

RED FLAGS FOR EDITING

As noted earlier, the master writer James Michener stressed readable, persuasive, and informative writing is characterized by *dedicated* editing. Dedication desire is one thing; actually being dedicated is something else. And so it is with editing. Searching and finding just what should be “edited” is an art in and of itself. Consider these tips—



1. **Contractions**—When you see a contraction, unless you are quoting someone else, remember formal communication does not use contractions. Informal communication, however, uses contractions and does so intentionally. Why? Consider...
 - 🚩 What is the difference between “Do not.” and “Don't.”? [sic]⁹
 - 🚩 Meaning of “should’ve” versus “should have.”
2. **Paragraph Length**—As noted earlier, shorter sentences improve readability; this principle also applies to paragraph length. When length is perceived, often visually, as too “long,” readers sometimes skip it out of frustration. Break up paragraphs by ideas—sometimes one sentence paragraphs are best (check out a typical newspaper article).
3. **Punctuation**—Use a ...
 - 🚩 Comma. When you want the reader to **pause**, to think, to consider...
 - 🚩 Period. When an idea is completed, period.
 - 🚩 Ellipsis (...) When a series of ideas follow in no particular order, or indicating there are other ideas that could be added, but are not.
 - 🚩 Colon (:). When a series of ideas should/must follow in a specific order.
 - 🚩 Dash (—). When you want the reader to **stop**, think, and consider before reading more.
 - 🚩 Semicolon (;). When you want two ideas, each of which *could* stand on its own, considered **together**.
 - 🚩 Enumeration (1., 2., 3., ...) versus Bullets (√ • ♥ § →)? When you wish to formalize and/or emphasize a series of ideas, with a particular *order* of understanding, then enumeration is best.¹⁰ When a series of ideas could/should be considered as a whole, then a bullet list works best. Note: people are accustomed to bullet lists; in fact, some organizations make bullet lists a veritable requirement. Adjust your writing style accordingly.

⁹Almost always, punctuation is placed **within** quote marks, not beyond their perimeter. For example, “Jesus the Christ is the Son of Man”. is **incorrect**; “Jesus the Christ is the Son of Man.” is correct.

¹⁰Many readers will assume “No. 1” in a list of ideas is the most important; make sure enumeration reflects that understanding **if** that is indeed your intent. If not, clarify whether the enumerated “order” of ideas is chronological, perhaps, rather than “import.”

As stated earlier, bullet choice can matter; consider the added meaning of the second and third bullets compared to the first or fourth.

- The Lord God Almighty is here.
- ⌘ The Lord God Almighty is here.
- Ω The Lord God Almighty is here.
- ✓ The Lord God Almighty is here.

4. **Space?** Yes, space is used to delineate ideas—from everything indicating a new paragraph has begun (a new idea) to separating clusters of ideas. Even the decision to use full justification versus left justification can make a visual, if not readability difference. Consider these two passages:

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5. **Font**—Type, size, and emphases?

Whether you are typing a manuscript for a printer or for reproduction as is (e.g., this document), you deploy different rules for font, font size and font emphasis. Generally speaking, FTS&CC research papers follow formal academic specs as if the paper in question were going to be typeset. Those rules are listed here:

- A. Words that normally would be in italics, are underlined, not actually typed in italics.
- B. Font selection is specified to be Times New Roman, no greater than 12 point, no less than 10 point. Your individual instructor may accept other fonts; e.g., Arial or Garamond; ask him or her.
- C. Double-spacing is required, and important. The space between lines is reserved for editing, comments, and suggested improvements.
- D. When a quotation from Scripture or elsewhere is three or more typed lines, it should be offset by 1 inch on either side of the quotation and *single*-spaced. For example...

John shared his declaration of “beginnings” and “eternities” by saying this to the

Church:

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. ²The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. (1 John 1:1-2, NIV)

6. **FTS&CC Rules?** Follow FTS&CC specs for the cover sheet and bibliography; some instructors will return your paper, considering it a draft until said cover sheet specs and bibliographic rules are deployed. When using a web site as a source, remember to provide a date when downloaded in all references or footnotes or bibliography. For example, consider this footnote:

³²For more information see:

DThomasPorter.com/BibleStudies/SPM_Ethics/IdolatryfromCulturalInfluence.pdf (As downloaded 2/24/2024).

