EDITING YOUR REPORT

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CONTENT

- Redrafting and Checking.
- Why is editing necessary?
- Guidelines for editing your report.
- Developing your own editing checklist.

Learning objectives:

At the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- explain why editing the report is very necessary;
- develop overall strategies for editing the report;
- edit the report for structural features;

Learning objectives cont'd:

- correct grammatical aspects of their reports;
- comply with technical requirements;
- develop their own editing checklist; and
- edit effectively to create maximum understanding.

REDRAFTING AND CHECKING

- Once you have written the first draft of your report you will need to check it through.
- It is probably sensible to leave it on your desk for a day or so if you have the time. This will make a clear break from the intensive writing period, allowing you to view your work more objectively.

- Assess your work in the following areas:

  - Structure

  - Content

  - Style

- Look at the clarity and precision of your work.

WHY EDIT YOUR REPORT

- The final stage in the process of writing a report is editing and this stage is a significant one.

- Editing is mainly a form of quality control.
- Is the prescribed standard of presentation followed? Use of approved format.

- Thorough editing helps to identify:

- spelling mistakes;

- awkward grammar;

- if you have really fulfilled the requirements of the report and answered all parts of the question.

- It is also used to make sure you have eliminated any errors of logic(or reasoning) in your report.

- Ideally, you will have ironed out any major problem in the redrafting stage and made sure that you have answered the question or tackled the report task. However, it is still worth checking in the editing stage that your report is logically structured. Sometimes minor adjustments or changes to expression can greatly improve the flow of your argument, or make your report clearer.

A 'Plan of Attack': It is worthwhile adopting a 'plan of attack' to ensure thorough and effective editing ; by editing for different features such as:

- **Check for structural aspects**
- **Check for grammar aspects and punctuations**
- **Check technical aspects(spelling, presentation, title, reference list)**

EDITING FOR STRUCTURAL FEATURES

Reports have specific stages or sections that need to be included such as Introduction, the body of the report and conclusion.

CHECKING REPORT STRUCTURE

Introduction

- Have you addressed the question fully?
- Does the introduction contain a statement of the problem and an outline of the sub-topics to be covered?

BODY

- Does your report include an executive summary?
- Does the sections of your report contain the necessary headings and that you have included suitable information for each section?
- Is the transition from one section to the next smooth and logical?

CONCLUSION

- Have you restated the main point?
- Have you reminded the reader of the strengths of your report?
- Have you avoided including any new information in your conclusion?

EDITING FOR GRAMMARTICAL ASPECTS AND PUNCTUATIONS

- After revising our report and we are satisfied with its basic content and structure, we still need to edit for grammar.

  In order words, we still need to examine our sentences to make sure that each one is clear, concise, forceful and free of mistakes.

You can use this checklist as a guide when editing paragraphs:

1. Is each ***sentence*** clear and complete?

2. Can any short choppy sentences be improved by ***combining*** them?

Let's look at an example of sentence combination. Start by looking at this list of eight short (and repetitive) sentences:

- She was our Latin teacher.
- We were in high school.
- She was tiny.
- She was a birdlike woman.
- She was swarthy.
- She had dark eyes.
- Her eyes were sparkling.
- Her hair was graying.

Now try combining those sentences into three, two or even just one clear and coherent sentence. In the process of combining, omit repetitive words and phrases (such as ‘she was’) but keep all of the original details.

Have you succeeded in combining the sentence? If so compare your work with these sample combinations.

- Our Latin teacher in high school was a tiny woman. She was swarthy and birdlike, with dark, sparkling eyes and graying hair.
- When we were in high school, our Latin teacher was a tiny woman. She was swarthy and birdlike, with dark, sparkling eyes and graying hair.
- Our high school Latin teacher was a swarthy, birdlike woman. She was tiny, with dark, sparkling eyes and graying hair.

Here is the sentence that served as the original model for this little combining exercise.

- ***Our high school Latin teacher was a tiny, birdlike woman, swarthy, with sparkling dark eyes, and graying hair.***

  Is it the best version possible? Nevertheless, certain guidelines are worth keeping in mind as we evaluate our sentence combinations.

