaders off a cliff**. (55)

We have to re-evaluate who we are as journalists. If we don't, **the Baby-boomers will be our last customers**. How to get young readers? Present information how they think. (144)

There's a huge push for news outlets to become **multimedia information centers** more than just the old broadsheet newspaper. When we've got information, boom, it's now immediately up on our Internet site. And there's lots of talk about the whole industry converting to tabloid-size over the next decade, if not sooner. Our society has become one of **instant information and portability**, two things the old broadsheet paper simply does not offer. (146)

THINKING VISUALLY

“One way to look at the collaborative editing process: The story is the movie star and the photos are her makeup and evening gown.”

- SAMUEL MORGAN, THE SAVANNAH MORNING NEWS

Journalism has become **much more visually driven**. There used to be a real division between *word* people and *picture* people. Those days are gone. Now, people who are well-versed in graphic design and straight reporting are considered the hottest thing around. It's more of an argument than ever for the importance of receiving a good general education and for teaching yourself to be aware of all aspects of a story, not just the ones that are outlined part of your specific job. (133)

Use photos effectively. It's a direct positive correlation: **The better the photo play**, the more people will actually read the newspaper. If you look at the pyramid of how people take in a typical newspaper page, photos are invariably glanced at first, then cutlines, then headlines, and at the very bottom of the pyramid is the story text itself. So, ultimately, a compelling photograph not only illustrates a story, it also serves as the top reason it may actually get read. (135)

Remember this cliché: A picture is worth a thousand words. (193)

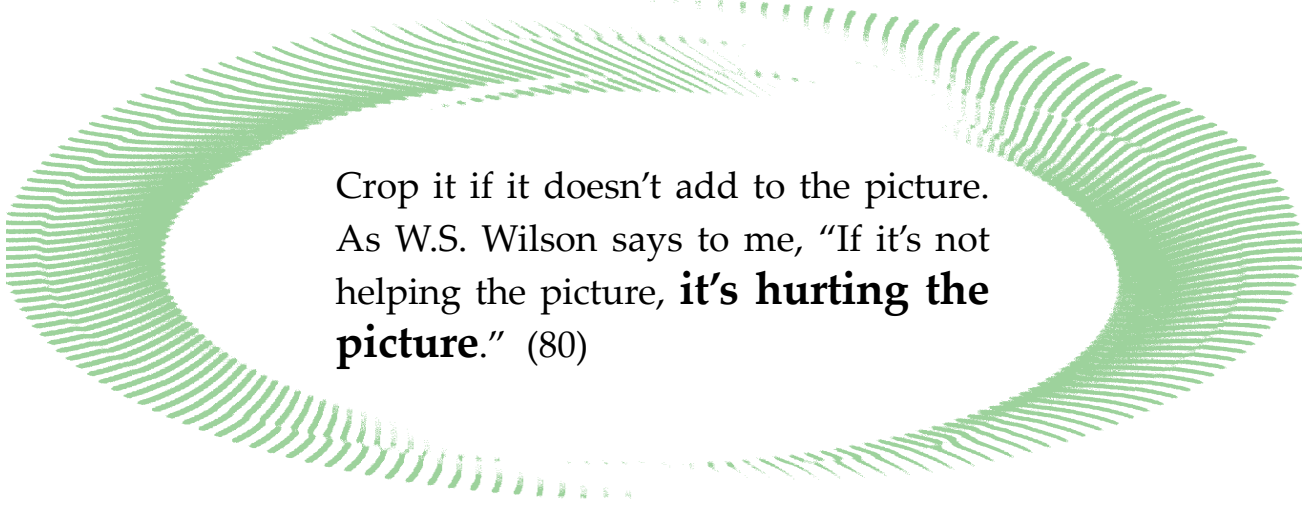
Mug shots with just the name are useless. **Tell me who that person is or was.** (144)

Grip and grins, podium shots, and group photos should be banished from newspapers ASAP. (144)

Nurture visual literacy. The greatest editors are blind without it in the current media world. If you can't repurpose wonderful narrative into graphics or Web packages, then **you're yesterday's news.** (12)

Double-check your cutlines. Make sure all the people in the photo are identified. Never forget to identify the people. (80)

Along with team-management and editing copy, editors are also responsible for a variety of other parts of a final story's placement and promotion in the paper. They create teasers and refers and work with the promotions department to **get people's eyes on your reporter's story**. They work with the visuals department to get the best photos and graphics and to make sure they're designed to enhance the story and played appropriately on the page. And when something doesn't work, editors also have to get more photos taken, help the designer revise the layout, and get the copy editor to rewrite the headlines and captions, etc. (177)

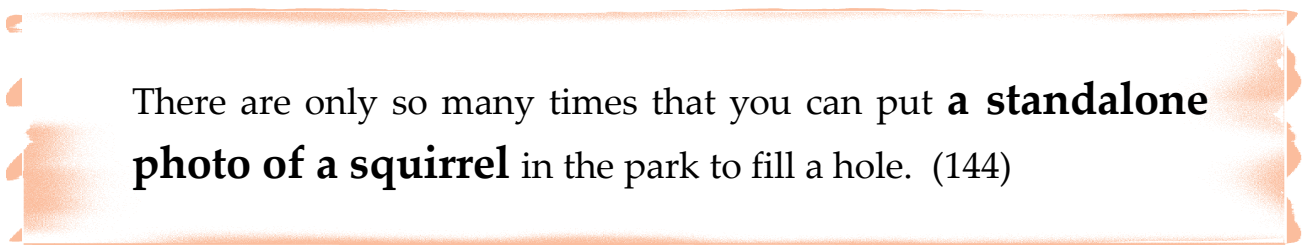


Crop it if it doesn't add to the picture. As W.S. Wilson says to me, "If it's not helping the picture, **it's hurting the picture.**" (80)

A good photograph doesn't need a story. (144)

Be honest with people about the quality of pictures (for submitted items such as obituaries). Maintain a standard of quality for your publication. **If the picture is poor**, ask if they have a better one and explain what it will look like if it is published. (80)

Realize that the most original photo submitted by readers will often be the best quality you're going to get, if the original is even any good. Many people go make a copy of their photo before bringing it in for the Lifestyles page, for example. Or they print a digital photo onto poor quality paper. **It almost never fails** that the original photo-paper photograph or the original digital photo will be better quality. (80)



There are only so many times that you can put **a standalone photo of a squirrel** in the park to fill a hole. (144)

RE: DESIGN

“Focus on layout. A decent, eye-catching layout can save a story that is not very interesting, and at least attract a few readers to stop and take a gander at the page.”

- BRET HARTMAN, THE VAIL DAILY

When it's a light news day and you don't need space, you will have way too much. When it's a heavy news day and you need space, you will have little. (142)

Keep ledes and paragraphs short. **Clumps of gray type** are a reader turnoff. (49)

When editing a story, **look for spots** where there can be breakout boxes, or useful boxed snippets of information for the reader that can be placed in a separate place that's easy to follow. (65)



**Good design sells papers, because
that's what draws people in. (144)**

Vary your page layout **from day to day**. (80)

Have a strong vertical element and a strong horizontal element on every page. (80)

Understand that **people read in a zigzag fashion** down the page, similar to a backward six. Keep that in mind when laying out a page. (80)

Take into account the graphics or pictures involved when laying out a story or a full-page. If the person in a photo is looking a particular direction or some other element **draws your eye** in a certain direction, use that in the layout of your page. (80)

An editor has to be organized and able to work with everyone, from photo to graphics to design to the copy desk. Reporters are thinking about the written word. It's a rare reporter who considers presentation. **That's where the editor comes in.** (87)

WRITING HEADLINES

“Don’t be afraid to have fun with a headline. Readers like to laugh, too.”

- GREG KENNEDY, THE OKLAHOMAN

The headline and subhead should **draw the reader into the story**, not explain everything upfront. (144)

It helps to have a copy editor **as clever with a headline** as the writer and originating editor are with the story. (148)

Read other newspapers and **write down good headlines**. (167)

If you find your headlines **being changed often**, check to see why they were changed. Compare your headline to what appeared in the newspaper. The slot has a lot of work to do and changing your headlines often will just annoy them. (167)

The best headline is always two picas too long. (21)

As a young copy editor, I always struggled with headlines. I assumed that for each story, there was a perfect headline, only the head-count got in the way. I once brought this up with one of the older copy editors, an excellent hed-writer who said, “Your biggest mistake is in thinking that. There is **no perfect headline** for ANY story, just the best one you can put on it. If you’re waiting for the Muse to whisper it in your ear, it will never come.” His advice: Write down the first hed that comes to mind, THEN take whatever extra time you have to improve and adjust it to the width-count and number of lines. But don’t sit around and fret about things. That’s a waste. There are four or five key words in a story that need to get into the hed. Start with those and do it quickly. (24)

Have writers put suggested headlines on copy to help the copy editor with writing headlines. (33)

No story, even on deadline, is **worth a mediocre headline**. Two to three minutes– or at the very least one– is not too much to ask to sit and actually think of a great headline. (35)

Always be willing to take **another spin through a story** if you can’t come up with a headline. Maybe you’re missing something. No one wants to be misled by a headline that got slapped on by someone who didn’t actually read the story. (63)

FACING DEADLINES

“Editing in crunch time is not unlike a M*A*S*H unit: You spend the most time on the stories that are most critical, either in terms of their prominence or their need of heavy revision.”

- MARK CAMPS, THE SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE

Advice for the on-the-go copy editor: **When facing deadline and a boatload of stories to edit, you’ve got to know who is writing each one, who is going to read it, and what the nature of the story is. Start with answers to those questions and everything else will seem more doable.** (137)

Manage your time wisely. **It always seems to be running out.** (175)

It’s better to be late and get something correct than to make deadline but get something wrong the first time around. (140)

Learn to learn with this inevitable truth: You always come up with the best headlines and story ledes **after the page has gone to press.** (142)

This is the order of importance for any editor:

1. Meet deadline; 2. Meet deadline; 3. Meet deadline. (144)

Don’t be a clock watcher. Take the time to complete your task to the best of your ability, no matter how long it takes, even when close to deadline. Quality work ensures future work. (22)

Your job is to deliver good stories on time. Good stories that are delayed because you didn’t manage the reporting, graphics, photos, editing or proofing, rob you of credibility. Get comfortable managing the process and you’ll get a reputation **as someone who delivers.** (160)

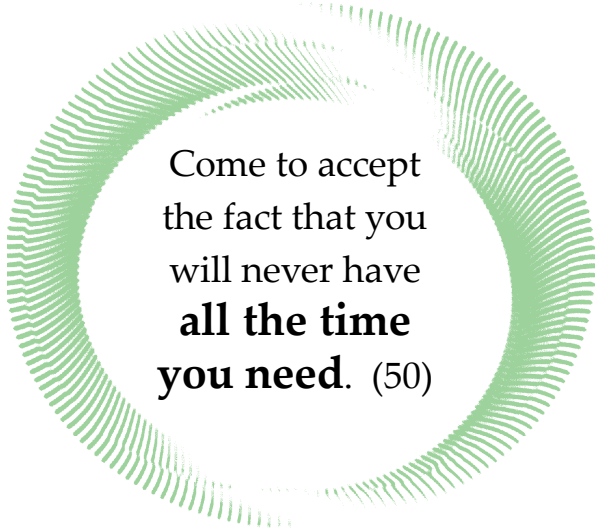
An editor must have good time management skills, especially on deadline with angry readers calling, production running, and **last-minute stories shooting in.** (167)

Move on to the next thing, whether the most recent thing was good or bad. No time to wallow in misery or gloat in accomplishment. Deadlines make both of those **null and void**. (173)

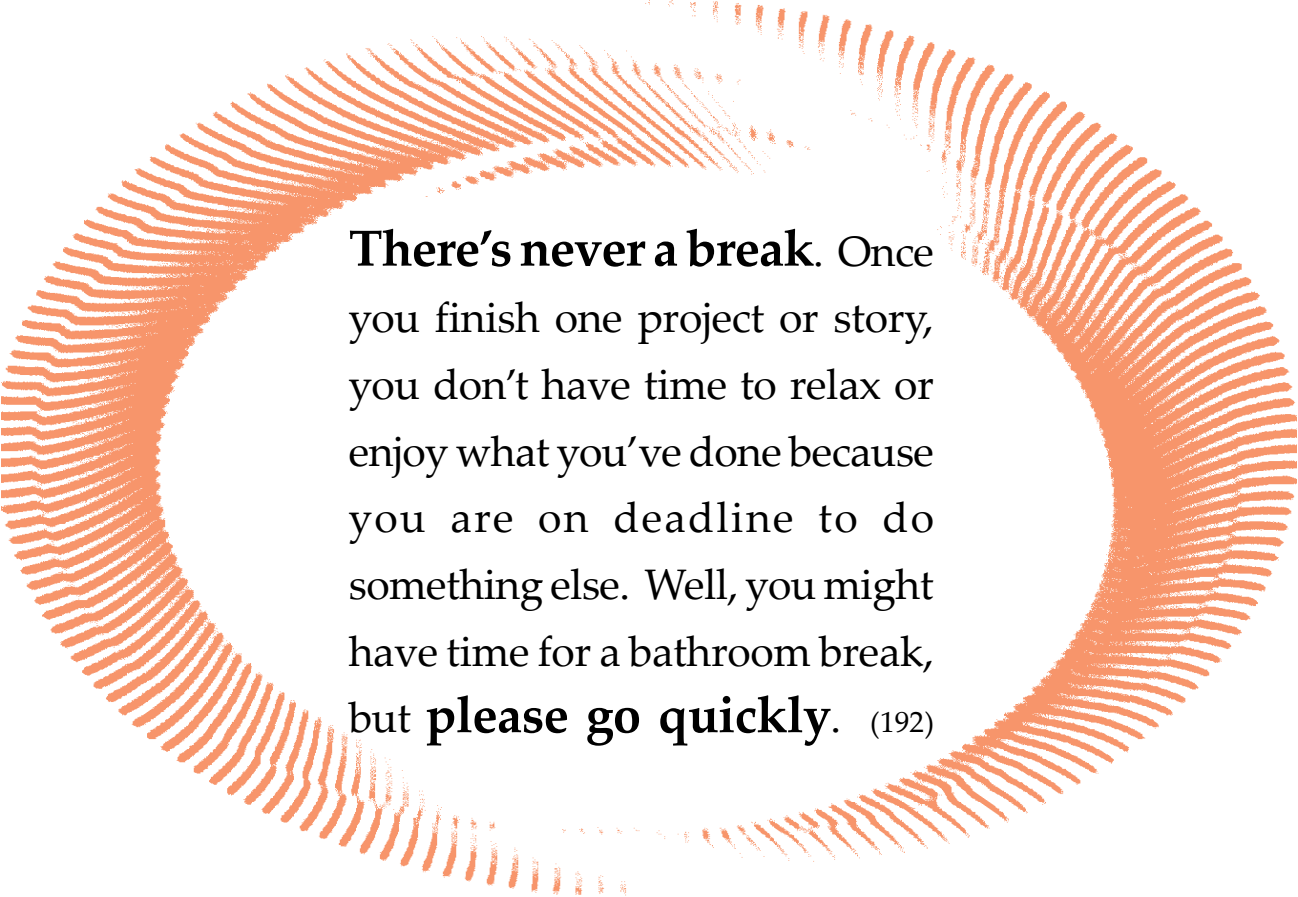
Resign yourself to the reality that, despite repeated management efforts to make copy flow smoother, stories will reach you near deadline, and you will be **blamed for busting deadline**. (4)

