

Editing and Proofing

Note: It's easier to edit and proof on a hard copy. The eye just doesn't see things as well on a computer screen, especially when you have to scroll down the page to see everything.

- Do your sentences start with subjects and action verbs?
- Are your sentences in present, active tense?
- Are you showing, not telling?
- Are you using nouns and verbs to be concrete and specific?
- Is everything (except the bio) client-centered?
- Have you stated why your offer will benefit your target market?
- Eliminate abbreviations (except for state abbreviations).
- Reword or delete redundancies.
- Have you written a concise, straightforward headline that focuses on benefits, reports news, or stimulates curiosity?
- Have you included all your key words and concepts?
- Have you written so the document as a whole tells a story?
- Does the tone reflect your personality on paper?
- Limit sentence length to no more than 25 words.
- Limit paragraph length to no more than 5–7 lines.
- Is the action you want the reader to take clearly spelled out?
- Check all homophones (words that sound the same but are spelled differently) For instance, have you written *principal* where you meant *principle*.
- Check for use of the word "that." Can you reword the sentence and get rid of it?
- Use standard English capitalization.
- Have you checked your spelling and grammar?
- Use en dash to signify "to" and em dash to signify a change of thought.
- Delete periods at the end of headings.
- Delete periods after bullet list items unless the item is a complete sentence.
- Change underlining to italics for book titles and periodicals; use bold or a different font to emphasize a word or two.
- Did you leave adequate margins and white space?

Personal writing demons

We all have them. The specific words we always seem to misspell. The grammatically incorrect phrase that crept into our language and stayed. Too many *thats* and bits of corporatespeak. List yours here and check for them whenever you write.

- Personal writing demon 1: _____
- Personal writing demon 2: _____
- Personal writing demon 3: _____