

Triage Editing



www.copydesk.org/TriageEditing

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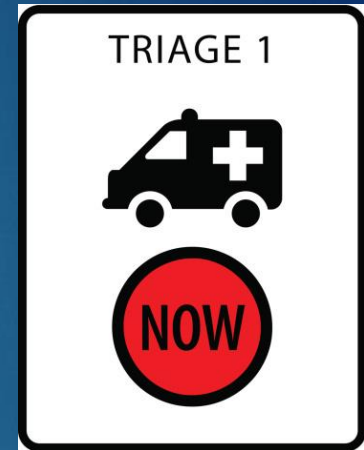
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Today's Agenda

1. What is triage editing?
2. Why is it valuable?
3. Basic triage steps
4. How to assess damage, plan treatment
5. How to create a triage checklist
6. Sample triage checklists
7. Our critical list
8. Summary



What is triage editing?

- ▶ We are imperfect humans living in deadline world
- ▶ Not all errors are created equal
- ▶ Not everything can be critical all the time
- ▶ We need to see the forest, not the trees, which is against our nature



What is the value?

- ▶ Deliberate approach to insane situations
- ▶ Objective criteria in high-stress situations
- ▶ Order to chaos
- ▶ Increases consistency
- ▶ Reduces conflict
- ▶ Improves quality
- ▶ Saves time
- ▶ Achieve editing nirvana



1. Bright light in distance

2.
Whoa!
Dead
in 15

3. Urgent: 30 min

4. Meh:
1-2
hours

5. NBD: Take your time

Basic concept

Imagine
tweaking
medical
criteria for
editing



Basic steps

1. Triage content: assess value, damage
2. Determine treatment (course of action)
3. Treat
4. Re-evaluate if needed
5. Let. It. Go.
6. Move on to next patient



Triage content

- ▶ Assess damage level
- ▶ Run spell-check, Lingofy, Tansa, PerfectIt, whatever tech you've got
- ▶ Skim document
- ▶ Take note of critical needs



Triage content

- ▶ Assess **damage level**
- ▶ Run spell-check, Lingofy, Tansa, PerfectIt, whatever tech you've got
- ▶ Skim document
- ▶ Take note of critical needs



Assess damage level

Things to consider

- ▶ Weight of project
- ▶ Likely eyeballs
- ▶ Lifespan
- ▶ Time to fix v. impact
- ▶ Cost to others?
- ▶ Damage to your credibility?
- ▶ Harm to someone?
- ▶ Confuse your readers?



Assess damage level

Things to consider

- ▶ Value to customer?
- ▶ Value to reader?
- ▶ Value to source?
- ▶ Value to you?
- ▶ Harm to source?
- ▶ Harm to credibility?
- ▶ Audience and goal?
- ▶ Who is the source?



Treatment plan

- ▶ Now that you know what's wrong, what are you going to do to save your patient in the time you have?
- ▶ We need a common approach or universal standards to save the life of our content – or a treatment plan.



What do you think is the worst error?

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

“ BREAKING: Rep. Giffords (D-AZ), 6 others killed by gunman in Tucson n.pr/fjnZW5