7. **Margins**—follow FTS&CC specs! If you use larger margins, it appears as if you are trying to “pad” the length of your research—not a good impression to make. Margin specs are currently 1” on the top, left, and right, and 1^{1/2}” at the bottom.
8. **Footnotes**, generally speaking, are better than endnotes as footnotes are easier to edit and modify as editing changes the text. Footnotes also assist the reader to “keep up,” instead of continually flipping pages to the end. Finally, footnotes are also an important tool to clarify your ideas without getting the reader “off track.” Professors love footnotes.

Well-delineated and frequent footnotes also protect you from unintentional plagiarism, again not a good impression to make. By noting precisely the source of ideas, you not only protect your credibility, you can more readily update when necessary. Professors love footnotes.

Footnotes are single-spaced and smaller in font (e.g., 12 point text documents would have 10 point footnotes).

9. **This and That**—One of the deadliest set of words to use in writing.

This. When you write “this,” the chances are good **you** know the referent. Your reader may not. In fact, they may consider something else quite different than what you intended. Make sure your reader knows about whom or what you are referring when using “this” or “that.”

That. “That” is a killer—it is designed, intentionally, to stop thought before proceeding. If you want the reader to stop, not just pause like with a comma, but stop, then use “that.” If not, excise “that.” But, how do you know when “that” is actually required? Say the sentence out loud; if it makes sense without “that,” excise. If not, leave “that” alone. For examples:

The way to success is comprised of all that nature has to provide.

The way to success is comprised of all nature has to provide.

Nature provides all that is necessary to succeed.

Nature provides all necessary to succeed.

10. **That and Which**—Inaccurately using “that” when you mean “which,” or using “which” when you mean “that” may give you an F, or get your article rejected, or most importantly, cause your reader to misunderstand. Choosing “which” versus “that” often has monumental implications. As an ideational connector, “that” infers causality, whereas “which” infers correlation. For example,

- A. The LORD God Almighty saves all that believe.
- B. The LORD God Almighty saves all which believe.
- C. The LORD God Almighty saves all who believe.

As you can see, example A asserts salvation is caused by belief (make no mistake, Satan himself believes). Example B asserts salvation is related to belief (a reasonable assertion). But example C, while clarifying the one who is saved is not an “it” (which is derived by the use of “that” or “which”), it does not clarify the relationship between belief and salvation. Sometimes using “which” or “that” when referring to a person, can be theologically devastating.

Believers are indwelled by that which is holy.
Believers are indwelled by He who is holy.

A major challenge to orthodox theology is referring to Holy Spirit, or even the LORD God, as “it” rather than as a person. “That” and “which” can unintentionally support this heresy. Consider this translation of John 14:26 KJV — *But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.* What does the use of “which” say about the nature of Holy Spirit?

11. **Who and Whom**—Lots of people have lost hair over this choice. “Who” is used when you are saying who is doing; i.e., the subject. “Whom” is used when you are saying who is receiving the effects of the doing; i.e., the object.

John is the apostle whom Jesus loved.

[John received the love of Jesus.]

John is the apostle who was known by the high priest Caiaphas.

[Caiaphas did the “knowing.”]

12. **Scripture References**—Always note the version of the translation(s) you are using. Major differences between translations can create major misunderstandings of the Scripture evidence you provide. Avoid abbreviations; do not assume the reader will know “Rev” means “Revelation,” or whether “Phil” refers to Philipians or Philemon.

13. **For Example** and **That Is**—One can begin discussing an idea by asserting it is an “example” of the phenomenon in question. An example is *partial* representation, NOT complete. On the other hand, one may want to say the phenomenon in question is identical to another phenomenon; we communicate that by writing “that is” rather than “for example.” Logical precision is at the bannister. Consider these contrasts—

- ✓ Unicorns, for example, are mentioned in the Bible. (“e.g.,” equals “for example.”)
- ✓ Hippopotami, that is, are mentioned in the Bible. (“i.e.,” equals “that is.”)
- ✓ God loves us because, for example, He was sacrificed on the cross. (⊙ position 1)
- ✓ God loves us because, that is, He was sacrificed on the cross. (⊙ position 2)

14. Cardinal Rule: Never, Never, Never use more than two fonts within a given document, pamphlet, or brochure. Why? Consider these two examples—

- ✓ What does each say about the author?
- ✓ Which says “amateur” and which communicates “pro?”
- ✓ Why and when should one make a font change?



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15. Another tip, a big tip...

REMEMBER, WRITING IS ESPECIALLY CHALLENGING BECAUSE YOU DO NOT EASILY KNOW WHAT YOUR READER MISUNDERSTANDS.

PRECISION, PRECISION, PRECISION.

PRECISION IS MORE THAN COMPULSION.