As far as organization, you have to do a great deal of prioritizing. Sometimes it's difficult because you know there's something that you would like to get covered with a reporter, but you can't because of something else more important happening within your readership area. (38)

Editors face **deadline pressure on a daily basis**. Everyone deals with it differently. Try to remain calm. I find my thinking is clearer when I'm calm. It takes a certain amount of time to perform a task. If you try and take unwise shortcuts, you will inevitably make a mistake. (53)



Come to accept the fact that you will never have **all the time you need**. (50)

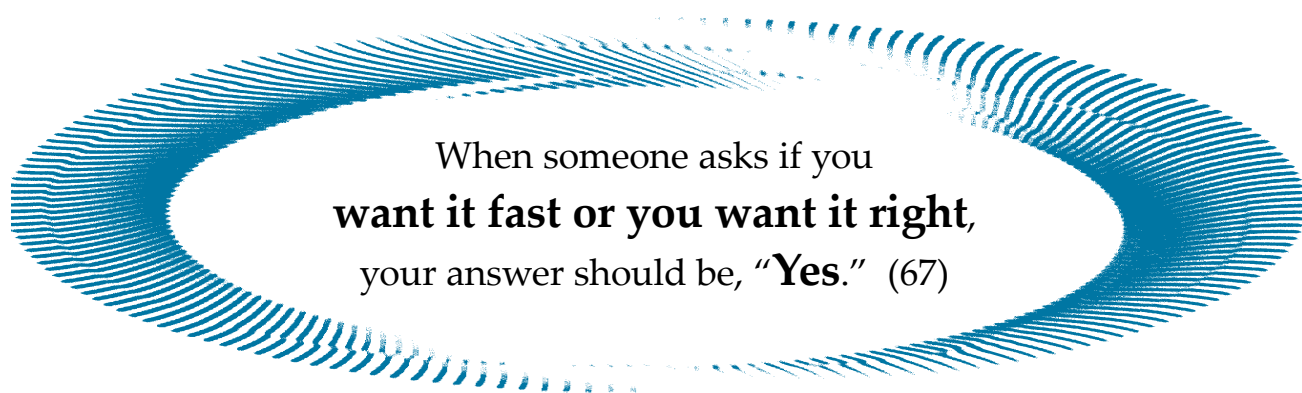


There's never a break. Once you finish one project or story, you don't have time to relax or enjoy what you've done because you are on deadline to do something else. Well, you might have time for a bathroom break, but **please go quickly**. (192)

Use your time wisely. You can alternate between projects when there is a lull. **Don't let interruptions rob you** of valuable time while you're on deadline. Be polite. Be firm. (53)

It doesn't matter how good you want to make it look. It has to **get on the truck on time.** (67)

Some stories take days to report and write. Most take hours. An editor who takes 10 hours in one day to polish a story that should have taken three hours is, over time, considered a failure by his superiors. For starters, they likely have blown deadline and worked overtime. Managing time is **a critical and often-overlooked element** of the business for the beginner. Get the story edited on time, and you're a step ahead of the game. (69)



On deadline, proofread thoroughly but quickly. It seems like a given, but sometimes I catch myself reading with such interest that I forget to edit the copy. There's no time for that on deadline. Plan to **read the paper later.** (80)

Someone in a job like this cannot be flustered by deadlines, and must remain calm whether we are in the middle of a huge blackout, there is breaking news late at night, or **a president is not declared as the winner** before we are scheduled to go to press. (89)

If a story doesn't sound right, **don't try to do radical surgery** and don't be put off by an immediate deadline. Stories can be rewritten on deadline or held for a second-day angle if something doesn't feel right. It's best to hold a story and get it right the second day rather than rush into print "just to get the news in" and look ridiculous when it's wrong. (102)

I have many, many more pieces of advice to share,
but **I'm on deadline.** (98)

BIG PICTURE PLANNING

“News editing is about a lot of little things that add up to a big picture.”

- DAVID SMITH, THE CHARLESTOWN PRESS

Remain flexible in your outlook of the world and the newspaper profession and never stop learning. In the next few years, there will be radical changes in the business due to technology, changing customer needs, and economic realities. The next generation of reporters and editors will have great opportunities to succeed and fail and they should make the most of whatever happens throughout their careers. **It’s an exciting time** to be part of the newspaper business. (150)

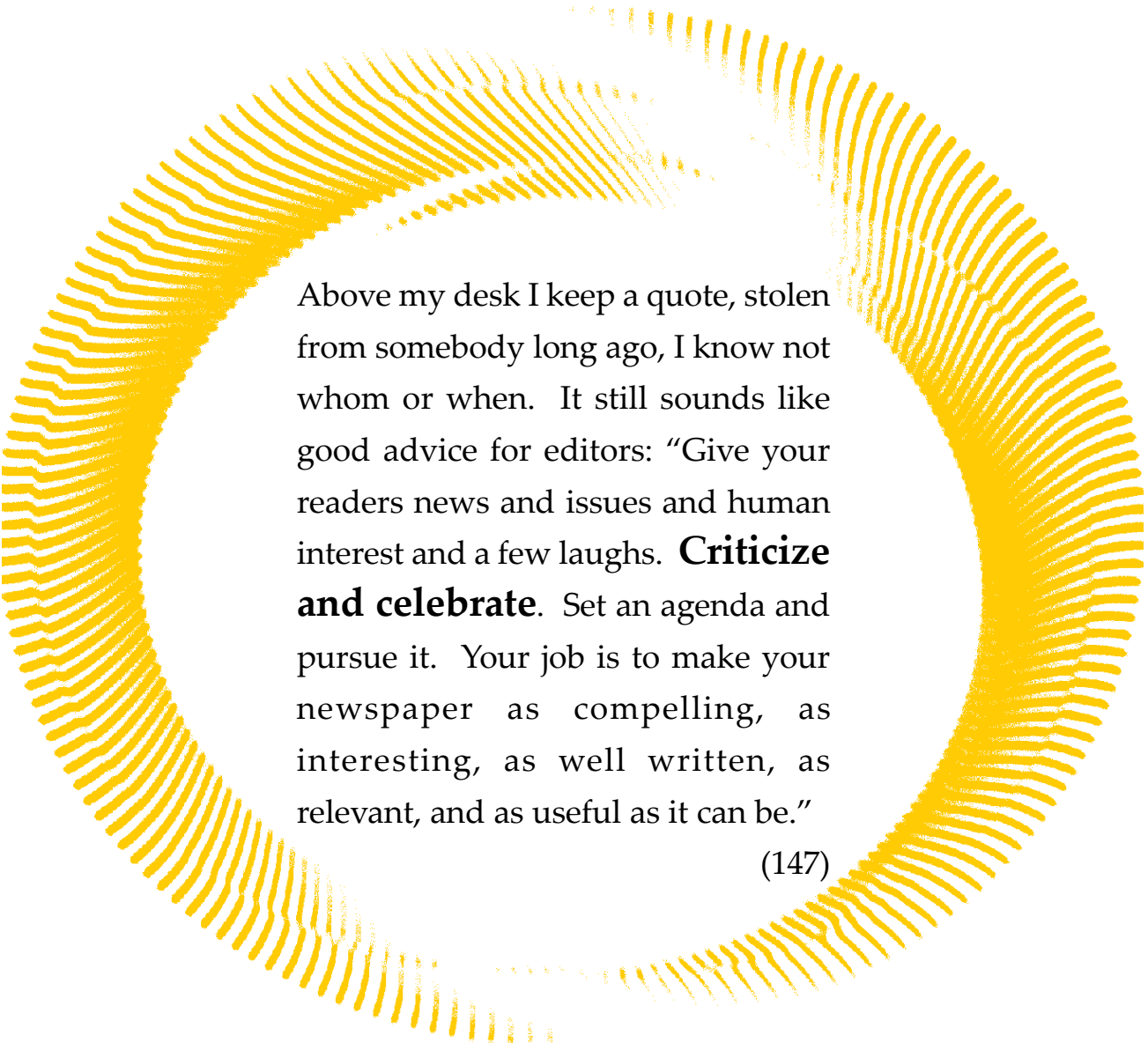
Reserve at least a little time each day for yourself, **for planning, reflection, and sanity**. You’ll be better able to handle the pressures– and help your reporters– if you’re mentally organized and fresh. Editing is demanding, and can be hectic and frustrating. But it also can be extremely rewarding to help a reporter conceive, report, write, and publish an important story. (154)

Get out of the office, **for coffee, tea or wine, to brainstorm** alternative approaches to the war horses: Father’s Day, Thanksgiving, annual music fest, etc., those days and events that come along every year and for which we’ve run out of original ways to handle. **Thinking outside the box** works much better when you’re actually outside the box. (170)

You have to see the big picture. In the area of macro-editing, you look analytically at the structure and organization of stories. You spot when a story slips out of focus. You identify material that does not contribute to the overall effect so that you can excise it. You understand what tone is appropriate to the story and to your publication, and you can explain why the tone of a particular word, sentence, paragraph, section or entire story is inappropriate. You pay extremely careful attention to headlines, captions, and other display type, knowing that they contribute enormously to the overall effect and are the key to capturing and holding the reader’s attention. (121)

Review what you did in a special section, so next time you **learn from the successes and failures**. Too often we are so busy we just go to the next thing and omit reviews with the staff involved in a project. (190)

If you are old enough and a political junkie like me, you'll almost certainly agree that the most memorable opening line ever uttered in a vice presidential debate was the one by Admiral James B. Stockdale, Ross Perot's 1992 running mate: "**Who am I? Why am I here?**" The ill-chosen opener, deadpanned into the microphone when it was the admiral's turn to speak, brought laughter from the audience, fueled weeks of pundit ridicule, and provided plentiful joke material for late-night TV monologues. Shamefully, I must confess that I joined the rest of America in that chorus of mean-spirited chuckles. But in a manner of speaking, those questions— Who am I? Why am I here?—are **precisely what young journalists should be asking themselves**. Those who may now, or someday, see themselves as newsroom leaders must know who they are and also be who they are. Reinventing yourself for your ambitions is a **slam-dunk recipe for disappointment**. Of course, you should never stop seeking personal and professional growth, no matter how far you rise or how much success you enjoy or how much satisfaction you find in where your career takes you. But be real, be honest, and be focused on something other than self-aggrandizement. (64)



Above my desk I keep a quote, stolen from somebody long ago, I know not whom or when. It still sounds like good advice for editors: "Give your readers news and issues and human interest and a few laughs. **Criticize and celebrate**. Set an agenda and pursue it. Your job is to make your newspaper as compelling, as interesting, as well written, as relevant, and as useful as it can be."

(147)

Keep a consistent focus on the big picture. This skill can be really hard to master, like keeping a steady hand on the rudder in the middle of a storm. It's always easier to attend to the day-to-day crises and assume everyone knows the paper's vision/goals/reason for existing. As I get older, I've come to realize however that consistency and clarity about expectations, vision, and the big picture are the most important facets of the job that a newsroom manager can master. (8)

Even in our over-mediated age, newspapers still have the opportunity to stand **head and shoulders above** other media in reporting state, regional, national, and international news. We should not abdicate our responsibility to readers to report this news, or to provide analysis and perspective on events which take place elsewhere. In the fearful rush to claim "local" news as "our franchise," while thinking this makes our particular newspaper more relevant to our readers, too many publications give short shrift to state, regional, national, and international news. This is shortsighted, and it underestimates readers. Local readers are affected by what's happening elsewhere, and most are savvy enough to realize this. The war in Iraq, mad cow disease, the price of gasoline— all this and much more affect their lives. We can still capture the bigger picture. (83)

There are two types of people in a newspaper: creative types and concrete types. The creative souls bring in **the big ideas, concepts, and dreams**, but may have trouble narrowing their focus or executing their ideas. The concretes are the A-follows-B types, who care greatly about whether the rules are being followed, but often have trouble thinking big picture. Thankfully, it takes both types at the top of their game to put out a good paper. The idea person wants the nuts-and-bolts guy to be the last set of eyes on his copy, and the nuts-and-bolts guy needs the ideas-man in order to have interesting copy to play with. Editors find themselves with feet in both camps. We have to bring the big ideas to the table, and help reporters develop them, but we also have to be concerned about the individual facts and whether the story says what is intended. (108)

As a way to **step back from the daily grind** and create better journalists, schedule occasional training sessions, especially for younger writers and editors, to train them in your newspaper's style and policies. The training can range from tips on photo-taking to ethics. I've kept the sessions at my paper interesting by using quizzes I've made up. Sometimes it's about area geography. Sometimes it's about local politicians. Occasionally I'll test their creative thinking by having them write headlines for common nursery rhymes, with the best headline winner getting \$10. (157)

One of the hardest things in a newsroom is finding the right balance between aggressively chasing the news of the day and planning appropriately for ongoing enterprise projects. **Here's the rub:** Nobody likes meetings and we run the risk of boring our staff and wasting valuable time if we are "**meeting people to death.**" But, if we are not intentional and direct about planning, then we're always chasing our tail and missing connections between reporters, photographers, and copy editors. Finding that perfect balance— just enough planning but not too much— is really the key to an efficient and successful newsroom. (78)

An Editor's Life

“Editors are **damn lucky**. Our skills are incredibly versatile. You can go just about **anywhere in the world** and practice this craft, at least on some level. After graduation, I spent six years in the Caribbean. Today I'm in Kauai, Hawaii. Tomorrow I could be in Cape Town. The written word is a powerful thing, and the ability to shape it: **priceless.**”

