

Editing Guidelines

24 January 2008; *The Oredigger*

Leads

- 25 words or less
- End of the lead graph must follow paragraph break
- Ensure a catch – suggested lead styles from 14 Jan 08 handout

Body & Flow Editing

- *One idea per paragraph* – very important. Also, keep 1-3 sentences per paragraph.
- Make sure that ideas flow between paragraphs (i.e. writers shouldn't go from "environmental sustainability" to "leather couches" without a serious link between the end of the former paragraph and the beginning of the latter)
- The "main idea" at the beginning – in the lead – should be echoed and, when possible, concluded at the end of the piece; readers should *feel* that they have gotten the entire story
- Always better to go with fewer words than too many; if a phrase and/or sentence doesn't *actively contribute* to the idea presented in the paragraph, cut it.
- If the writer hasn't cited enough sources (interviews, research, etc.), you have two options:
 - 1. Perform some last-minute research yourself, as the editor, to fill in the gaps (this option takes more time, but presents a better product).
 - 2. Cut the non-research (commentary) portions of the piece back *much* more than normal so that it doesn't appear imbalanced; we can always run a follow-up with another portion of the story.

"News" Tips

- Arrange paragraphs from the most important to the least important; you can still keep the flow between them (this is where editing comes in), but make sure the biggest detail isn't at the end (most readers won't get that far).
- All quotes should read "said." No "say" or "says" or "will say." Also, the writers shouldn't vary from "said" too much – it's not interesting, but it's AP. Every now and again, they can say "continued so-and-so," or "commented," but not "uttered," etc.

"Feature" Tips

- Features should be *easy* to read. They're fun – don't make the reader work too hard. This means short sentences (no more than 30 words) and short paragraphs (easier for the eye to grasp).
- Quotes can be much more fun and phrasing can *start* to editorialize...a little. Writers don't need to always represent both sides of a story here, either.

Grammar & Style Tips

- Make sure all interviewees have their full name & title listed the first time and only their last name after that

- Humor is okay, but make sure there isn't a bad double-meaning behind it
- When possible, ensure that sentence structure isn't always the same
- Lowercase phrases: graduate, undergraduate, discipline, year in school, etc. (only *proper* nouns are capitalized)
- Always abbreviate a month when accompanied by a date, so either "Jan. 24, 2008" or "January 2008."
- Always show state abbreviations, but not postal code style: it's "Colo." And "Mich.," not "CO and MI." – here's the list of what they can be: Ala., Ariz., Ark., Calif., Colo., Conn., Del., Fla., Ga., Ill., Ind., Kan., Ky., La., Mass., Md., Mich., Minn., Miss., Mo., Mont., N.C., N.D., Neb., Nev., N.H., N.J., N.M., N.Y., Okla., Ore., Pa., R.I., S.C., S.D., Tenn., Vt., Va., Wash., W.Va., Wis., Wyo.
- Number from one to nine are written out like so; numbers greater than 10 are written as numbers; ages are always written by numeral – i.e. 15-year-old
- Never use the word "dollar" – it's "\$15 or \$1 million"
- Remember, punctuation always goes within the quote, not outside.