

COPY EDITOR

Copy Editor in Three Different Categories

When you receive a copy think yourself in three distinct people

- **Consumer**
- **Architect**
- **Mechanic**

Consumer

Read the whole story first, putting yourself in an average reader. At this stage you don't make any changes. Avoid the temptation to start chopping away anything, take a long view of the copy (the audience perspective).

After a long view, do an analysis starting with asking the questions; is this the kind of story I want to read? Is it interesting enough that I want to read on? Do I understand it? Is it so full of jargons that need translations? Do I know why the story is in the first place in the newspaper?

- The intelligent reader wants to be shown, not told. Does this story do it? If you are not satisfied on any of these fronts, take down a note.

Architect

- Look first for fundamental design flows. Fixing little things might end up being a waste of your time, because the whole story may need a complete overhaul.
- Here is where you want to make sure there are no major holes that the six pillars of a story are in place: Who, What, When, Where, Why and How.
- Now, you will want to look closely at the structure, the organization of the story. This starts with the lead, which sets the overall tone and approach of the story.

- May be a key fact or quotation is buried on the second page must be brought up higher in the story.
- Finally ask yourself “Is the structure balanced? Are all sides represented or is the story lopsided? It goes without saying that you have checked for libel.

Mechanic

- Cut away the “fat” and unnecessary detail. (Space is precious, and so is reader’s time. If it does not add to the essence of the story, cut it out. Watch out for inappropriate or unnecessary adjectives.
- If there are numbers in the story, make sure they add up. If there’re questions, double-check with the reporter. If you have any suspicions about the name spelling and addresses, double check those, too, because few things can determine the paper’s credibility than to have those detail wrong.
- If you have to cut a story to make it fit, ensure that the least important information is the first to go, and the story still flow.
- When applying inverted pyramid, the last paragraphs are the least important information to be cut away