Here are the six basic qualities to consider when you evaluate your new sentence:

- **Meaning:** as far as you can determine, have you conveyed the idea intended in the report?
- **Clarity:** is the sentence clear? Can it be understood on the first reading?

- **Coherence:** do the various parts of the sentence fit together logically and smoothly?
- **Emphasis:** are key words and phrases put in emphatic positions?
- help to emphasize the key points?

- **Conciseness:** does the sentence clearly express an idea without wasting words?
- **Rhythm:** does the sentence flow, or is it marked by awkward interruptions?

3.Can any long awkward sentence be improved by breaking them down into shorter units and recombining them? i.e. Cutting the Clutter.

Here we apply some key editing strategies for cutting out needless words (dead wood) that only bores, distracts or confuses our readers.

TIPS TO CUT THE CLUTTER:

- Reduce long clauses to shorter phrases.
- Reduce phrases to single words
- Avoid There is, There are and There were as sentence openers
- Don’t overwork modifiers
- Avoid redundancies
- Don’t try to show off.

4. **Can any wordy sentence be made more concise?** Conciseness is a one in which a great deal is conveyed in just a few words.

Concise writing is generally free of repetition and needless details.

5. Problems with noun-verb agreement. Does each verb agree with its subject?

- Cut empty phrases

Now let's put this advice to work. The sentences below contain unnecessary words. Without eliminating any essential information, revise each sentence to make it more concise.

(i) In the cellar there are four wooden-type crates with nothing in them that might perhaps be used by us for storing paint cans inside of.

(ii)This morning at 6.30am, I woke up out of sleep to hear my alarm go off, but the alarm was turned off by me, and I returned back to a sleeping state.

(iii)Omar and I, we returned back to the hometown where we both grew up to attend a reunion of the people that we went to high school with ten years ago in the past.

(iv)She used her money to purchase a large-type desk made of mahogany wood that is dark brown in colour and handsome to look at.

EDITED VERSION

(i) We could store the paint cans in the four wooden crates in the cellar.

(ii) I awoke this morning at 6.30am, but then turned off the alarm and went back to sleep.

(iii) Omar and I returned to our hometown to attend our ten-year high school reunion.

(iv) She purchased a large, handsome-looking mahogany desk.

- Here we will practice applying one of the most basic and yet also most troublesome rules of grammar: In the ***present tense,*** a verb must agree in number with its subject; simply means that we have to remember to add an –s to the verb if its subject is singular and not add an -s if the subject is plural. It is really not a hard principle to follow as long as we can ***identify the subject and the verb***

Exercise: Compare the verbs(in bold) in the two sentences: *Mardine* ***sings*** *the blues at the Rainbow Lounge.*

My sisters ***sing*** *the blues at the Rainbow Lounge.*

4 tips to help you apply the principle that a verb must agree in number with its subject.

Tip 1 : add an –s to the verb if the subject is a singular noun: a word that names one person, place or thing, e.g. Mr. Eko **drives** a hard bargain

Tip 2 : Add an –s to the verb if the subject is any one of the third person singular pronoun: he, she, it, this, that e.g.

He drives a minivan.

She follows a different number.

Tip 3 : Do not add an –s to the verb, if the subject is the pronoun I, you, we, or they. e.g.

I make my own rules.

We take pride in our work.

They sing out of key.

You drive a hard bargain.

Tip 4 : Do not add an –s to the verb, if two subjects are joined by and.

e.g. **Jack and Sawyer often argue with each other.**

Charlie and Hurley enjoy music.

Exercises

(i) I ride in the bus every morning. My sister never (ride) the bus.

(ii) Veronica seldom visits her mother. In fact, she never wants to (visit) any one.

Edited Version

(i) I ride the bus every morning. My sister never rides the bus.

(ii) Veronica seldom visits her mother. In fact, she never wants to visit anyone.

Edited Version

6) Are all *verbs* forms correct and consistent?

8) Do *pronouns* refer clearly to the appropriate nouns?