- Todd Vines,

Essential Kauai

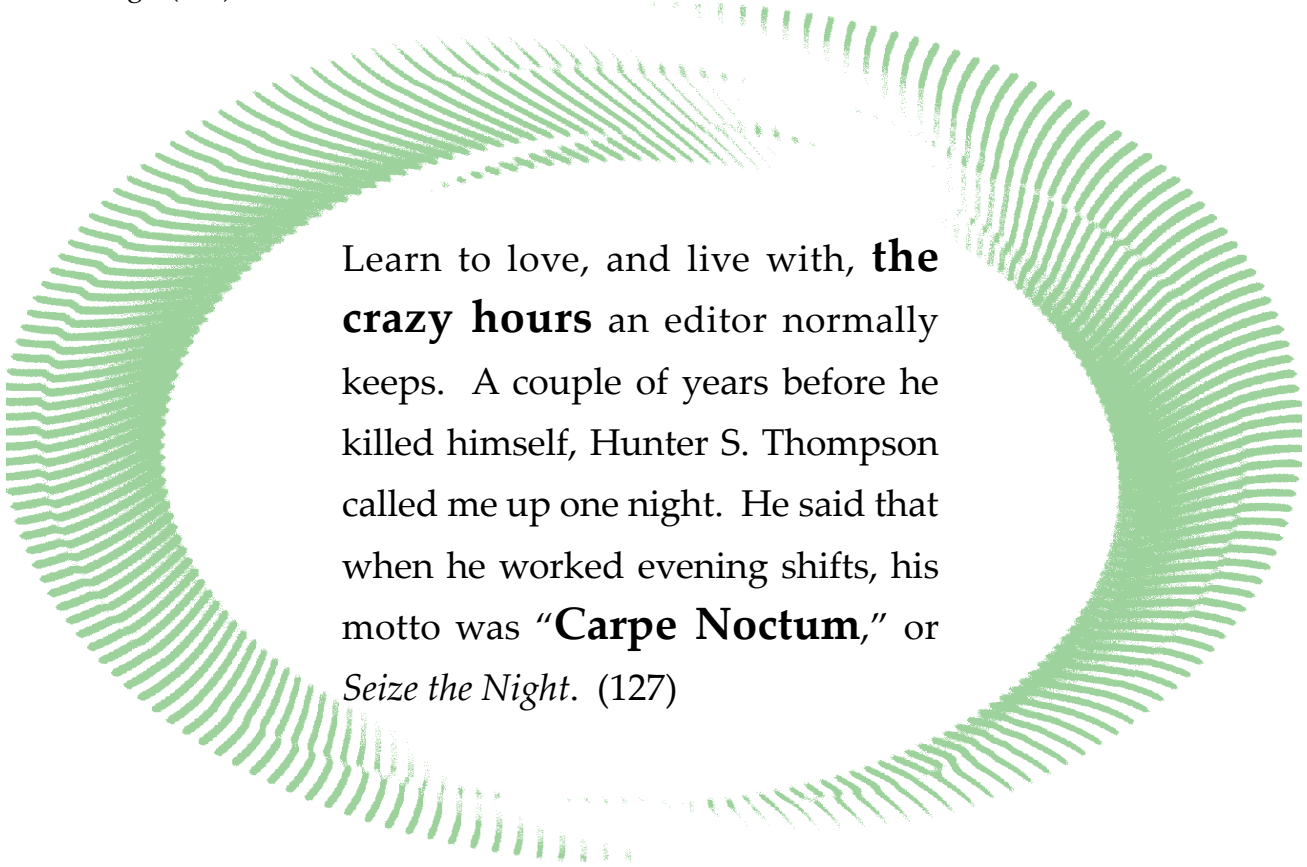
WORK SCHEDULE

“If having a normal schedule is important to you, forget journalism. However, if you like a fast-paced work environment where there’s never a dull moment, news and editing are where it’s at.”

- SUSAN ROBINSON, THE BIRMINGHAM POST-HERALD

Be willing to be flexible with your schedule. A job on the desk usually means working night shifts and having very few **“real” weekends** (i.e. Saturday and Sunday) off. (134)

Never relax, because news never stops. **If you stop for a second**, you will miss something. (140)



Learn to love, and live with, **the crazy hours** an editor normally keeps. A couple of years before he killed himself, Hunter S. Thompson called me up one night. He said that when he worked evening shifts, his motto was **“Carpe Noctum,”** or *Seize the Night*. (127)

Split-shifts at small papers are not uncommon. Example: working 6 a.m. to noon, spending time at home, and then covering a basketball game at night. (142)

Journalism schools don’t teach students about the long hours they will work. **It’s not a 9-to-5 job**, whether you’re a writer or editor. (152)

Prepare yourself for the fact that there are a lot of **VERY BAD schedules** for some on the copy desk. For every daytime features editor, there is a nighttime copy editor on deadline. I stress this point, because it can be very difficult on families and relationships, and I've seen many people throw in the towel for just that reason and that reason alone. (77)

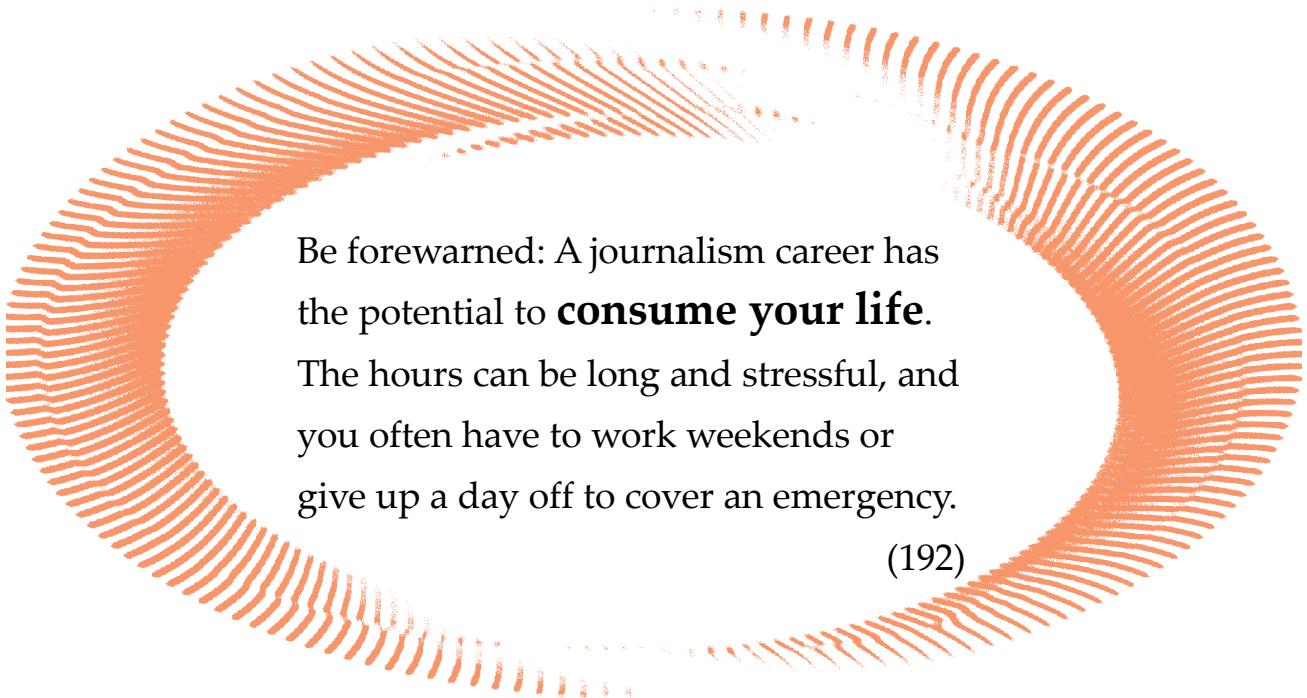
Lousy work schedules are a part of journalism. It can get very tiring working every Sunday and **feeling guilty** taking a full week of vacation. (79)

Be prepared **to move around**, a lot! (48)

Learn to celebrate holidays with your co-workers. Most newspapers publish 365 days per year, and many young journalists draw the short-straw and work holidays. You normally will get overtime or holiday pay, at least. (89)

A Typical Day...

A typical day as a managing editor (in no particular order): reviewing that day's paper and providing feedback to other editors; planning and coordinating stories for the next day's newspaper; interacting with members of our newsroom and other departments in the building such as advertising, production, and circulation; keeping up on the news developing in our region and also throughout the world; communicating on the phone and via e-mail with members of the public; presiding over two daily news meetings (9:30 a.m. and 4 p.m.); and handling a variety of other administrative duties. **Oh, and no two days are alike.** (89)



Be forewarned: A journalism career has the potential to **consume your life**. The hours can be long and stressful, and you often have to work weekends or give up a day off to cover an emergency. (192)

At newspapers of a certain size, your time is not your own. Get used to accepting it, or **follow another siren into the mist**. (98)

If you want to work 9 to 5 and have weekends off, then this is definitely not the job for you. (104)

Most copy editors work **really weird hours**. I am a news copy editor at a morning paper with a circulation of more than 50,000. I get to work at 3:30 p.m. and am usually home by 1 a.m. These hours are great if you like to sleep in. They suck if your spouse or all your friends have typical 9-to-5 jobs. (116)

If you can't picture yourself working on holidays, **find a different career**. Reporters generally get the day off, but someone has to be there to put the paper out. (116)

Get used to **eating at your desk**. A news cycle does not wait for lunch or dinner. (89)

Understand that newspapers are now a **24-7 business**. It used to be that most of the things that happened off-cycle could wait a few hours to be handled. Not so anymore, with the Internet and the constant need for people to be informed. So the story that happens just after the final edition has rolled off the press is still as urgent as the one that happened six hours before deadline, because **"We can get it up on the Web!"** If people aren't careful, it can take a toll on their health, physical and mental, and their families and personal lives. (93)

RE: PAY

“Working a copy desk presents great opportunities. If you can edit copy and paginate, you probably can start with a bigger salary and with more perks than your reporter friends.”

- CLARK WALWORTH, THE CASPER STAR-TRIBUNE

Marry someone rich. (128)

When I speak to journalism classes the first thing I always say is that you will never make much money in journalism, but it beats working for a living— no heavy lifting, little math, etc. **Those who laugh I consider suitable candidates.** Those who dutifully take notes, I gently suggest consider entering PR. (129)

Understand that you will most likely earn no overtime pay. Editors work a lot of hours and are generally salaried. There are days that you will work up to 16 hours, depending on news breaking, and not receive **a dime more** than your usual compensation. (87)

The myth that journalists don't make any money isn't totally true. Yes, starting at a small paper may mean living paycheck to paycheck. But as you move up the ladder, things get better. You can live a very comfortable life being a journalist. **Teachers, on average, make less.** (142)

You'll often hear that you'll never make **decent money at a newspaper.** That's not true. This profession is full of people who make a good living in the newspaper business. If you commit yourself to excellence and hard work, you can too. (46)

A nice plus to the editing profession: Copy editors make more money than reporters with the same amount of experience. At the Chicago Tribune, for example, even entry-level copy editors are **a full pay-grade level** above reporters. (181)

THE BUSINESS ANGLE

“This is a business, not a profession. That means we have to produce something every day, and we often do not have time to do the kind of thorough job we might like. Balancing what we’d like with the real world is a constant challenge.”

- CLIFF BELLAMY, THE DURHAM HERALD SUN

Never forget that a newspaper is in the end a business, no matter how lofty our ideals. Constraints of time, money, and the news hole can all make your life frustrating as hell. So can being forced to sit through corporate seminars, “employee appreciation” events, and required annual OSHA safety videos, all of which take away from the time you spend doing your job. (182)

I attended an AP seminar a decade ago and the keynote speaker began his address by asking the journalists in the room what the purpose of their publication was. Many began to answer with correct responses: to document life; tell good stories; keep an eye on government. But, as the speaker noted, the main intent of any newspaper in this country is to make money. Now, we’re lucky in the newsroom that we don’t have a direct hand in marketing, selling or collecting cash. We’re lucky that by doing our best work, we create a situation where people want to read our paper each day. We don’t pander, we reflect. **We don’t market, we appeal.** We don’t sell, we’re sought. (2)

It frustrates me to learn that when publishers look around the newsroom to cut costs, they’ll typically scale back or eliminate their investigations or special projects departments. First, a compelling investigative series is a real draw to get people to read the newspaper. Investigative stories breed controversy and interest. People will buy newspapers that dig up revealing stories, projects with power. When the Lexington Herald-Leader broke a major story in 1985 on the beloved University of Kentucky basketball program, revealing cash payments to players by boosters, etc., people called the newspaper enraged. They vowed to cancel their subscriptions. The paper didn’t blink, and in the end, circulation actually increased by more than 10 percent after publication of the series (which won a Pulitzer). Investigative stories may be the last real reason for reading the local newspaper. There are always ways to cut back on costs and to carry out projects more efficiently. But to eliminate projects positions from the paper is a sure way to become less compelling and important. So my suggestion to any managers looking to make cuts: **Stay away from the projects.** (31)

Be prepared to handle corporate managers whose **eyes are filled with \$\$\$**. They frequently make decisions which don’t seem fair journalistically and result in the running or placement of a certain story. You can argue all you want, but remember who pays your salary. (35)

THE NEWSROOM

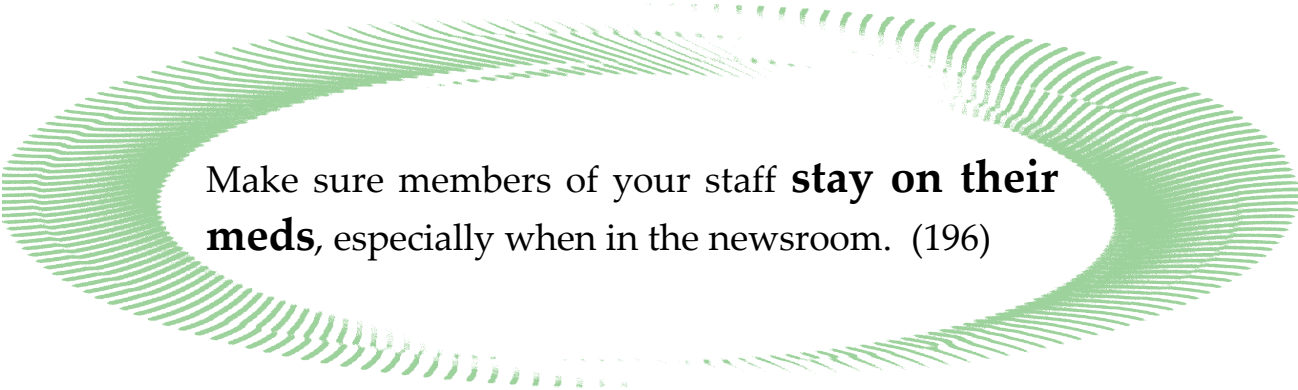
“Sometimes the newsroom is wonderful, sometimes I’m trapped in a bad sitcom, but it’s never boring.”