 11 months ago

nprnews

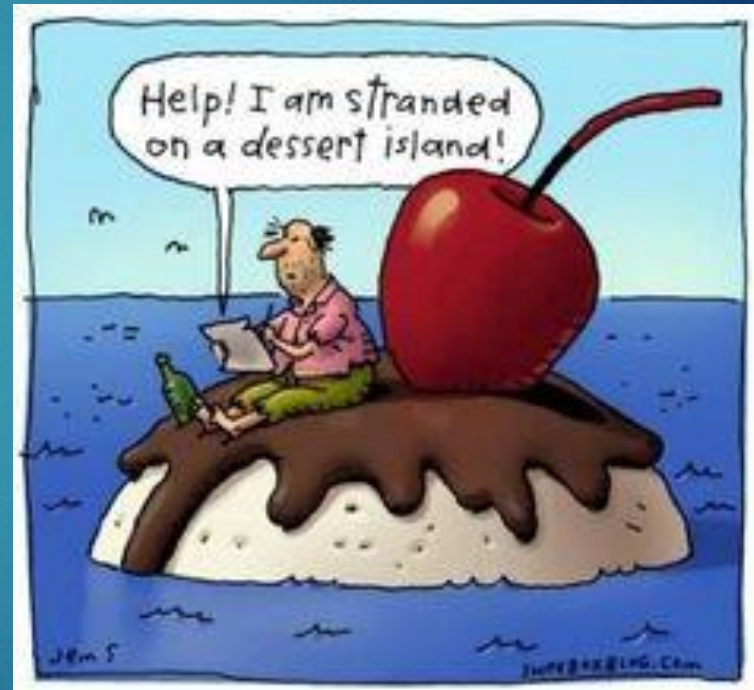


Eye
nver
dew
tipe o's.

www.cathygates.com/typist/brand.com

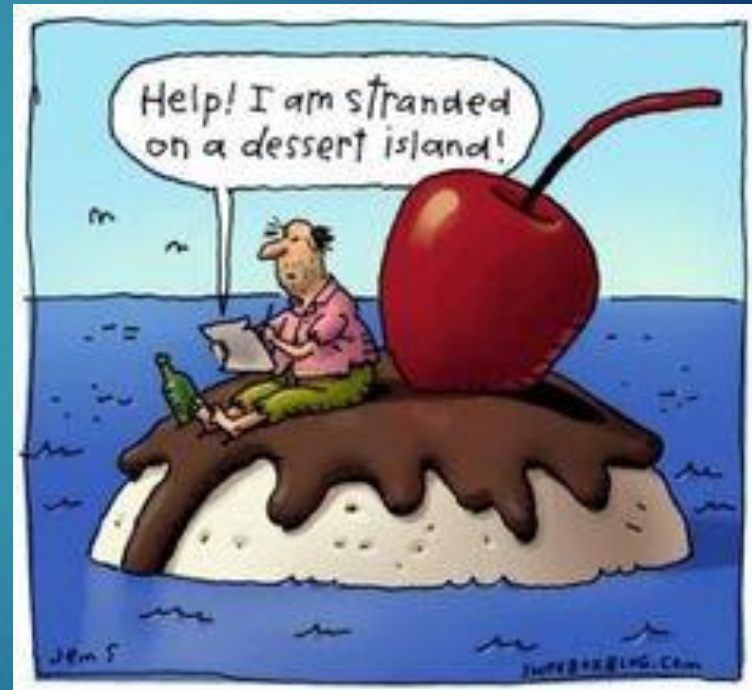
What do you think readers think is the worst error?

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



What do you think readers think is the worst error?

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



Treatment plan

How to create one

- ▶ Rely on research, branding
- ▶ Talk to client
- ▶ Talk to boss
- ▶ Lean on metrics
- ▶ Listen to readers
- ▶ Rely on stylebook
- ▶ Know your market, readers
- ▶ Know your writers
- ▶ Use whatever data you can



Sample

Damage assessment – Level 1:

- ▶ Career-altering errors
- ▶ Errors that cause harm
- ▶ Errors readers care about
- ▶ Errors we care about
- ▶ Errors that will domino day
- ▶ Content that contains libel

Course of treatment:

- ▶ Put a toe tag on it and kill it



Sample treatment plans

Level 1

1. Profanity
2. Name spellings
3. Math
4. Libel
5. Grammar

Level 2 (+1)

1. Consistency
2. Smooth transitions
3. Clarity
4. Hyperlinks
5. Trademarks



Sample treatment plans

Level 3 (+1, 2)

1. Style
2. Split infinities
3. Cosmetic
4. Plagiarism spot check
5. Duplicate words
6. Wordiness

Level 4 (+1, 2, 3)

