

## 7 Editorial Tips to Writing Better Copy

by Karen L. Reddick

As an editor by trade and a writer by passion, I know how hard it can be to get your thoughts on paper. Your inner editor constantly detours your writing flow by criticizing your grammar, word choice, and punctuation. You can stop your inner editor by putting pen to paper (or fingers to keyboard) and letting the words flow—even if you consciously know you should be more specific or know you’ve added extra words—forgive yourself and move on. Nobody ever writes a perfect first draft. Once your work is on the computer, run it through the grammar and spell check, and then use these 7 tips to help make your writing better.

1) **Persuade and motivate your reader.** It’s your #1 goal when writing. Provide your readers with smartly-expressed thoughts by choosing words that drive your sentences from one to the next and create a seamless reading experience. Think of the horse-before-the-cart analogy. That cart’s not going anywhere until the horse pulls it into action.

2) **Paint a picture.** Would you rather eat a chocolate dessert or a creamy, chocolate layer cake? A piece of fruit or a crisp, juicy apple? Drive a car or drive a luxury Jaguar with soft, leather seats and new-car aroma? Your readers won’t *see* what you’re talking about unless you paint a vivid picture.

3) **Clear the clutter.** Words like “that, so, very, and much.” Look at your sentences closely—how many times do you use these words in your writing? Are they necessary? If extra words are not adding to the sentence, leave them out.

4) **Pick a style—and stick with it.** Whether you prefer formal or informal writing, use the same tone throughout your piece to create fluidity and keep your readers focused. Formal writing is used in professional writing, technical writing, and most business writing. Informal writing creates a more casual tone and uses contractions liberally (i.e., *you’re* vs. *you are*; *won’t* vs. *would not*, and so on).

5) **Walk away.** Put your draft down and walk away for an hour, a day or a week. After a short break, you’ll view your draft in a different light and be able to pick up what you missed earlier. Sometimes all it takes is a new perspective.

6) **Get another set of eyes.** Don’t be embarrassed (or too proud) to let someone read your work. Step back from your writing and let an objective set of eyes view your work from a reader’s point of view. Remember: feedback is your friend.

7) **Edit, edit, edit.** Editing and proofreading will make the difference between mediocre and magnificent. It’s important to rework your writing, but it’s even better to hand your work over to a professional editor. An editor’s job is not to criticize, judge or take away your voice; their job is to make your writing better.

© 2007 Karen L. Reddick, MVA, author of *The A-Z Guide: The Best Ways To Work With A VA* has more than 30 years of administrative experience, with the last five as a successful virtual assistant. She owns V-And-E-Services and The Red Pen Editor providing virtual assistance and editorial services to authors, writers and small businesses.

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