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The Importance of Being Edited

Your writing and design choices communicate a message to the reader. That message can say you're sloppy and confusing, or you're clear and professional. We often don't notice the mistakes we make as we write. Editing will take a document from decent to distinguished.

Editing is going line by line to make a document error free in grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

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Revising is going paragraph by paragraph, moving and changing parts of the document to provide clarity and flow to the content.

Writer Editor Relationship

As you edit a person's writing, remember you're creating a dialogue, a relationship, with them. You're critiquing their work: be careful in not only what you say, but also in how you say it. There are multiple ways to provide critique. Editing isn't just showing the writer where he or she can improve, but it's also praising him or her for where they've done well.

Ways to Edit:

- Question:** "What do you mean?"
- Comment:** I've never heard of this before. This is an interesting point.
- Suggestion:** "Perhaps rephrase this so that it's clearer."
- Praise:** "This is a very well written point. Good job!"

Gestalt Principles

Symmetry: Think of a mirror; it should show a perfect reflection. This is used for the "Ways to Edit" section of this poster.

Figure - Ground: This principle is about being able to differentiate a figure from its background. The cream-colored text stands out against the green background.

Closure: Each paragraph at the bottom of this poster has a line on either side, indicating the beginning and end of each section.

Continuity: Notice how each section heading on this poster uses the same color. This establishes a style so you can locate each section heading.

Similarity: Similar to closure, each paragraph at the bottom of this poster has the same design components to create a theme and sense of unity.

Proximity: Each Gestalt principle is placed near the title for this section to show the reader that the text surrounding the title relates to the title.

Editing doesn't just apply to writing, but to design. Applying Gestalt principles enables communicators to clearly convey their message. However, every principle must be used. They act as guidelines when editing the design of a document.

Levels of Editing

- Content:** Make sure document flows, is cohesive, concise, and demonstrates audience awareness.
- Grammar:** Check for subject - verb agreements, pronouns and their antecedents, fragments, and run-ons.
- Spelling:** Conduct a simple spell check. Reading aloud is extremely beneficial.
- Punctuation:** Fix missing commas, periods, and inaccurate spacing within a sentence.

Class: *Editing in Technical Communication* develops the principles and practices of editing. While it focuses primarily on technical editing, the skills developed in this course can be readily applied to a variety of general editing problems and situations. Although expertise on grammar and mechanics is essential, an editor also shares some responsibilities for making the writing effective and usable. The editor also arranges for publication and distribution.

Objectives: Students will develop an understanding of editing and its role in document development, publication, and use. They will learn how to edit effectively on a range of editing tasks and documents, develop productive attitudes and habits, prepare for his or her role as a professional, and for ongoing learning once the course is complete.

Our Project: My project involved editing YWCA's website for layout and content. Together, my team performed a soft copy edit of the website for the design which included going through each page and applying Gestalt principles. Separately, we conducted a hard copy edit of each Web page for the three levels of edits included content, grammar, and spelling.

Client: YWCA (Young Women's Christian Association) is dedicated to eliminating racism, empowering women and promoting peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for all. This is accomplished by providing counseling, education, job readiness, outreach, childcare, early childhood education, shelter, and support for victims of domestic violence.

Benefits: My team gained experience working with a client and peers on a project, and editing a professional website for a real world client. By incorporating our edits, YWCA's website will be more visually appealing, free of grammatical and spelling errors, and more concise in its content. Visitors of the site will be able to navigate through the various Web pages, to understand the organization and its mission, and to return to the site and recommend the organization.