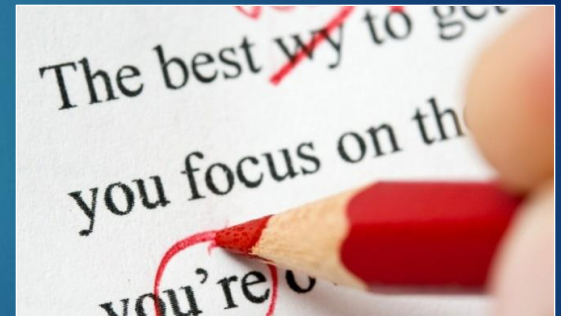
1. Flow
2. Tone
3. Voice
4. Fabrication check
5. Full rewrite



Sample treatment plan

As time allows, in order:

1. Correct factual errors
2. Check all display type for errors in fact and grammar
3. Check all display type for clarity
4. Check all type for clarity
5. Fix spelling, homophone errors
6. Fix usage errors
7. Fix punctuation errors
8. Fix style errors



Triage for readers: 3 minutes

Spelling

Grammar

MLB

Amphibious pitcher makes debut

Venditte becomes first pitcher in 20 years to pitch with both arms in MLB game

By HOWARD ULMAN
Associated Press

BOSTON — Pat Venditte took warmup pitches in his major league debut with his right arm. And left.

The ambidextrous pitcher entered the game against the Boston Red Sox at the start of the seventh inning after he was called up Friday by the Oakland Athletics.

Wearing a specially designed glove, he threw warmup pitches with his right hand then switched to his left.



AP Photo/Charles Knapp

In this two image combination, Oakland Athletics relief pitcher Pat Venditte (29) delivers with his left and right hand to separate Boston Red Sox batters during the seventh inning at Fenway Park in Boston, Friday.

In 17 outings this season, 16 in injury.



Administering treatment

From introducing the nation's first bottle refund in 1970 to founding the first car-sharing company in 1998, Oregon is a green pioneer. Today the state continues its eco-friendly tradition by embracing electric vehicles, enabling drivers to see and protect the environment simultaneously.

With a network of 35 fast-charging electric vehicle stations every 25-50 miles along Interstate 5, Oregon's award-winning West Coast Electric Highway is extending the range of travel for electric vehicles in the region. With the Ski Bowl West location in Government Camp kicking off this past winter, the Mt. Hood-Columbia River Gorge EV Tourism Loop was completed. Now, the third phase of the project is underway, reaching even further into central and southern Oregon. In just over a year of operation, the highway saw over 10,000 charges, and with the number of EV's on Oregon's road doubling in 2013, the stations should only gain in popularity.

Triage for readers: 3 hours

Accuracy

Spelling

Grammar

Clarity

Grammar

Hyperlinks

Style



Triage for readers: 3 days, weeks

Profanity

Name spellings

Math

Libel

Grammar

Consistency

Smooth transitions

Clarity

Hyperlinks

Trademarks

Style

Split infinities

Plagiarism check

Duplicate words

Wordiness Flow

Tone

Voice

Fabrication check

Full rewrite

Your OCD list

It's "Before", not "B4"...you
speak English. Not Bingo



Our treatment musts

- ▶ Accuracy
- ▶ Clarity
- ▶ Big type
- ▶ First graph, last graph
- ▶ Grammar
- ▶ Profanity (you don't want)
- ▶ Big, career-altering errors (libel, fairness, balance, victim ID)
- ▶ Hyperlinks



Our forgettaboutits

- ▶ Style
- ▶ Cosmetic
- ▶ Oxford commas
- ▶ Who, whom
- ▶ Dangling modifiers
- ▶ Split infinitives
- ▶ Anything that trips your OCD button



Final thought

“A good editor accepts that they cannot achieve perfection and knows which errors it is essential to prevent and which, if missed, alter nothing of consequence.”

Colleen Barry, Copy Curmudgeon



“Everything about Jay Cutler is a mistake .” Teresa Schmedding

Research

- **Audience Perceptions of Editing Quality**
Fred Vultee, Digital Journalism, 2014
- **When the Editor Disappears, Does Editing Disappear?**
Susan Greenberg, Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies, 2010



Portland March 28-April 2

Join hundreds of copy editors for the ACES national conference in 2016. For info, see copydesk.org/aces-2016-portland

