

Triage Editing

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www.copydesk.org/TriageEditing

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. My 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



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



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



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

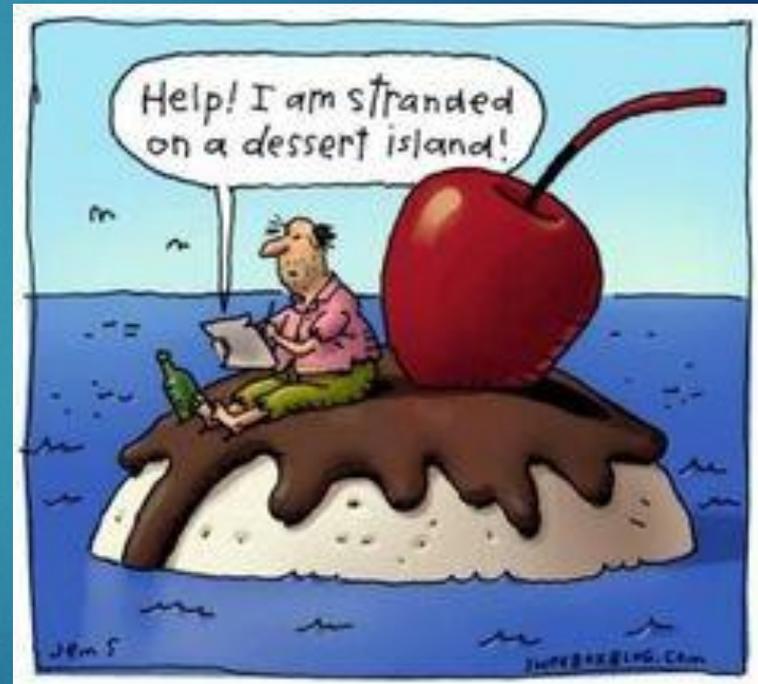
 11 months ago

nprnews



What do you think readers think is the worst error?

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



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



Determine course of treatment

This can be sticky or simple: Your call

Things to consider

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



Determine course of treatment

Special considerations

- ▶ 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?



Sample triage

Level 1:

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

Course of treatment:

- ▶ Put a toe tag on it



Treat

Know your checklist

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 checklist

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 checklist

Level 3 (+1, 2)

1. Style
2. Split infinitives
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 checklist

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 style errors
8. Fix punctuation errors



ACHES

1. Accuracy
2. Clarity
3. Headlines
4. Efficiency
5. Style



Nick Jungman,
Director of student media,
University of Oklahoma



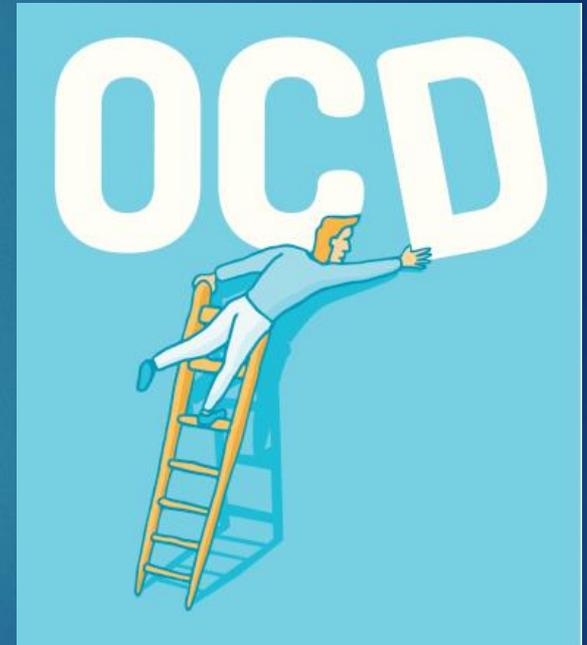
My checklist musts

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



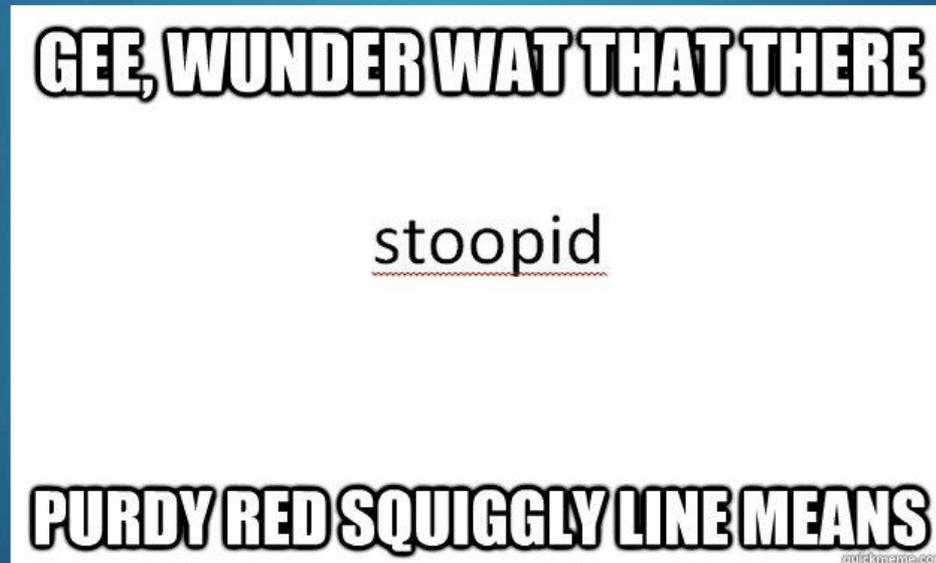
My checklist forgettaaboutits

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



Big bonus tips

- ▶ Use tech – first !!!!!
- ▶ Spot check for accuracy, plagiarism, fabrication



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