9) Do *all modifying words and phrases* refer clearly to the words they are intended to modify?

10) Is each word in the report appropriate and effective?

Check Glossary of Usage: index of commonly confused words. For example Advice or Advise; principal or principle

Exercise

(i) (Whose, Who's) shorts are hanging from the flagpole?

(ii) What is your (principal, principle) reason for wearing a parrot on your head?

(iii) Last year Beckham(lead, led) the league in goals.

(iv) Computers are being called on to perform many new functions, including consumption of homework(formally, formerly) eating by the dog.

11. Is the punctuation correct?

Can any run-on sentence be more effectively coordinated or subordinated? **Run-on sentences:** are sentences which are generally incorrectly punctuated. The result is a series of sentences 'run' together mostly with commas

For example: After water is released from the dam it is important that it is able to travel easily downstream. Thus channel improvements sometimes must be made, ***this can involve straightening bends, removing brush, debris or hazards from the channel***

Edited Version: ***After water is released from the dam it is important that it is able to travel easily downstream.***

This channel improvements sometimes must be made.

This can involve straightening bends, removing brush, debris, or hazards from the channel.

Run-on sentences can also be avoided by using coordinating conjunctions preceded by commas. For example

- Thus channel improvements sometimes must be made, ***and this can involve straightening bends, removing brush, debris, or hazards from the channel.***
- Alternatively, it would also have been possible to make the run-on sentence a relative clause by introducing which;
- Thus channel improvements sometimes must be made, ***which involves straightening bends, removing brush, debris, or hazards from the channel.***

Understanding the principle behind the common marks of punctuation i.e.**(.) period, (?) question mark, (!) exclamation mark, (,) comma, (;) semicolon, (-) dash and (‘) apostrophe;**

should strengthen your understanding of grammar and help you to use the marks consistently in your writing.

USE OF APOSTROPHE

Apostrophe (‘) may be the simplest and yet most frequently misused mark of punctuation in English.

- Apostrophes are used with singular and plural nouns to show possession: **e.g. the dam’s storage capacity, employees’ concern.**
- They are also used in contractions such as **I’m (I am), can’t(cannot)**, however as contractions are not encouraged in report writing we won’t be focusing on this aspect of apostrophe use.

Common errors with apostrophes are:

- Confusion between singular and plural nouns; inclusion of apostrophe in possessive pronouns **e.g. the main advantage of the disc is it's ease of operation (incorrect).**
- Inclusion of the apostrophes in plural nouns when there is no possession, **e.g. the downstream areas' were prone to flooding (incorrect)**
- and even not using any apostrophe at all!

Edited Version

- If the possessive noun is singular, the apostrophe goes before the 's': **e.g.** ***the employee's concern (one employee)***
- If the possessive noun is plural, then the apostrophe goes after the 's'. **e.g. the employees' concern (more than one employee).**

- If the noun's spelling changes to form the plural, such as in child => children, then the apostrophe goes before the 's': **e.g.** ***the women's art movement***
- If the possessive word is a possessive pronoun (its, yours, hers) then no apostrophe is used. The apostrophe in it's is there because it's a contraction of it is.

EDITING FOR TECHNICAL ASPECTS

By this stage your report should be well structured, and have few grammatical errors.

What about technical aspects which will affect the overall appearance of your report?

- **Spelling errors** can be quite easily avoided by running the spell check programme on your computer. However, if you are not a very good speller, don't just rely on the spell checker, but consult your dictionary. This can help you avoid embarrassing errors.

Other things to look out for are:

- Inclusion of report Title, an Executive Summary, Terms of Reference.
- Report should be double spaced. Finally, you could have a Reference List and Appendices.
- The details of references should be in alphabetical order by author.

DEVELOPING YOUR OWN EDITING SKILLS

The ideas presented in this module on editing your report covers three areas: structural features; grammatical aspects, and technical features.

You can customize these suggestions by compiling your own one page checklist from these three areas; incorporating features to which you need to pay special attention.

EDITING CHECKLIST

An ***editing checklist*** can be a useful tool to help you learn to edit your report and check it is as complete as possible.