- LISA MCMANUS, THE PATRIOT LEDGER

About newsroom life: **Nothing is private** and it can be really noisy. Learn to edit stories with the TV on beside you, a radio blaring in the background, people interrupting you to ask a question, and the phone ringing in the middle of your most important thought. (132)

Follow your gut and learn how the newsroom **views your role**. Learn the political climate of your newsroom. Temper your demeanor to fit your situation. (119)

The best part of the job is when you’re in the newsroom and **big news** is breaking. (54)

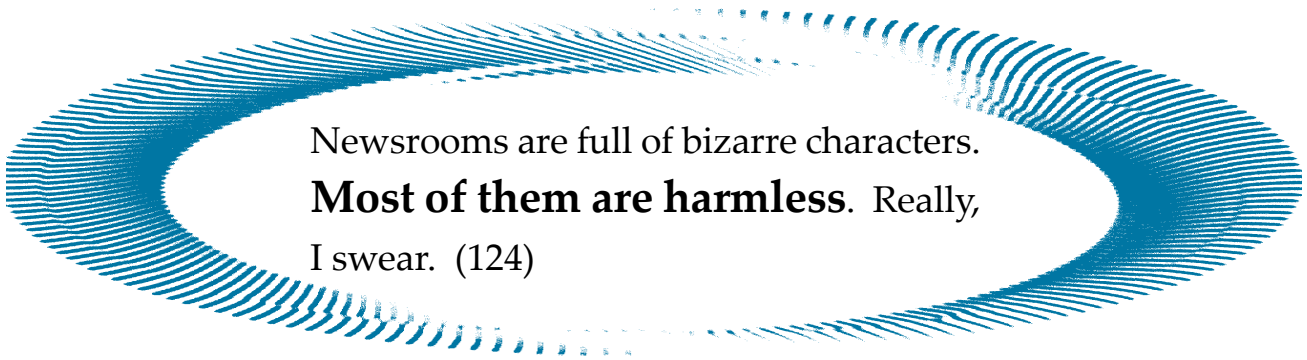


Make sure members of your staff **stay on their meds**, especially when in the newsroom. (196)

When you work in a newsroom, it’s as if you have stepped into an unpredictable, unending, and always stimulating conversation. You are part of a group of curious people who ask questions about everything and react to what is going on in their homes, their neighborhoods, their cities, and their world. You will never lack for **companions, good banter, insidious inside jokes or things to criticize**. In the process of talking, debating, and living with these colleagues, you will, most likely, get the sense that you are becoming more interesting yourself. (2)

Don’t expect to like everyone in the newsroom. Journalism tends to attract some strange people, and they’re not always easy to get along with. **Some of them are downright impossible to like**, and they will bring out the worst in you. (192)

Newsrooms are among the least corporate environments. They’re full of skeptics and people constantly amused at the absurdities of life. I can’t imagine working in any other profession. (28)



Newsrooms are full of bizarre characters.
Most of them are harmless. Really,
 I swear. (124)

In a newsroom, you are, literally, **on stage 24 hours a day**. Whatever you say, wherever you are, someone is invariably observing you. He or she is immediately forming an opinion, positive or negative, on your actions and behaviors. I don't know how many times, personally or professionally, those first impressions have played a part in how I've been treated downstream. I've run into people in other cities, and they recall their first impressions most often. So, it's generally a good idea to mentally prepare yourself to "be on stage" all day. (22)

Many marriages are born in the newsroom, seemingly more than other businesses. Desk editors in particular all seem to hang out with each other all the time. We work together and play together. **We really need to get a life.** (146)

Newsrooms are the most cynical, skeptical, **pain-in-the-butt places** to work. They are also the best places ever to be when news breaks or history happens. (78)

In newsrooms, you are surrounded by smart, motivated people who are passionate about their work. Many of them are **weird, odd duck-types**, but they are blast to work with and just be around. (78)

There is nothing quite like a room full of journalists. They can be extremely bright, passionate, and energetic in pursuing the truth. But they can also be whiny, selfish, and belligerent, and when it comes to this behavior, when it rains, it pours. In general: **Be prepared to get wet.** (93)

It can be enormously fulfilling to be in the newsroom and see the finished newspaper come up at the end of the night and find your headline, your design, or your transformation of **a garbled mess into a coherent and engaging story**. And when a major news event happens, the sense of teamwork and camaraderie I've seen in the newsroom is marvelous. We remember that we're all in this together and we're all here to serve our readers, and great work gets done. That's the kind of thing that keeps you in a job like this. (182)

Even amid the **squabbles, bitching and bouts of laziness**, your co-workers in the newsroom will always rise to the occasion, especially during major events or personal crises. I continue to be amazed at how people will step forward when needed and do what needs to be done. (81)

PLAIN OL' HARD WORK

"At small newspapers, editors work 50 to 60 hours per week. They must cover stories, determine which stories get covered, assign writers, assign photographers, produce pages, and handle the budgets."

- AL EDWARDS, THE YORK COUNTY JOURNAL TRIBUNE

Election nights are hell. And every night is an election night in the sports department. (142)

Do the work first, and **bitch later.** Nothing's worse than bitching about something that has yet to happen. (186)

Never settle for second best. Whether you're doing a news brief or a potential Pulitzer, always do your best. (189)

Chances are you'll be working with about half the staff you need to get your job done right. **Get used to it.** (127)

If you're going into the newspaper business, make sure you **like coffee and hate your family.** Seriously though, it's hard work with very few rewards, but every now and then you make a new friend or change someone's life. That makes it all worth it. (195)

No matter how bad the piece of slop is that you're editing, work hard and do the best you can with it anyway. (35)

Here's the ugly reality of editing a newspaper: As much as I'd love to, I can't afford to take the time to really respond a query about what it's like. Tighter budgets, higher expectations of profit margins, and smaller news staffs mean everyone is working harder and faster than they did even five years ago. (122)

THE LIFESTYLE

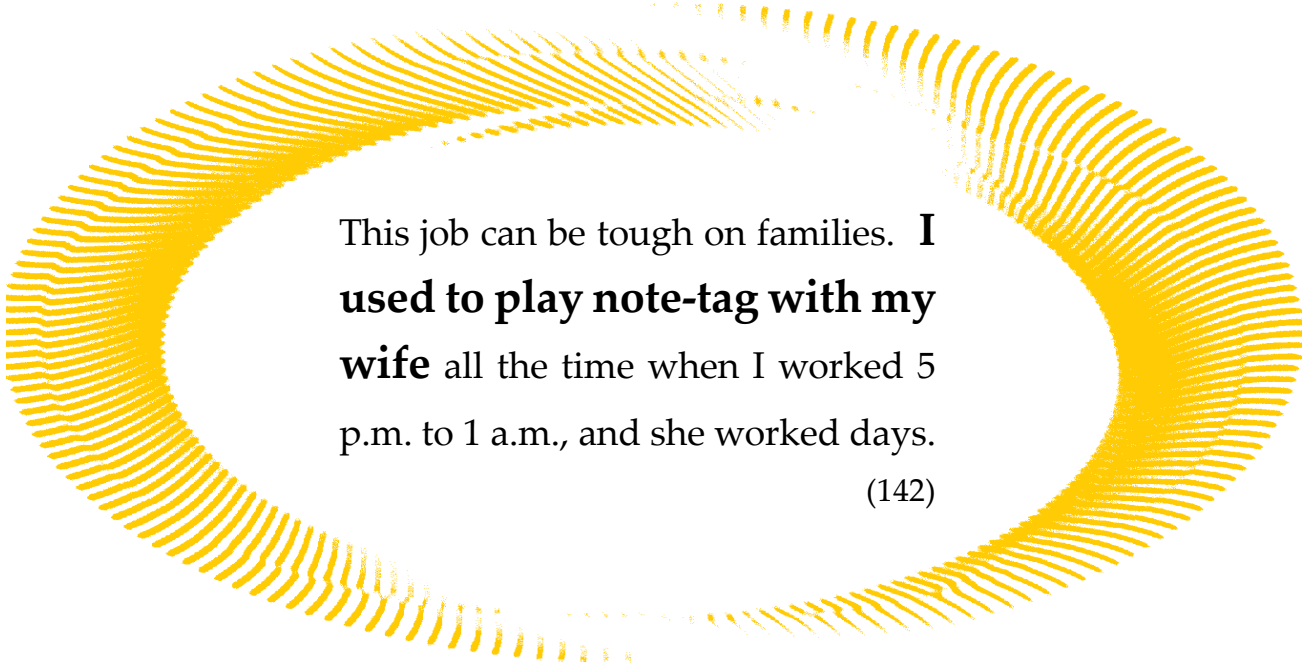
“Make sure to have a life outside the newsroom. It helps immeasurably. The work can absolutely drive you crazy if you let it.”

- TODD CONARD, THE DURHAM HERALD-SUN

Have some fun outside of the newspaper. Not doing so will also show, and readers won't like that. (162)

Have a life outside the newsroom, because remember, if nothing else, outside the newsroom is also where stories come from. (170)

Supposedly journalists are **among the most secular people in the workforce**, with fewer believing in God, attending worship services, etc. Therefore, if you have a faith, don't be afraid to demonstrate it in the way you conduct yourself in the newsroom. Contrary to what some may say, we *should* **carry our faith into the workplace**. If we are genuine in what we believe, it should be part of our everyday lives in a way that people can see. (171)



This job can be tough on families. **I used to play note-tag with my wife** all the time when I worked 5 p.m. to 1 a.m., and she worked days.
(142)

In terms of raising a family and being a boss at a newspaper, it's good to **keep things in perspective**. My former managing editor told me, "**After I'm dead**, no one will care if I did a good job at the Billings Gazette. **My kids and grandkids will remember** if I was a good dad or not." (1)

If you're not having a good time on the job, **learning, growing, laughing**, then move. Life is too short to be underpaid in a job you don't like. (13)

Don't stay up too late after work. (34)


Even though it seems to be the mantra of our profession (for the men, at least), please do not announce to the world that you are a journalist **by wearing a tie with a plaid shirt**. (35)

I once had a journalism professor **who read books with a red pen**, marking the pages as he went. I used to think it was funny. While I don't hold a red pen, **I do the editing in my mind**. It's a hard habit to break. (53)

Modern desk work is, well, desk work, in which you will often sit for hours in front of the computer. Get exercise, and eat well. Take breaks when you can on the job. The pace in modern newsrooms often **goes into warp speed** and your faculties can be pulled into that if you don't step away for fresh air and to rest your eyes and brain. (12)

Respect yourself. Do not work so many hours in a row that **you can't see straight to read**, or to drive home safely. (63)

Something they don't tell you about copy editing is that with **the non-traditional hours**, and the little time you have for lunches and dinners, you can gain weight and develop a lazy lifestyle pretty quickly. **I put on about 15 pounds** my first year in the business from eating junk and having no time to work out. You've really got to make time in this business **for a healthy lifestyle**. (146)



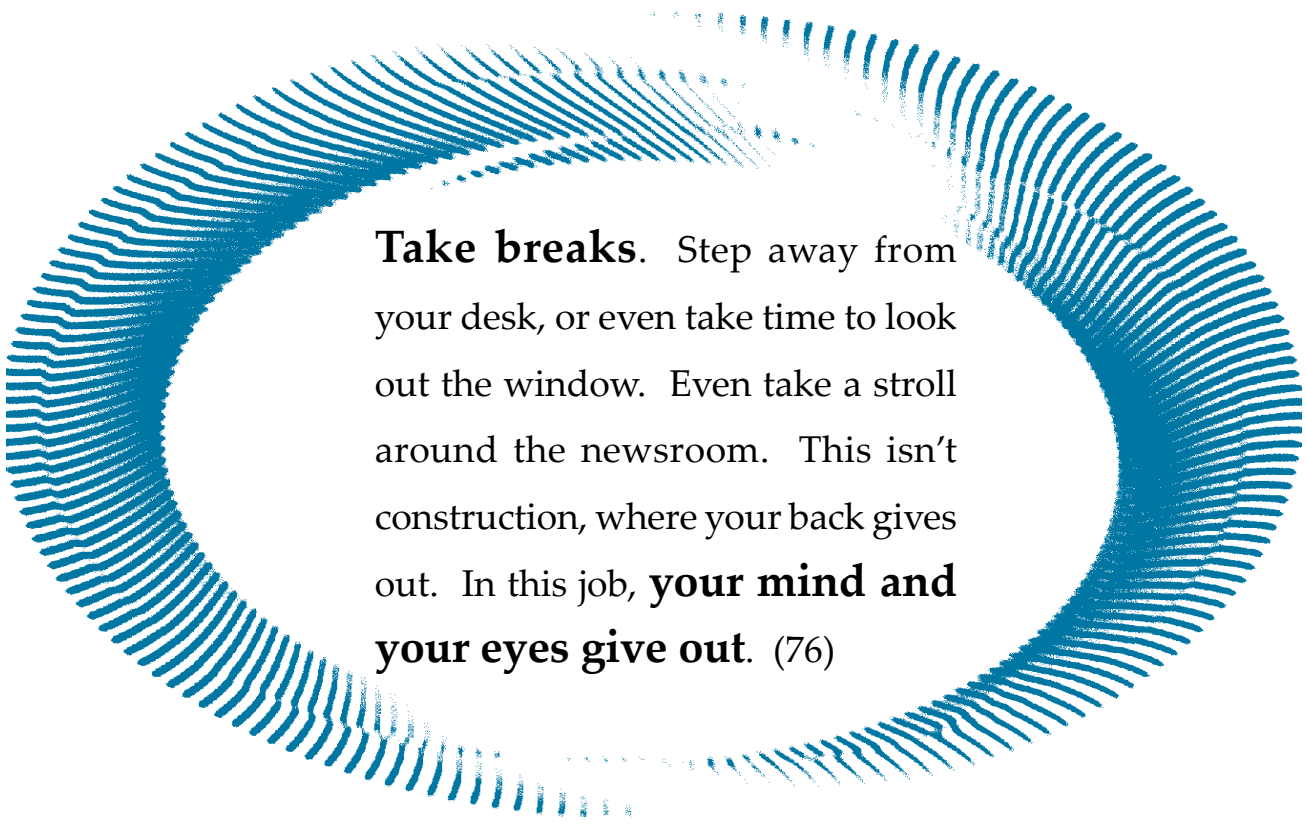
One of the best tips I can give:
Get a good night's sleep!

(103)

Every journalist knows, or soon finds out, that bringing passion and commitment to your job forces a balancing act for the rest of your life. **The perks and trappings** of the top executive's office do not make that part of it better. Should you be lucky enough, as I was, to marry another journalist, there may be grudging understanding when you pack up the laptop to take it along on a family vacation or struggle with a time conflict between a big breaking story, your son's Little League game or an obligatory community civic event. Remember, **that balancing act is YOUR challenge**, not your spouse's. And, the key to finding balance is not simplistic or formulaic. (64)

Have a life outside the newsroom. Then, see if you can incorporate that life in your work. That would be called **the key to happiness**. (71)

It's important to work as hard as possible, but **don't burn yourself out**. Let your boss know when you're overworked. They can't read minds. (96)



Take breaks. Step away from your desk, or even take time to look out the window. Even take a stroll around the newsroom. This isn't construction, where your back gives out. In this job, **your mind and your eyes give out**. (76)

SENSE OF HUMOR

“Retain a sense of humor about deadlines, writers’ poorly-written stories, and the ever-changing editing rules. It’s the only thing that will keep you sane.”

