

Five Tips for Catching (and Correcting) Errors in Your Business Writing

The point is, a wrong word devalued the whole article and as a result, discredited the writer. Don't make the same mistake. Below are five tips you can employ to drastically decrease the chance of mistakes finding their way into your business writing, whether it be a proposal, a website, a book, or a newsletter.

1. Utilize an editor

The most common mistakes are minor, such as misspellings or incorrect use of punctuation. Other common errors are incorrect word use (their, they're, there; worse, worst, borscht, etc.). A professional editor is adept at noticing and correcting these kinds of mistakes. If your professional writing will be seen by many – a website or an emailed newsletter – do not make the mistake of relying solely upon a computerized spell-checker, which cannot tell the difference between "worse" and "worst" as both are properly spelled. Use a human editor.

2. Get a second and third set of eyes

Since you are overly familiar with your own work you are much more likely to miss obvious mistakes because your mind already knows what it is *supposed* to say, rather than what it *actually* says. Even if you do not wish to pay a professional, anyone who reviews your writing will find mistakes you invariably miss. When others read your work, they don't have any preconceived notions about your writing. At the same time, human behavior will often motivate them to find fault. Use that to your advantage. In addition to finding mistakes, other people may offer helpful suggestions to make your business writing stronger.

3. Come back to it later

How long do you wait after writing to begin editing? Many writers edit their work *as they write it*. Not only does this slow down the creative process, it increases the chance that your mind will ignore blatant errors in deference to your intentions. Once your brain thinks a paragraph is free from errors, it tends to overlook any new errors that are introduced during the rewriting process. Put your writing away for several hours, days or weeks (depending on your deadlines) and revisit it later. After some time away from your work, you will be more likely to read the words as they appear on the page, not as you envisioned them in your mind. The mind is error free, the page is not.

4. Read your material backwards

Fortunately, you are only familiar with your writing in one direction – forward. Reading your material backwards makes it seem entirely different and fools your mind into ignoring the

intention and only concentrating on the reality. Furthermore, your critical view of the writing at its most technical level will not be corrupted by the flowing exposition you have massaged into sparkling prose. When you read your manuscript backwards, it becomes a collection of words without contextual meaning. The brain has nothing to focus upon other than the words themselves and mistakes literally jump off the page.

5. **Read your material out loud** When you read words aloud, your brain must slow down and concentrate on the material. How fast can you read the following sentence? The quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dogs. Now how fast can you read it out loud? It takes at least twice as long, and those precious milliseconds sometimes make all the difference between a typo that is missed, and one that is caught and corrected. As a popular Internet posting informed us in 2003, "it deosn't mtttaer in waht oredr the ltteers in a wrod are, the olny iprmoetnt tihng is taht the frist and lsat ltteer be in the rghit pclae. The rset can be a toatl mses and you can sitll raed it wtihuot any porbelm. Tihs is bcuseae the huamn mnid deos not raed ervey lteter by istlef, but the wrod as a wlohe. But try raednig tihs out luod" and see how far you get. An extra bonus for reading your material out loud is that you may discover stumbling blocks like awkward sentence structure and choppy dialogue. Strong business writing is not only dependent on error free prose; it must be crisp and clear.

As a writer, what is your *worst* fear? Is it publishing something littered with mistakes? Donâ€™t make good writing bad or bad writing *worse* by failing to catch errors before publication. Your writing career, your business, and your readers will thank you.

About the Author

Brent Sampson is the best-selling author of "Sell Your Book on Amazon" and the award-winning "Self-Publishing Simplified." As the president & CEO of Outskirts Press, Brent offers turn-key, on-demand custom book publishing services to authors seeking a cost-effective, fast, and powerful way to publish and distribute their books worldwide. Outskirts Press has helped thousands of authors realize their dreams of publishing profitably, with affordable publishing, writing, editing and marketing options. Call 888-672-6657 or visit www.outskirtspress.com.