- **Title page:** Does this include the:
  - title?
  - author's name?
  - module or course details and dates?

- **Acknowledgements:**

  Have you acknowledged all sources of help?
- **Table of Contents:**

  Have you listed all the main section in sequence?

  Have included a list of illustrations?
- **Abstract or Summary:** Does this include:

  The main task?

  The method used?

  The recommendations made?

  The conclusions reached?

- **Introduction:** Does this include:

  Your Terms of Reference?

  The limits of the report?

  An outline or the method?

  A brief background to the subject?

- **Methodology:**

Does this include:

The form your enquiry took?

The way you collected your data?

- **Main Body(Analysis and Findings):** Are your findings presented in a way that is as simple as possible?
- **Illustration checklist:**

  Are your diagrams clear and simple?

  Are all your diagrams/ illustrations clearly labelled?

  Is the link between the text and the diagram clear?

  Are the headings precise?

  Are the axes of graphs clearly labelled?

Can tables be easily interpreted?

Have you abided by any copyright laws when including illustrations/tables from published documents?

- **Analysis/Discussion:**

Have you identify the key issues?

Have you suggested explanation for your findings?

Have your outlined any problem encountered?

Have you presented a balanced view?

- **Recommendations and Conclusions:**

  Have you prepared recommendations that:

  - offer solutions to the problems in the body of the report?
  - relate to the Terms of Reference?
  - are concrete, specific and action oriented?
  - clear and concise?
  - Have drawn together all of your main ideas?

- **References:** Have you referenced appropriately in the text of the report?

  Included a complete reference list?

  Have you listed all references alphabetically of author's names?

  Have you included all the necessary information?

  Are your references accurate?

- **Details of your references should include:**

  - author's name
  - date of publication
  - title of the book, paper or journal
  - publisher
  - place of publication
  - page numbers
  - details of the journal volume in which the article has appeared.

- **Appendices:** Have you included appendices that are:
  - relevant to the report but which are not essential to the main findings e.g. questionnaires, statistical data, glossary of terms etc?
  - clearly labeled?
  - necessary?

- **Index:**

  Is it well organised?
- **Writing Style:**

  Have used clear and concise language?

  Are your sentences short and jargon free?

  Are your paragraph tightly focused?

  Have you used the active or passive voice?

- **Layout:**

  Have you clearly labelled each section?

  Is your labelling consistent throughout the report?

- **Presentation:**

  Have you left sufficient margin space for binding/feedback?

  Are your headings clear?

  Have you checked your spellings?

- **Overall:**

  What are the main points for consideration?
- What have you done well?
- What needs fine tuning?

CONCLUSION

Reports communicate information which has been compiled as a result of research and analysis of data and of issues.

Report written in an office context tend to be ***structured, formal, objective, impersonal, complex and may contain some technical language.***

In addition, an ***effectively written report*** will ensure that the readers of the report will be able to properly appreciate and understand the report's contents in order to take appropriate decisions.

THANK YOU FOR LISTENING.

THIS IS A POOR EXAMPLE OF AN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY FROM A MARKETING ASSIGNMENT

Executive Summary

Every time a business or consumer

Purchases products or services they Display forms of buyer behaviour that are influenced by many factors. The Following report looks at the fast food industry and will analyse four McDonalds key products and Services.

It highlights what type of consumer Buying or-business buying behaviours are displayed in the purchase of a product or service and explains why each behaviour may occur. This enables a conclusion to be drawn from applying theory to reality.

Although a full comprehension of buying behaviour is impossible, since everyone is an individual, it is useful to reflect on common behaviours and attempt to divide behaviours in types and stages. Even McDonalds, a leader in marketing cannot always predict consumer behaviour.

You are to edit the executive summary to make it better

COMMENTS…

Background to problem

Report's aims outlines what information the report deals with but FAILS to provide a summary of the results gained, conclusions drawn and recommendations made. These are the functions of an executive summary and are absent in this example.

The information in this executive summary is vague rather than summarising what the report found.