- GARY REINMUTH, THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Be willing to laugh at yourself, because others in the newsroom are laughing at you when you are not around. Laugh with them. (179)

Death is never funny. As an editor, you will be surrounded by death. In town, and off the wire, you can’t get away from it. You eventually will become a connoisseur of death and come to appreciate dark humor. This is good for your sanity and great for laughs with friends in the newsroom. However, in a story or a headline, death is never funny. **It doesn’t matter how brilliant your wit might be**, if you make light of someone dying, you will offend many readers and make the paper look insensitive and crass. This might sound like no-duh advice, but it happens much more frequently than expected. (115)

Most copy editors are really goofy (and geeky) people who are fun to hang out with. At what other job could a misplaced word be so entertaining? (116)

This is a fun business, and it remains so for most journalists. However, most of us develop a **dark sense of humor** which would probably offend most of our readers. It’s important that such **black humor** not creep into the printed product. **A flip headline, lede or phrase on a serious story just isn’t acceptable.** (81)

A LACK OF GLORY

“It’s hard to be a prima donna editor. Those who need lots of ego-stroking should pursue the reporter path. Your reward as editor is that you get to have much greater creative control than reporters do, but you forfeit the limelight.”

- AMBER NIMOCKS, THE RALEIGH NEWS & OBSERVER

Aspiring editors, take note: If you’re **looking for glory, you’d better look elsewhere.** Editors don’t get bylines. Almost no one outside the newspaper will have any idea what you do, and several people INSIDE the newsroom probably won’t know either. So you have to learn to pat yourself on the back. (182)

Editors have to accept some rotten hours and a lack of glory. **There’s no credit line for a copy editor,** and you’re often like a referee in that your missteps are what might draw more notice than your good work. (25)

By and large, editing is a thankless job. When a piece turns out well, the writer gets or takes all the credit. But when things go bad, the blame is shared. Rare is the reporter who says, “Thanks for the catch!” or “You made my story so much better.” Much more frequently, the writer expresses dissatisfaction that his copy was “tinkered with” or “had all the life taken out of it.” Editors must derive their satisfaction from the knowledge that they have done something well. **Don’t expect anyone to notice.** (45)

Assigning editors have basically thankless jobs. Reporters who do good work get public and internal praise. High-level managers get bonuses, etc. **Not so, on either point,** for assigning editors, who also are the targets of the criticism from below and above when things go wrong. (87)

Though your masters may never fully recognize or acknowledge their utter dependence on you or your invaluable contributions to your publication, **you will know at the end of the day** that you have left things better than you found them. And you will be glad. (121)

TAKING CRITICISM

“As an editor, you’ll definitely have times when you feel like you’re receiving constant criticism and nothing you do will ever be good enough. It’s important to roll with the punches and take the bad times with the good.”

- ROBYN JACKSON, THE HATTIESBURG AMERICAN

Accepting criticism can be the single toughest, but most important, aspect of being an effective editor. There is nothing like the crushing feeling that comes with seeing words that you think cannot POSSIBLY be written any better than you had just done, marked up, crossed out, and questioned. It is crushing in the moment, but will prove extremely valuable later on. (130)

Be prepared to be called liberal by some and conservative by others. This means you are **probably just right**. (142)

Don’t get discouraged. **The curmudgeon who enforces all the grammar rules** often doesn’t know as much as he or she pretends. (143)

An editor’s job can be unbelievably detail-oriented, and if something goes wrong, even though 14 people had a hand in preparing and presenting that story, **the buck stops with the editor**. You take the calls when people are angry or upset, and you also get the nice notes when they like something. It’s important, in each case, to take the blame and share the praise. (177)

You can’t please everybody. No matter where a story runs, or how long it is or how much art you include, **somebody’s always pissed**. In the art and music world, every band is the best band ever. Every art show is the most important one ever, but only to the people involved. Trust your own news judgment, and your writer’s, about stories’ length, placement, and play. (6)

Learn to live with the fact that everybody thinks they can be a better editor than you. (6)

Thick Skin Factor...

You must develop thick skin to survive as an editor in this industry. **You will be second- and third-guessed** and definitely criticized by everyone, from the reporter who wrote the story to the people mentioned in the story. It simply comes with the job. (132)

Have a thick skin. Lots of readers are just fixing to be offended, no matter what you do. And lots of editors won't always like what you've produced. **It's not simply an offshoot of the job. It's the very nature of it.** (142)

Grow a thick skin, keep your sense of humor, and **don't let the jerks of the world get you down.** There will always be small-minded people who have nothing better to do than call and complain about the Jumble or whether you missed one typo in 300 inches of copy. Don't let them get to you. The next day or week will always present a new chance. **Conversely, don't get a swelled head** when folks tell you the job you've done is stupendous. Chances are you will screw something up soon enough. It is the nature of the business, and it won't even necessarily be your fault, but it will happen. (44)

No matter who really made the mistake—the city editor, the reporter or copy editor— the last copy editor to see the page usually takes the blame, so definitely take editing seriously. (19)

It's rough out here sometimes. **I tend to take things personally.** That's one of the reasons I didn't think I'd be a good editor. People are bound to snap at people a lot in high-stress environments like a newsroom, but it shouldn't be taken personally. (57)

Expect sarcasm and cynicism in the newsroom. **People are critical and criticizing all the time.** Try not to take it personally. (90)

Accept rejection and failure with **renewed determination to succeed.** (117)

LEAVE THE EGO OUT

“Forget the notion that your own stories, headlines, and page designs are so great that nothing could ever improve them. Simply put, don’t be a prima donna.”

- SUSAN ROBINSON, THE BIRMINGHAM POST-HERALD

To be a good copy editor you need to **put your ego aside**. Otherwise you’ll be miserable. (145)

Copy editing is a mind-set, and the best copy editors are the ones who approach their jobs with their egos **checked at the door**. It isn’t the career path to take for those interested in becoming famous. Copy editors are a lot **like baseball umpires**. Often they’re noticed only when they make a mistake. (101)

The day you think you know it all is the time to quit working as an editor. (112)

Forget the notion that your own stories, headlines, and page designs are so great that nothing could ever improve them. **Simply put, don’t be a prima donna.** (124)

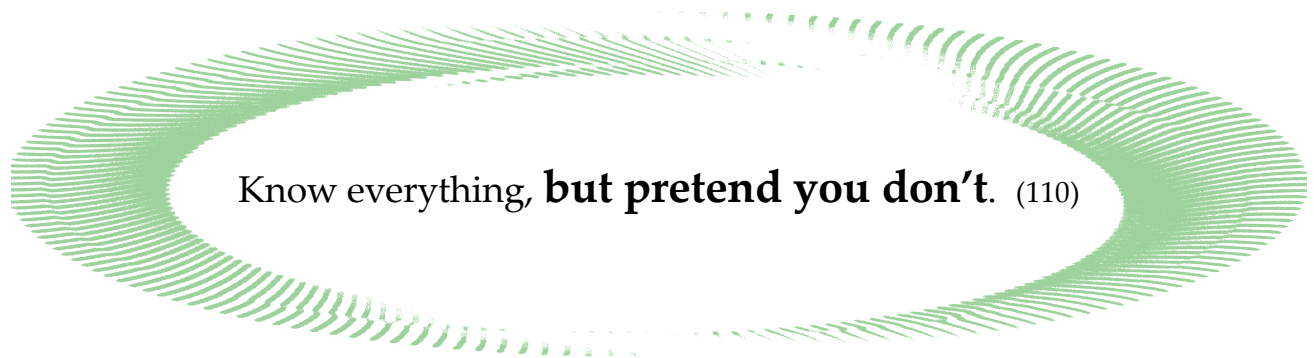
I think the most important thing a young editor can do is to leave her ego out of the newsroom. She should **never be afraid to admit** that she doesn’t know what something means or refers to. First, it’s the only way to learn new information. Second, once the question is voiced, the editor will find that half a dozen other people didn’t know either, but were afraid to ask. Being able to say, **“This may sound stupid, but...”** can take an editor far. (155)

There’s a tendency to fall in love with something you’ve done, be it a story, photo or page design, and resist any criticisms or revisions to it that others make. While you absolutely shouldn’t change everything that people suggest you should change, you should always be open to new ideas. (10)

Learn how to be humble if you’re a copy editor. Since you’re always looking for mistakes and asking people about it, it builds some resentment among some people. If you mess up, it can be pretty tough on you since it’s your job to find mistakes, not make them. Being able to take things in stride and **being resilient** will go a long way. (167)

Preparing for leadership isn't just about being smart, talented, hardworking or dedicated to high journalistic standards. Yes, we reward those qualities and we look for them when we recruit. But an editor who is absolutely convinced that he or she is **the smartest and most talented person** in the building does not have cause to congratulate themselves. Instead, they need urgent remedial training in leadership and recruiting. (64)

The best leaders in almost any field are those who found that circumstances were right when the opportunity to lead presented itself. The most effective newsroom leaders **did not set out to be editors**, and did not necessarily see themselves in that role early in their careers. That is not to say that those who are goal-oriented should stymie their ambitions. And, heaven knows, we'll never reach acceptable levels of diversity in any of the professional or management ranks of our industry without people who push and advocate change. But those who aspire to, assume, or luck into leadership roles need to understand that it's not all about them. (64)



Know everything, **but pretend you don't.** (110)

After more than a decade leading the newsroom at the Seattle Post-Intelligencer, I still consider it **an honor and an important task of stewardship**. I try to remain grounded in the humbling realization that the paper, its mission, our readers, my talented staff, and my wonderful family are all more important than I am. (64)

Copy editing is humbling. The best of us miss mistakes that the most casual of readers catch the next day. No matter how astute we think we are: The written word has a way of **biting us back.** (29)

Stop thinking of editors as grown-up reporters— as if editing is what all reporters aspire to do. If we all thought of ourselves as storytellers (whether it's stories about the zoning board or the cancer victim), and editors saw themselves as people whose job it is to make stories better and not just as gatekeepers or the next step up the ladder, newsrooms would be happier places and newspapers would be better publications. (8)

Gaining Experience

“Be willing to move around, be teachable, and never stop learning. Every day will call on you to be an expert in something new.”

- Ruth Hill,

The Beaufort Gazette

RELEVANT CLASSWORK

“J-school is good at teaching you about editing, but not being an editor. Most editors are managers and supervisors. J-school does little to train us how to manage employees. So while in school, take some basic people-and-management skills courses. They will prove invaluable later on.”

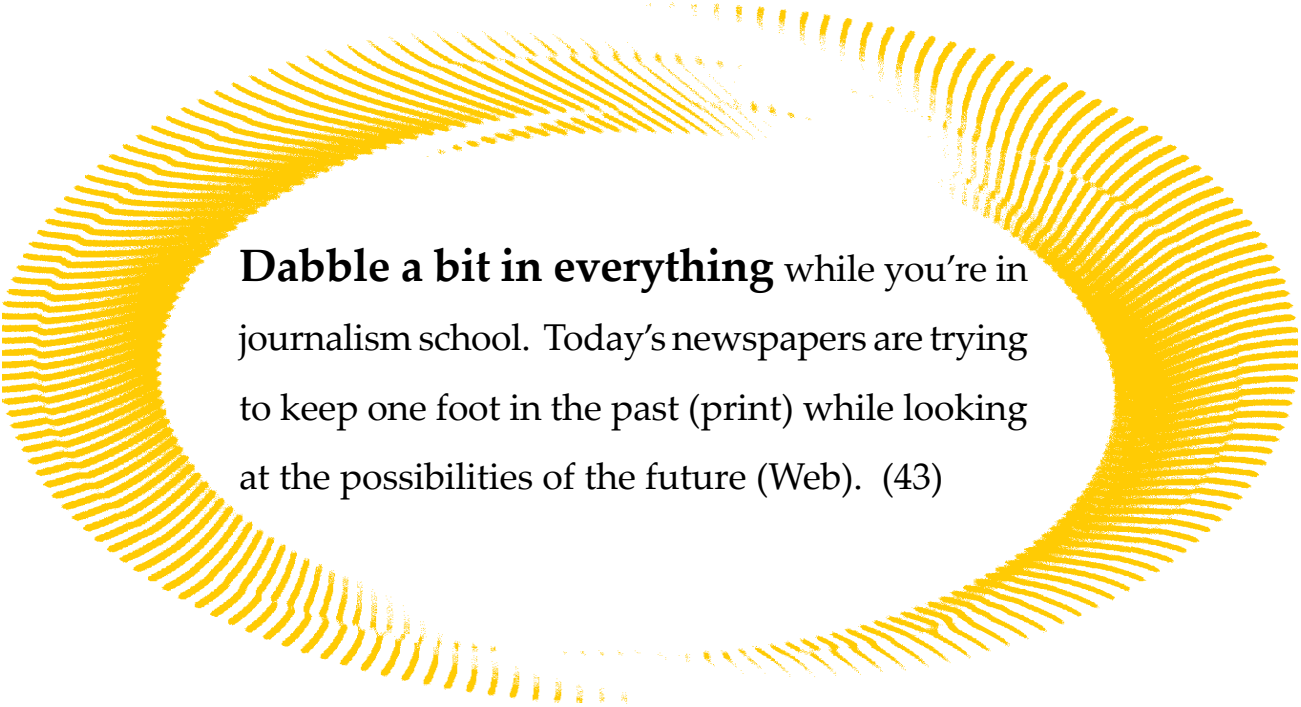
- KIRK CARAWAY, NEVADAAPPEAL.COM

Aspiring editors should take psychology courses. Sounds offbeat, but it isn't. The modern editor must deal with all types of personalities and figure out how to motivate them, make them think, and get results in an industry that's very demanding and constantly evolving. (7)

You must love knowledge and the pursuit of it. In college, double major. A journalism education is a good foundation, but it is **stone without cement.** Find another field— political science, history, English, economics, any of the sciences— and learn that as well. **The world would be better informed** if journalists were better informed. (32)

Basic science and math knowledge is a must. Whatever classes you end up taking, you need to be able to answer some basic questions at the very least. I mean, how does a journalist write about the stem cell debate without a decent grounding in biology? Other things to know: What relationship does nuclear fission and nuclear weapons have to with Einstein's Theory of Relativity? **What does $E=MC^2$ mean anyway?** Not the equation Energy equals Mass times the Speed of Light squared, but what do those words mean and what are the ideas behind them? (18)

If you want to be a page designer, take some classes in **graphic art.** (192)



Dabble a bit in everything while you're in journalism school. Today's newspapers are trying to keep one foot in the past (print) while looking at the possibilities of the future (Web). (43)

Being a hard news editor is not the only job in the newsroom. If you're interested in editing features, you should probably take some courses in **interior design, health, cooking** or other areas where you'll need some more random knowledge. (192)

Young journalists in college should **dive into minors and electives** in math and science. Once they are out of school, they'll never study this material. (18)

Take copy editing in college. It may prove to be the worst experience of your undergrad years, but **that which does not kill you** makes you able to build a career on working with words. (12)

Editors need to be able to make a sensible and coherent argument, so **a debate class** should become part of the core journalism curriculum. (55)

There is one thing I was always flabbergasted with in my journalism education: **Nobody ever actually explained to me how a newsroom works**. I think it's taken for granted at the college level that everybody realizes that reporters write the stories, then work with an assignment editor, then the story goes to copy editors, etc. The only thing I had to base the operation of a newsroom on was what I saw in the newspaper, which to the uneducated doesn't really tell you much besides the final product. So don't be afraid to ask to see some sort of flow-chart listing everyone's duties and interactions. I wish I'd asked what a copy editor was earlier in my education. Maybe it wouldn't have taken me so long to figure out I wanted to be one. (57)

WORK EXPERIENCE

“The world is hungry for good copy editors. If you are good at what you do, you shouldn’t have any problem finding a job. Just be sure to make your experiences count.”

