

# COPY EDITOR'S QA GUIDE

*Ensure you don't miss any errors as you perform quality assurance on a writer's work.*

Nothing ruins credibility faster than obvious grammar or spelling errors in written communication. Use this checklist as a reminder of how to spot mistakes in others' work. It will help preserve credibility and ensure that poor writing skills do not detract from the message.

1. Read for content.
  - a. Read for the facts, the tone and the story structure.
  - b. Read as a reader would and see if you understand the message the writer is trying to communicate.
  - c. Circle information you want to revisit.
2. Rework as needed.
3. Read for errors.
  - a. Inspect mechanics (grammar, spelling, punctuation and sentence structure).
  - b. Compare to AP and local style guides.
  - c. Read aloud (read every syllable of each word in an exaggerated tone to check spelling).
  - d. Read the article backward, sentence by sentence.
  - e. Place your finger under each word as you read to ensure you are reading the actual words on the page and not mentally inserting what you think you are reading.

- f. Step away for a few minutes and come back to the work to reread with fresh eyes.

4. Read for clarity.

- a. Ensure the message is clear and that it aligns with the commander's intent.
- b. Answer any questions a reader might have.
- c. Ensure there are no headless snakes (i.e., last name only on the first reference).
- d. Give perspective – if you give astronomical numbers, provide context.

5. Read for accuracy.

- a. Check every reference to a specific name or detail.
- b. Use middle initial for proper ID (when writing on a crime).
- c. Verify all dates, places, times and events.
- d. Test all hyperlinks, emails and phone numbers to ensure they work.
- e. Confirm job descriptions and roles and ensure that a person's job description provides credibility to speak on the subject.
- f. Verify all numbers and statistics, from news to recipes.
- g. Confirm that nothing new has become available immediately before release.
- h. Ask subject matter experts to review the final copy, especially when the subject is complex or technical.
- i. Compare captions to articles. Ensure that they do not contradict one another.