



Quick Guide to...Text Editing

Phrasing:

Your role as an editor for roar is not to revamp the work of the writer and make it Pulitzer Prize material but more to hone it. You will learn from experience what to do, essentially you need to check the copy text makes sense, that it flows and that there aren't any grammatical mistakes. There may be a few facts you feel need checking such as dates, numbers, or names of places or people, check them if you are unsure, it doesn't look good to have an article which is factually inaccurate. Do not feel shy to make some changes to the article in terms of words or expressions used, there is nothing wrong with having someone look at your work and tweak, but do it in the interest of the writer and not because you feel you know best.

Faced with this situation for the first time, some editors tend to feel a little reluctant to edit the text. DON'T. An article is simply a tool to producing a good magazine in the same way that a nice photo is. It is your job to edit. However, most people seem to find it difficult knowing where to start with editing nonetheless. So here's a stab at providing some guidelines as to what editing involves. You will learn from experience just what needs to be done, but this should get you off to a good start.

Editing Text

1. *Cut out anything irrelevant* - This is especially relevant to anyone editing an article within the arts section as many arts writers have a tendency to witter on about themselves in their articles (e.g., their journey to the gig they're reviewing). This is fine so long as it's funny/interesting and there isn't too much text. However, if space is short, cutting out irrelevancies is often a good way to lose a couple of paragraphs. A good way to judge whether to cut an irrelevance is to imagine the article without it and see if it radically alters it. If not, then it should be cut.

2. Cut out repetition - a) *Repetition of points* - Very often writers will make the same point in different words. E.g., "It was a unique event. It will only happen once." Here, "unique" means something that will happen only once, so the second sentence is irrelevant. The two could easily be combined. Another e.g., "A good time was had by all. Everyone enjoyed themselves." Again, these sentences basically say the same thing, so only one need stay. This is a good way to save space, but also it stops the writer sounding like they don't really have very much to say for themselves.

b) *Repetition of single words/similar words* - This is fairly straightforward. Often people will repeatedly use the same word throughout their article, which can end up leaving them sounding somewhat stunted of vocabulary. If you see repetition, go through and change the words to similar words with the same meaning. E.g. change "fun" to "enjoyable", etc. This also applies to words that aren't quite the same, but almost are. E.g. "The band's performance was somewhat basic, and basically should have been better". The repetition of "basic" here again make the author sound like they lack a decent vocabulary. Just changing either "basic" or "basically" makes it sound far better - "the band's performance was somewhat basic, and really should have been better". If in doubt, use a thesaurus. We have one on the shelf. Try not to use overly complex words though, we don't want to confuse people.

3. *Beware of run-on sentences* - Many writers have a tendency to make sentences longer than they should be by either inserting commas where full stops should be, or using "and" to string together two points that would have sounded better if separated by a full stop. If in doubt as to whether a sentence is too long, try reading it out loud and only taking breaths

when there's punctuation. If you find it hard to read out without breathing, the sentence is too long and needs cutting into two sentences with a full stop.

4. Make sure there are paragraphs - Obvious, but sometimes writers forget. Paragraphs are very important to making an article readable. No one wants to read a massive block of text. It looks a bit daunting. I'm sure you all know how paragraphs work: a different one for a different point, so we'll leave it at that.

5. Exclamation Marks - This is less important, and not so commonly done by writers, but sometimes people tend to litter their work with exclamation marks. If you read any newspapers, you'll notice that exclamation marks are never used. They tend to be used by someone who's incapable of conveying excitement through their writing, and so have to tag on exclamation marks to convey it instead. This one is largely down to your own personal feeling on their usage. If in doubt, ask your editor, although they'll almost undoubtedly tell you to get rid of them.