- AMY PHILLIPS BURSCH, THE SIOUX FALLS ARGUS LEADER

Get as much work as you can while you’re still in school. Nothing, nothing, nothing should be considered beneath a young person when he or she is trying to build a résumé. That means anything from typing up local announcements for your hometown weekly to covering the men’s varsity darts team for the college paper. The more work experience you get, and the more diversified it is, the better. (130A)

Force your way onto an editor’s radar screen. Most newspapers have some sort of unpaid, for-credit internship program, even though they may not advertise it. Be relentless. Be direct. Call an editor. Offer your services. Many a career in sports editing has been launched via the 15-hour-per-week-takes-game-summaries-over-the-phone-route. Sure, it’s a bit demeaning and laborious. But it’s also a foot in the door. (130)

Work at your college paper. Get on as a part-timer at your local hometown paper. The best learning happens in these types of jobs, more than any college course you enroll in. It’s also a perfect chance to build clips and to learn computer programs you might need. (143A)

After college, remember that **continuing education isn’t just about the classroom.** It’s about lifelong learning. (32A)

You’re responsible for your own professional growth. **Be entrepreneurial** when it comes to your career development. (71A)

Be prepared to sacrifice. My first job in newspapers was gathering and transmitting racing results on Friday and Saturday nights as a college junior. It did not help my social life and I came close to not taking it for that reason alone. Had I not, however, I think things might have worked out differently for me. Giving up a Friday night of dollar drafts in exchange for time in a newsroom may seem a steep price now, but it won't later. Trust me on that. (130A)

Get real-world experience. Some of the worst journalists I've worked with have had master's degrees. Don't keep going to school for the sake of going to school. Graduate school will make you a better writer, but it won't make you a writer. An internship will make you a writer. I'm not saying you shouldn't go to grad school, but don't go just because you can't find a job or because you don't want to find a job. (10A)

Good copy editors are hard to find. If you aspire to the position, get good at it, and you can go far and possibly move up the ladder fairly quickly. So if you're anal retentive and you edit billboards as you drive down the road, you may be on your way to stardom! (25A)

Look far and wide for your first job. Don't limit yourself geographically. At that first job, work your fanny off. Don't worry about overtime or bad shifts. The impression you make and the clips or photos you create will propel you to a better position in a more favored part of the country. (65A)

Before a Journalism Job Interview...

Read the paper. Seriously. Go to the library and **grab the last 10 editions**. Glean what you can before your interview. (10A)

Find out what you can about the paper. It's hard as a college student, but when you're working a few years, you'll have contacts and they can save you from taking a sh*tty job. If a paper is hard-up for help, they have a way of **prettying the place up**. Also, if you're hard-up for a job, you might tend to look beyond some otherwise glaring warning signs. (10A)

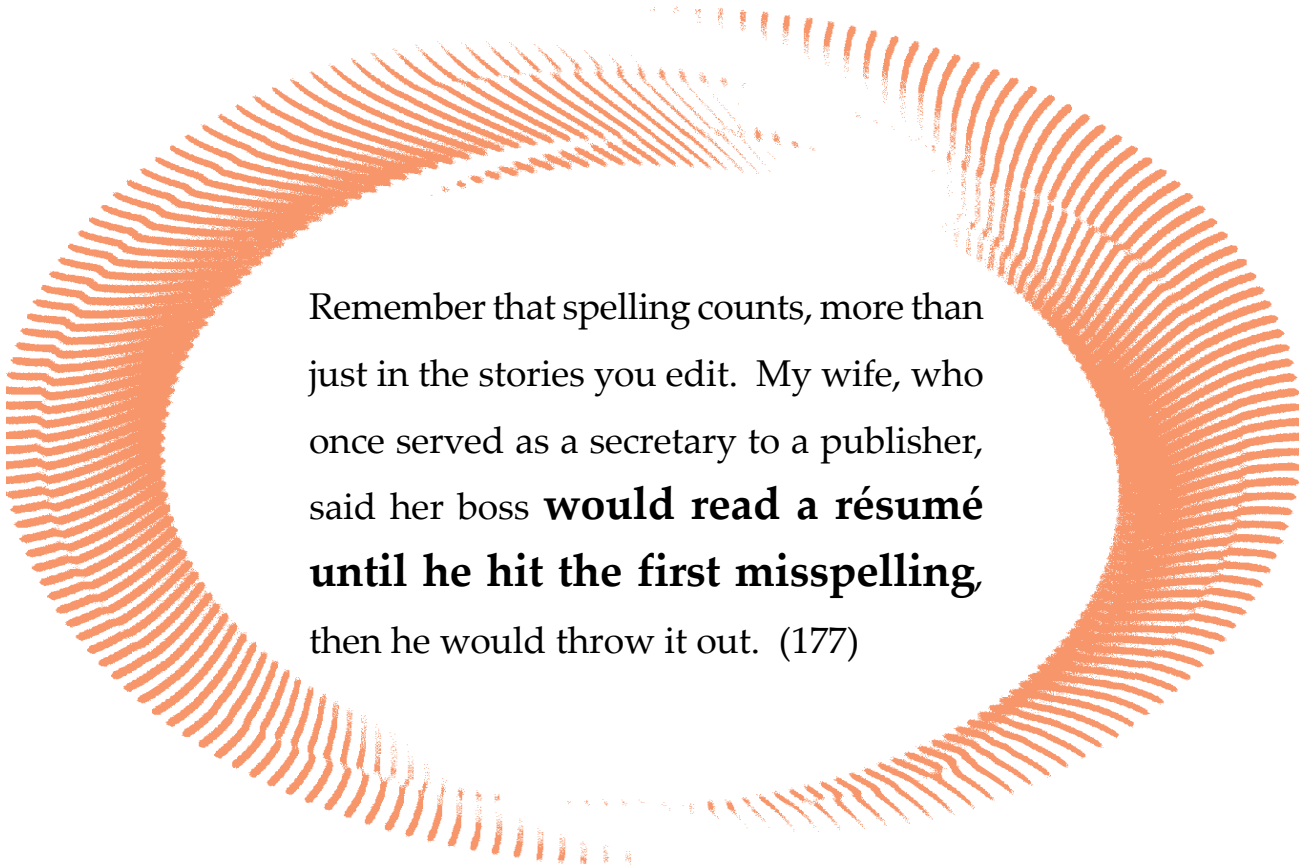
For God's sake, **have two people proofread your résumé** and cover letter. It gets hard when you're sending out 100 resumes, but you need to have it done. (10A)

Make sure your résumé and cover letter are **in AP style**. (10A)

- Andrew Toland, The Nashua Daily Telegraph

This is definitely a profession in which the **quality and quantity** of one's internships can really help a budding journalist land a job. (92A)

I found both of my jobs since college on journalismjobs.com, a very valuable resource, especially for beginning journalists looking to get a sense of what's available in the field. (134A)



Remember that spelling counts, more than just in the stories you edit. My wife, who once served as a secretary to a publisher, said her boss **would read a résumé until he hit the first misspelling**, then he would throw it out. (177)

At the moment, I'm working at a newspaper which serves as a springboard for reporters looking to move on in a few years. Most reporters are in their early twenties, and this is their first job. Oddly, a lot of these reporters think they know everything about the newspaper world, because they come from good schools. One reporter actually went into the executive editor's office and complained that there wasn't enough landscaping to beautify the parking lot. **Don't do that!** When you land your first job, make the best of it, even if you're working for a weekly paper and writing stories about the 4H Fairs. (96A)

Keep a portfolio of your best work. This isn't scrap-booking. It's your career. (76A)

Much of what I need to know as an editor I learned while working as a reporter. (118A)

Starting at a Smaller Paper...

Do not be afraid to work at a small-town paper. Many small-town papers give young journalists much more autonomy than a big paper ever would. You can learn a lot about the business that way. (154A)

Small papers don't often advertise on popular journalism employment Web sites, so you have to ask around. (154A)

My first job in this profession was as a photojournalist at the Emporia Gazette, a 10,000-circulation daily in Emporia, Kan. I worked there for 11 years, but it wasn't until I had left that I fully appreciated not only the history of that institution, but the true joy one gets working in real community journalism everyday. You literally become part of the fabric of the community. At times, being the "picture-taker" or the "Gazette-guy" on a daily basis was annoying, but it allowed me instant access into the lives and homes of complete strangers and unguarded access to portray their stories visually. It wasn't until I began work 50 miles away at a 70,000-circulation city paper that I grasped how meaningful my time in Emporia was. My point: Don't discount small newspapers as a career or a mid-life career-move possibility. Despite not having the resources of larger papers, **the rewards from the smaller community often outweigh** anything the larger has to offer. (5A)

My first journalism job was with a rural weekly in Nova Scotia in 1986. I worked for \$200 a week, but the experience was invaluable. One day I covered courts, the next a car accident, and the next the town council, plus I took photos and did layout. **It was a steppingstone to better jobs.** (103A)

Editing is more than knowing grammar and putting a sentence together. Instinct and the ability to judge a good story comes from experience. So work hard and **don't be fussy** about your first job. Instead, learn all you can. (103A)

MULTI-TASKING

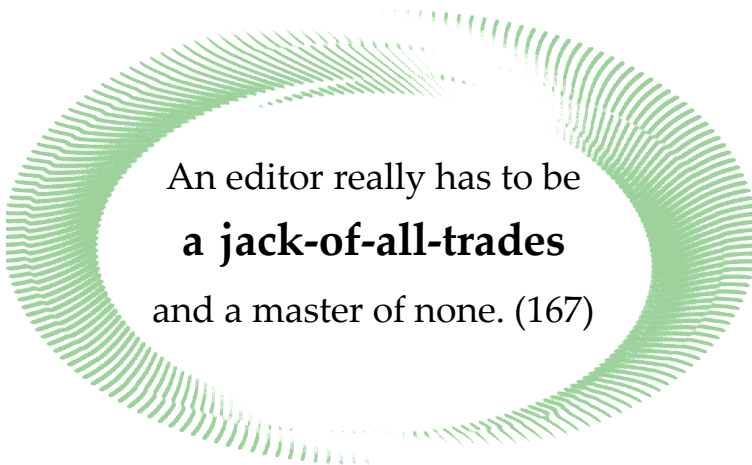
“Be very good at editing, headline writing, and design. To most hiring managers in the current marketplace, these skills are a package deal. They want employees to have all three abilities.”

- CHRISTINA JESSON, THE TUSCALOOSA NEWS

Never be afraid to try different things. Be versatile. There are so many aspects of this business— reporting, editing, research, page design— the more you can offer an editor, especially at entry level, the better your chances of landing a job. (130)

If you consider yourself a writer, learn how to take pictures. If you consider yourself a photographer, learn how to write. At some point, a newspaper will become short-staffed, and people will be forced to do something **they might consider unnatural**. (153)

To be a good editor, **you must always remain** a good reporter. (169)



An editor really has to be
a jack-of-all-trades
and a master of none. (167)

Do some of the sh*t work. I’ve never respected an editor who isn’t willing to help type engagement or wedding announcements when the clerk is near tears and on deadline. Write up short releases if you’ve got time. Don’t hand off a phone call. (170)

Get out of the newsroom to report and write every once in awhile. It keeps you in touch with the community and the public. **It also shows the crew** that you are not too good to do what you ask of others. (179)

Do some reporting. I’m a writing editor so I’m on the street a lot. It not only helps me stay involved in the community, I also get story tips that way. **I also keep my writing chops up** for when I have to re-write stories. (6)

The ability to multi-task is essential. You'll be editing, planning, communicating, and interacting all day. News breaks or other developments happen that need to be handled, so you'll often be working on several things at once. (89)

Editing combines the best of writing with the best of judgment, careful planning, encouragement, and management. Learn and practice those skills. (6)

Write for pleasure. Editors who stop writing— even if it's a journal, fiction or poetry— lose touch with the process. And edit yourself. (11)

Be willing to multitask. On a newspaper copy desk, you will in many cases be **asked to wear several hats.** Depending on the size of the paper, you may paginate or design pages, in addition to editing. You may edit everything from sports copy to features. The more flexible you can be, and the more willing you are to learn and develop new skills, the more valuable you will be at your own paper, and the more marketable you will be to others. (20)

Be flexible. In this business, things have changed so rapidly over the past 10 years that **a beginner who's willing to learn is much more likely to find success** than one who's already convinced she will excel in one small area. If you're a writer, spend a day taking photos, another copy editing, another laying out a page, another shooting video, and another doing Web page layout. Get exposed to all the different areas that make up any news organization. (40)

At my first job at a weekly, I not only wrote, I put together pages, served as a photographer and **even did darkroom technician duties for a time.** I've worked in sports and on the copy desk, in addition to doing stints putting out an advertising section. **Being versatile has really helped with job prospects.** (43)

Be prepared. Newspapers are cutting staff and looking for people who can wear more than one hat. When I first got into the business, "copy editor" and "page designer" were two separate jobs. Now, the position is fast becoming "**copy editor/page designer**" at all but the largest newspapers. And in many cases, the copy desk is assuming roles elsewhere, such as composing rooms, which are also disappearing at smaller newspapers. (43)

Be aware of what it takes for others to do their job. If you're a reporter, sit in the newsroom and watch the editors, copy editors, page designers, etc., work. **Take a tour of the press room** and find out what it really means to pull back a story on deadline. (44)

Say yes to any opportunities that may take you into another "job" in the newsroom, in particular, those jobs you may think you can't do or are not prepared for or experienced in, such as learning how to paginate and spot write special sections for the advertising department. You'll learn a new appreciation for other team members and an understanding of how other critical forces of a newspaper operate. (47)

Even if you want to specialize in one area of coverage, such as education, social issues or sports, don't turn down the chance to report in other areas. **Start broad and then fine-tune** your expertise. If you start and stay narrow, it could hurt your chances of moving into another field of coverage later on. (65)

Small town journalism is a little like being a jack-of-all-trades. As city editor, I assigned stories, chose the stories for page one, did layout for several pages, including the market pages, and when the "lifestyle" editor couldn't seem to handle layout, I took over her duties as well. I did about every newsroom job in existence except in the realm of business and sports. Be prepared to display that type of versatility. (79)

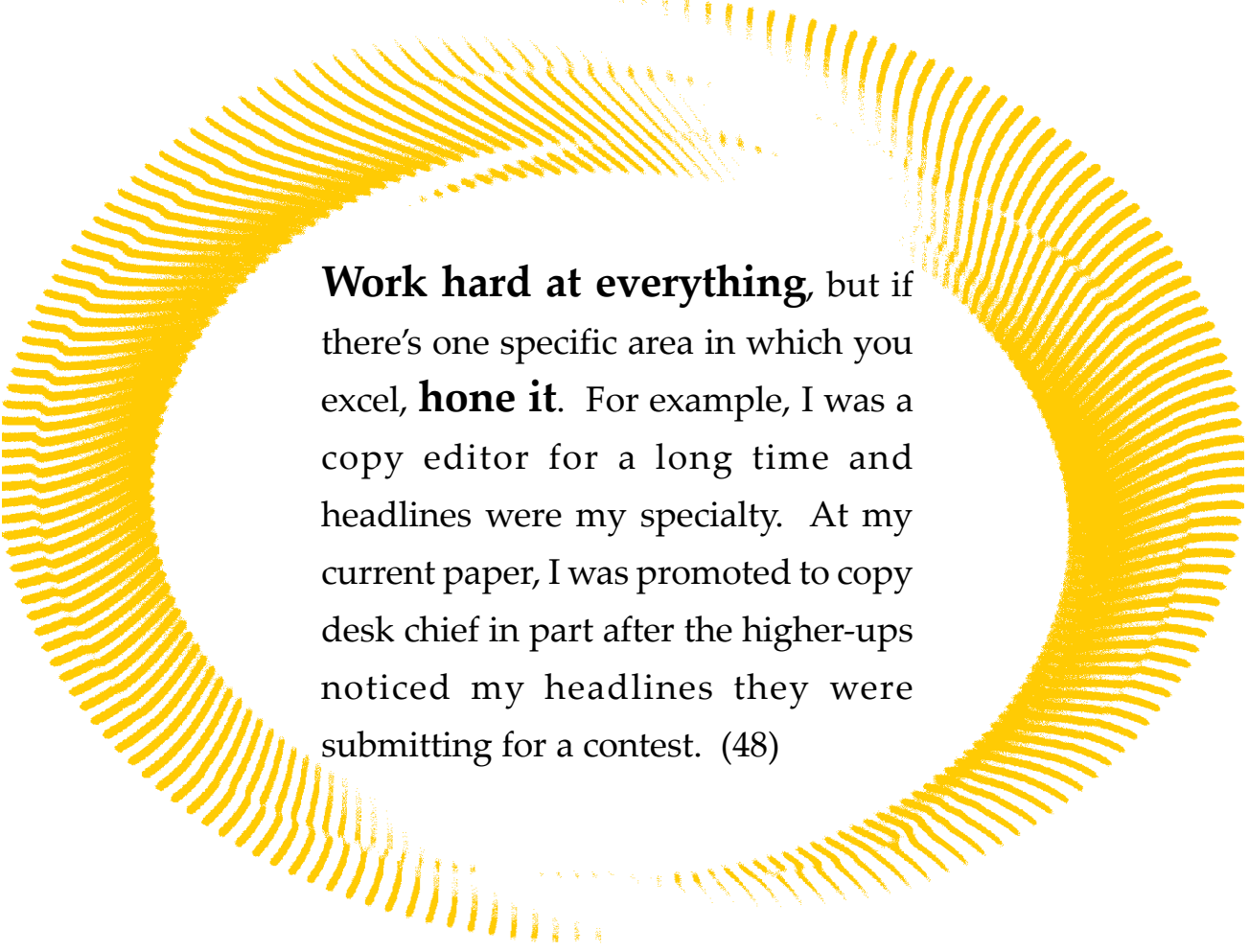
Would-be journalists should **study every aspect of the business.** Try reporting, photography, and layout, even if you never plan to do any of those things. You'll be better at the job you do end up with and you'll be a better hire when you start looking for new jobs down the road. (41)

If you are serious about editing as a profession, diversify your skills as much as possible. Learn page design. Learn HTML and basic Web skills. Learn how to do as many jobs in the newsroom as you can, **even if some might seem to have little relevance** to what you really want to do professionally. Versatility in newsrooms has never been more important than it is now, and those with the ability to do several different jobs over the course of a week are almost certainly going to be the most attractive candidates. (101)

Get some experience, and **learn to be versatile in what you do**. There will be more jobs for the person who has everything from writing and editing skills to photography and design jobs as we move forward in journalism. (91)

Never forget what it's like to be a reporter, and keep up those skills. (173)

First piece of advice on going into editing, only slightly tongue-in-cheek: **Just don't do it!** Reporting is much more fun. I suggest reporting for years and years before going into editing. It will make you a better editor and a much happier person. (168)



Work hard at everything, but if there's one specific area in which you excel, **hone it**. For example, I was a copy editor for a long time and headlines were my specialty. At my current paper, I was promoted to copy desk chief in part after the higher-ups noticed my headlines they were submitting for a contest. (48)

You must become a jack-of-all-trades. You must be able to write, edit, paginate, and even take photos on the rare occasion. Being able to do a lot of different things in the business **makes you more marketable** if you choose to move on to a bigger place. (104)

Strive to be a well-rounded editor who can handle various tasks, someone who has solid editing skills, knows grammar well, likes to write accurate, bright headlines and informative caption information, and can handle layout or paginating pages. The more skills you acquire, the more valuable you become to your employer. (112)

ALWAYS BE LEARNING

“Be eternally hungry to learn. Be insatiably curious.”

- NICHOLAS PALMER, THE VANCOUVER SUN

Commit yourself to learning something new every week, and you’ll grow till the day you retire. I tell my staffers that it’s a good idea to ask themselves on the drive home each Friday night, “What did I learn this week?” It might be how to calculate property taxes on a \$100,000 home. It might be how to bypass the city manager’s secretary and get to his personal phone line. It might be “don’t swing my right foot under the desk because it unplugs my computer.” Aim to list at least three things you know Friday that you didn’t know Monday. (46)

Staying Current...

Stay very current on international, national, and regional issues.

Most editors never know what they’ll be dealing with on any given day until they get to work. (134)

Keep up with trends. Check several newspapers each day to see how they differ in their approaches to the news. **Keep up with the competition**, and remember that competition doesn’t just mean another newspaper. It’s the Internet, TV, radio, and all those other electronic devices that can deliver information. (112)

Stay abreast of current events, even things you’re not interested in. Doing so will make you a better copy editor and can mean more money coming your way at evaluation time. (35)

Learning Language & Style...

You have to be an expert in the language. In the area of micro-editing, you are thoroughly grounded in spelling, punctuation, grammar, usage, and your house style. You know them as familiarly **as a pianist knows the keys under his fingers**. You never stop expanding your grasp of the language, its developments, and its subtleties. (121)

Learn the English language. Your voice or writing style will take you a long way, but eventually if you don't care what the difference is between *further* and *farther* or *which* and *that*, then neither will people care about what you write or edit. (163)

Learn and **be knowledgeable about style, grammar**, and all kinds of information. You are the one who has to catch errors, so you should know all kinds of things upside-down and backward. (30)

Invest time in learning **the language, jargon, and buzzwords** of the particular beat of which you're in charge so that you can ask better questions of reporters on assignment and understand their answers. (84)

When I first became an editor, I will admit, I was too young to have the job. I was only 23 and clueless. However, **I read every book I could get my hands on** about how to edit writing, how to produce stronger layouts, how to work with writers, how to handle budgets, and so on. **Every little bit of learning helped.** (152)

Know that you can constantly **learn more.** (41)

As an editor, **I'm constantly learning that I'm still learning.** Journalism is an industry that's always changing. Even a seasoned editor will find it difficult to stay on top of current events, the latest technology, and the energy of a reporter just out of college. (96)

LEARN FROM PEOPLE

“Journalism is a great opportunity to meet thousands of people each year and learn how different folks, inside and outside your newsroom, are better because they’re different.”

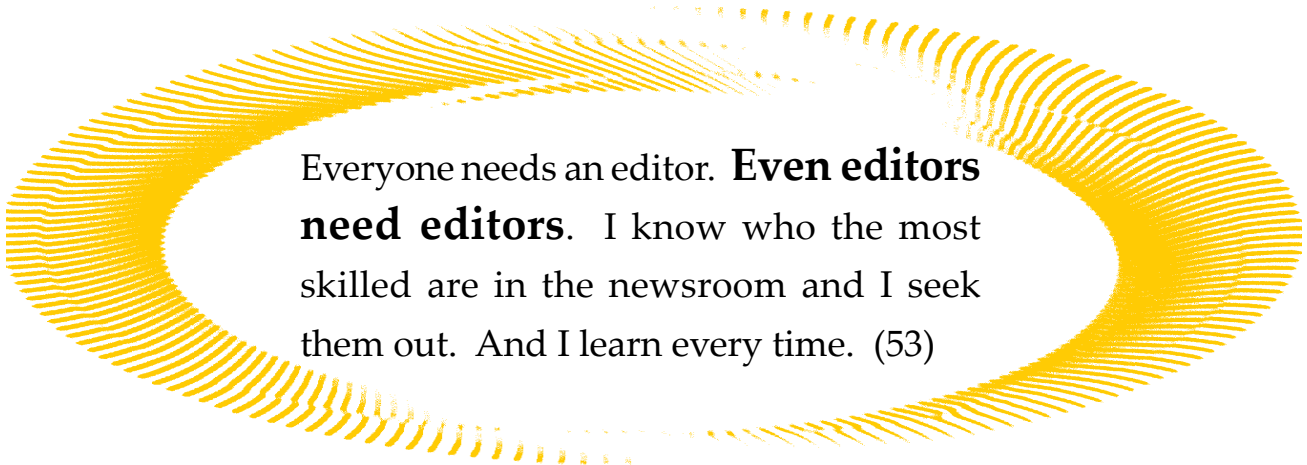
- JEFF HENDRICKSON, THE COLUMBUS LEDGER-ENQUIRER

Pay attention to your colleagues. Learn from them. Don’t come into a paper thinking you know it all. You don’t. (143)

Listen to your readers. **They’re a lot smarter** than you think they are. (147)

Surround yourself with talent. It may not always be possible, but it should always be your goal. Ultimately, it’s only going to help you improve your game. (120)

Listen to reporters and other editors, and then decide what to do. (173)



Everyone needs an editor. **Even editors need editors.** I know who the most skilled are in the newsroom and I seek them out. And I learn every time. (53)

Never brush off advice from another copy editor. You can always use the extra help. (19)

Learn all you can from the people around you. **Observe.** (48)

Find an editor who will be a mentor, someone to help you with difficult stories and act as a sounding board. (188)

Listening is a two-way street. Take the time. Freshmen reporters have taught me a lot of valuable lessons. (53)

Find mentors, some in journalism, and some not. **I've been inspired and taught** by a 101-year-old historian who just finished his 33rd book; by my Uncle Louie, who is a great storyteller; by all the editors I have worked for, none of whom was exactly like the other one; by a couple of seasoned broadcast lions who rip away the stereotype that TV people are shallow and print people deep; by reporters who lived by certain rules (including, "one more phone call" meaning if there is time to do more reporting, then there is always more reporting to do); and by men and women of courage and conviction anytime I meet them, including a federal judge who knew long before it was popular that our country's integrity was at stake when we dealt with civil rights issues. (32)

Get to know as many people in the newsroom as you can. You never know who will turn out to be a great teacher, mentor or resource. The most valuable person might be a copy editor who will explain to you how the place *really* works or a page designer who will help you learn to think visually. (51)

The more you learn from people who know a lot, **the better you'll be in your job.** That means learning from the sources, not just fellow journalists. "Real" people do real jobs and lead real lives, and they can be real interesting, if you listen to them. (54)

During my undergrad years, **it seems I sat through a thousand lectures** about the "qualities of a good ___" (insert: editor, photographer, writer, etc.). A good editor is thorough, deliberate. A good writer is tenacious, artful. The only thing those lectures do is to reduce your self-confidence in whether you think you're good enough for the job. I remember seriously considering finding a new major because I didn't think I'd be able to cut it in journalism. My advice, based on this experience: **Seek out mentors** who will tell you how to do a job, and not simply what you must be as a final product, because you're not there yet, and they know that. (57)

Be aggressive, especially when you want to learn. Don't take "no" or "there's no time to teach you this today" or "we just let experienced editors do that" as answers. Find someone who will work with you and show you the ropes. (60)

Every reporter you will work with, no matter her skill level, has something to teach you. Convey a respect for that knowledge and **you'll remove the barriers** that can keep them from turning to you for guidance. (62)

Find how others do it and do it better. That's how legendary coach Bear Bryant won all those football titles at Alabama. (71)

For newcomers, **it's far better to close the mouth and open the ears.** (81)

Try to work closely with a superior editor who will give lots of good feedback. (89)


LEARN FROM MISTAKES

“Make mistakes, especially huge ones. No one cares about small mistakes. You can make those all day and end up mediocre, never having learned anything worth getting wrong.”

- DAVID BRAUHN, THE WALLA WALLA UNION BULLETIN

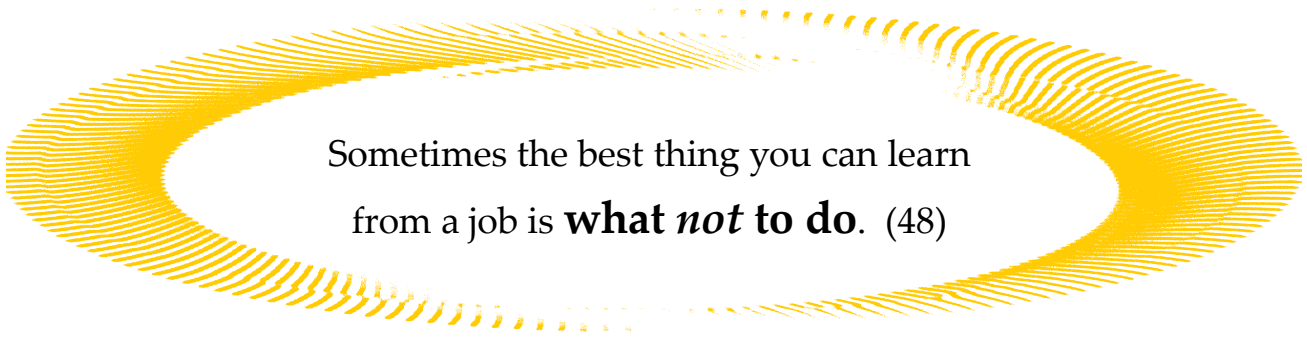
You’re going to make mistakes. **Learn from them.** (183)

Take your work seriously, but don’t take yourself too seriously. If you make a mistake, learn from it and move on. **It’s the blessing of daily journalism.** There’s always tomorrow. (48)



Learn from your mistakes. **Forget about the egg on your face** and move forward. (112)

Fail. Fail a lot. The only way you’ll truly be a really good editor is to make lots of mistakes and learn from them. This is cliché, but it’s so true in a profession that is known for lawsuits and corrections. Higher-up editors realize mistakes will happen, and they’re going to watch **how you handle said mistakes.** It’s always important to handle oneself in a professional, gracious manner. Avoid making excuses (“The computer didn’t save my work” or “It’s her fault.”). **Listen and learn.** (96)



Sometimes the best thing you can learn from a job is **what *not* to do.** (48)

All newspapers, including the one you're working at or aspire to work at, are imperfect. **Embrace this imperfection.** There's beauty in it. (143)

I've worked at newspapers with circulations ranging from 5,000 to 40,000, and nearly every journalist I've ever encountered has had an inflated ego. I think the more a journalist or editor makes mistakes, **the more humble he learns to become.** (96)

There's always tomorrow. While we strive every day for excellence in our headline-writing and editing, we are occasionally going to fall short. Keep your perspective. There's a learning aspect to an editing job. And you'll be putting out a new edition the next day, providing you with a fresh start to move forward and learn from your mistakes. (20)

Most of my management "lessons" have come in making mistakes and making sure I never make the same one twice. (24)

When things go awry, you can't afford to get upset, angry or frustrated, because in editorial production things go wrong all the time, not just daily, hourly. It's your job as editor to **learn quickly, adapt, fix, work around, and generally make brilliant** the steady stream of stories that go off the rails, staff that let you down, gremlins that mess up your pages, sources that go sour, photography that goes wrong, and writers who don't measure up. (105)

Accept the fact that you are human. You can and will make mistakes. Accept them, learn from them, and move on. Leaders take responsibility. **Toadies look for others to blame.** Poor leaders think of themselves as infallible. (17)

LOCAL LEARNING

“An editor must have a working knowledge of the area as well as its people. These things only come with experience. While you are learning, keep a telephone book and street atlas handy.”

- DAVID SMITH, THE CHARLESTOWN PRESS

Work hard at learning all you can about the city you’re working in, even if you grew up there. If the story says Washington Street when it should have said Washington Avenue, you give ammunition to the reader who says, “Whenever I see something in the paper about something I know, it’s often wrong.” (4)

Whether you start out at a 12,000-circulation paper or a 100,000-circulation paper, learn about the community. You’ll never have the best story ideas, or help your newspaper meet its responsibility to the community, if you aren’t part of it. Even if you only plan to stay one year, **find three things you love about your city or its people.** (46)

Residents know their own place and expect their newspaper to know it too. If readers see too many errors regarding places and people they know about, the newspaper comes off badly. **Readers are experts in their own lives** and need to be respected as such. (9)

Get to know your community. **Drive around or walk or take the bus** and become acquainted with the neighborhoods. Study maps so that you are familiar with the place names and their locations. (51)

I can always tell the journeymen journalists from the real things by how little heavy lifting the journeymen do in learning local beats. Yet, while place-specific knowledge may not be needed at their next paper, without it, they’re not meeting the needs of readers, and that is how the great journalists are judged. (123)

READING FOR FUNDAMENTALS

“Read widely and voraciously. Absorb and be well-versed in current events, from a global level right down to the state and civic scene.”

- NICHOLAS PALMER, THE VANCOUVER SUN

Read as much as possible: **newspapers, magazines, non-fiction, fiction.** It’s all good for making you a better writer and editor. (124)

Read as many newspapers as possible. **Read stories for structure.** Ask yourself: What do all good stories have in common, beyond the where, when, etc? Do they all evoke some kind of emotion? Do they all quickly provide balance and context? Do they all include people who are affected by the issue? (188)

Never stop learning. Read as much and as widely as possible. **Especially read history,** for your professional growth and your personal pleasure, because you absolutely can’t know where you are, much less where you’re going, unless you have some idea of where you’ve been. In addition, an understanding of history can save your paper from many errors by ill-informed writers. (4)

Read for pleasure. Find someone who does it right and get your hands on everything they’ve published. (11)

Read, read, read, read, and read: fiction, nonfiction, bad Internet articles, Socratic dialogues, anything, as long as you read. So many people I’ve met in life, and a few in journalism sadly, have little intellectual curiosity. To be a good editor, and a good human, **one must explore the world,** and the easiest way is to read. (26)

Read, read, and read some more. If you’re on the desk or serving as editor, you don’t necessarily have to know more about a beat than your reporters, but you have to know what questions to ask, what’s missing, and what holes need filling. That means you need to do the same heavy lifting about local institutions, people and places as reporters. You need to know the difference between justice court and city court or why for a long time in Philadelphia there was no building taller than the statue of William Penn atop City Hall. (123)

Read poets, frequently. They have a lot to tell newspaper writers: Be spare. Don’t be trite. Describe. Reach. (32)

Read other newspapers and **steal their ideas for design**. (76)

Read at least 20 good books a year and know things. (49)

Read your newspaper. **Look at the ads**. There is a lot of information in the advertisements which may be valuable to the newsroom staff, such as sparking story ideas. (80)

I read USA Today and magazines like People, etc. that deliver entertainment and feature news. These are “**style setters**” in giving readers what they want: quick reads rather than three pages of copy on a person or event. (102)

You have to read: novels, biographies, history, philosophy, and other newspapers. You can't expect to be able to **put things into perspective** if you have no perspective yourself. (99)

Pay attention. This is key advice for all good journalists, but especially for copy editors. And it is true in so many aspects. Pay attention to what your newspaper is running. **Read it every day**. You can catch inconsistencies that crop up in a second-, or third- or tenth-day story. You can edit wire news to make it even more relevant to your local readers. (20)

Good editors are big readers who are **constantly expanding their mental database** with vocabulary, the nuances of English usage, general knowledge, and specialized information. As an old-timer, I would say there is a tendency for young people to read less these days. Journalists, by contrast, always need to read more. (30)

You must have an endless curiosity about anything and everything and enjoy reading the stories running in your publication, both the ones you edit and the ones you don't. Our reporters have covered stories about strip bars, the re-establishment of bald eagles in a wilderness, the discovery of a mountain moonshine still, the state budget, hopeless candidates for Congress, daughters who kept their dead mothers in a footlocker so the Social Security check wouldn't be cut off, runaway goats from the Christmas manger scene, city manager resignations, the high cost of a funeral, the fluctuating coal market, and people trapped inside a deep cave by high water. Some of it I knew something about before reading. All of it, however, taught me at least one thing I didn't know. (32)

There are many benefits of working for newspapers— for editors mainly **the chance to learn or see** stuff you'd never otherwise learn or see. (36)



Tools of the Trade

“There are two tools every editor needs:
clairvoyance and omniscience.”

- John Ferro,

**The Poughkeepsie
Journal**

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

“We want people to spend as much time each day with us, the publication, as possible. That is our mission. Produce insightful efforts that people want to read.”

- JEFF HENDRICKSON, THE COLUMBUS LEDGER-ENQUIRER

Make a cheat sheet of notes on style points, etc. that you can use for a quick reference. (112)

The most important tool for success: Develop a system to keep things where you can find them. It saves a ton of time and aggravation when someone asks you a mundane-sounding question like, “Do you know when that book was published?” or “Are you sure that Web site is correct?” and you can find the answer in less than a minute. **That doesn’t mean labeled folders and hanging files**, but they help. It means putting things where you can find them, not in a cluttered stack of things on a shelf. (185)

Keep a city map at your elbow, and check it frequently. Do the same for your state. (4)

Do crossword puzzles in your downtime. You’ll build your vocabulary quickly. (168)

AP Stylin’

Crack the AP Stylebook. You’ll be surprised how much easier it makes the job. (21)

Once a year, read the AP stylebook and the local stylebook **cover to cover.** (81)

The AP Stylebook is **your Bible.** (90)

Editors need to know the AP Stylebook, but **not be handicapped** by it. (145)

Books to Edit By

Of the usage guides published in the last decade, the best is Bryan A. Garner's "**Modern American Usage.**" It tops my list of reference works I can't do without. (27)

Bill Walsh, a copy editing executive at the Washington Post, has written "**Lapsing into a Comma**" and "**The Elephants of Style.**" Both are engaging and easy to read. Walsh also has a Web site, theslot.com, which every journalism student should explore. (27)

Buy a copy of "**The One Minute Manager**" by Kenneth H. Blanchard and Spencer Johnson. Read it. Use it. (37)

All editors must own "The Elements of Style." They should be forced to recite it by page and paragraph, or at least be able to find the page and paragraph for the rule in question on deadline. (156)

Keep a dictionary nearby. I never go a day without checking one, even if it's just answering a question: "**Is this one word, two words or hyphenated?**" (4)

Start your reading with "**The Careful Writer**" by A.B Rosenthal, another old volume which is up-to-date in many ways. Wilson Follett's "**Modern American Usage: A Guide**" is excellent, too, especially on adverb placement. (27)

One of the most helpful books I've read on editing is Bremner's "**Words on Words.**" I've always recommended it to our writers when they've wanted to expand into editing. (33)

Post an editor's checklist where you can see it. Include questions such as: Is the lede supported by the story? Is the story unbiased and balanced? Is there enough background to give context and scope? Are name spellings in stories CQ'd (checked and double-checked)? **Have you looked up unusual words?** Do numbers add up? Are names of companies, organizations, and agencies correct? In the old days, some of this checking was laborious, but now with Google and online dictionaries, it's pretty easy. (30)

Use Internet search engines. That's what they are there for, to check facts, dates, spellings, definitions, anything. Don't rely on memory all the time. After all, you could be wrong. (102)

Chocolate is ALWAYS good medicine. Keep a stash in your desk and distribute liberally, especially when the CF (crankiness factor) is running high! (124)

Know where all **caffeinated beverages** are kept in your newsroom. (153)

Find a good weight room and exercise regularly. The more exercise you get, the longer you will be able to sit at your desk and concentrate. (76)

Turn off the iPod and turn on NPR! (73)

Uninstall spellchecker from your computer. It will make you a better writer and editor. Every morning I get an e-mail from a reader who points out the misspelled word that is misspelled because an editor assigned the job to a computer program. (156)

Know your libel law. (33)

You can never go to enough libel seminars. The **nuances of the law** change with every new court case won or lost. (112)

Make it a daily habit to **read the “Romenesko” column** on the Poynter site (www.poynter.org) for industry gossip. Other Poynter staff also offer good advice to journalists. (65)

Copy editors should **look into ACES**, or The American Copy Editors’ Society. They have a Web site (www.copydesk.org), contests, an annual convention, classes, and job postings. (65)

A good Web site to get the feel of a copy desk is www.testycopyeditors.org, whose motto is “One of the great things about being a copy editor is **freedom from vulgar desire** for public recognition.” (107)

Don’t ever ask the city editor for directions to anywhere, **except perhaps the bathroom**. Instead, use a map. (188)

Sign up for professional seminars, **even if you have to take vacation and pay tuition yourself**. It’s an investment in your own future. (65)

Learn how to read business annual reports, budgets, etc. Realize that *everything* you cover is, in some form or another, a business and you need to understand all aspects of the company you are covering, such as **sports teams, the symphony, theater groups, the cinema**, etc. (65)

If your marketing department puts out materials about the readership, read those. It will give you **a sense of who your publication is serving**. (51)

Final Thoughts

“**Newsroom wisdom:** My, oh, my,
that sounds like **an oxymoron.**”

- Roman Augustoviz,

**The Minneapolis
Star Tribune**

“In my news job, I feel as though I’m **watching the future unfold**, become the present, and then pass into history every day. It’s **always changing and it’s always the same**, and it is never dull or insignificant.”

- Catherine Hicks,

**The Walla Walla
Union Bulletin**

“Editing copy should be listed on the “**Top 10 Most Stressful Jobs on the Planet.**” You have multiple deadlines every night. You must make very few mistakes. At our paper, our work is critiqued daily and publicly, and any goof-up will be seen by thousands of people.”

- Amy Phillips Bursch,

**The Sioux Falls
Argus Leader**

Qualities of an Effective Editor

The effective editor:

- 1) Labors everyday to get better at the editing craft.
- 2) Engages writers, and offers editing that is vital.
- 3) Ignites the spark of enthusiasm.
- 4) Asks meaningful questions to help the writer define the work.
- 5) Sees extraordinary events in ordinary places.
- 6) Takes risk, and seizes opportunity.
- 7) Invests in the writer's success.
- 8) Protects the writer, and the publication, from failure.
- 9) Understands the publication, the mission, and the audience.
- 10) Coaches writers to engage readers.
- 11) Knows when to speak and when to listen.
- 12) Understands that the writer owns the story.
- 13) Never touches a story before reading it in its entirety.
- 14) Does not tinker or edit for editing's sake.
- 15) Learns from the writer, other writers, and other editors.
- 16) Praises in public.
- 17) Criticizes in private, with an eye to future success.
- 18) Stands by the writer.
- 19) Never publishes with doubt or misgiving.
- 20) Never quits.

- **Tom Heslin**, The Providence Journal

“When you take your place among the ranks of copy editors, you will join that select group of people who would **rather be right than president**. You will work among some of the smartest people in the newsroom, people whose love of language and broad range of knowledge are unmatched. As an editor, you will find that the work you do demands an unusual combination of skills and an uncommon temperament: a combination of **mild obsessive-compulsive disorder** (expressed as a determination to establish accuracy, order and consistency where they did not exist before) and that quiet sense of superiority that is gratified by the correction of other people’s mistakes. In headline writing, you will develop a skill that combines **the mastery of Scrabble with the composition of haiku**.”

- Jon McIntyre,

The Baltimore Sun

“The most memorable, and most ignored, advice I once received in a college journalism class came from a crusty old editor who said, “Get out of this [effing] business while you still can.” Even then, more than 25 years ago, people were **screaming that the sky was falling on the news business**. If it was, it’s a very slow collapse. I don’t believe it’s falling. I do believe it’s changing, and the pace of change is accelerating. **That’s actually what makes it fun.**”

- Rex Seline,

**The Fort Worth
Star-Telegram**

“To become an editor, you must know what it is to have a byline on an important story and be entirely comfortable with giving it up. You must become **deaf in one ear**, develop a **rubber-like skin**, and remember with every story you must figure a way to please the person **above and below you** on the food chain.”

- John Mura,

**The Louisville
Courier-Journal**

“Copy editors’ jobs have gained respect among their colleagues in recent years. It wasn’t long ago that the desk was where journalists were sent if they screwed up as reporters. It was punishment, not a sought-after destination. The copy desk is now rightfully seen as a newspaper’s last line of defense, and top editors today recognize that **you can’t have an exceptional newspaper without an exceptional copy desk.**”

- Steve Blust,

The Beaufort Gazette

“**Editors have massive egos.** They’ll not only take time out of their busy schedules to pass on their “wisdom” to others, they’ll **demand credit if you follow their advice and meet with success.**”

- Todd Vines,

Essential Kauai

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