



A Way With Words

Copy Editing and the Writing Process



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Grade Level	7th – 8th Grade	Time Frame	150 minutes
Subject	English/Language Arts	Duration	2-3 class periods
Course	Composition, Creative Writing		

Essential Question

What is the purpose of applying grammar and mechanics to writing? What does a copy editor do? How can editing written work improve its quality?

Summary

In this lesson about the journalism writing process and the role of a copy editor, students will explore the importance of grammar and style. Students will work in groups to identify the key elements of a news story through a Card Sort. Then, students will work independently to practice editing a paragraph with copy editing marks. An interview with a copy editor then lends students an inside look at the skills involved in this career. Students will use the elements of a news story they previously identified to write their own news stories. This lesson includes optional modifications for distance learning. Resources for use in Google Classroom are included.

Snapshot

Engage

Students edit a paragraph with an eye toward punctuation, spelling, complete sentences, subject/verb agreement, etc., that mimics the work of an editor. Students reflect on this activity and discuss whether these are real-world skills.

Explore

Students learn that editing text is just one of the jobs of a copy editor. Students are introduced to the elements of a news story by participating in a card sort.

Explain

Students watch an interview with a copy editor and take notes on a graphic organizer. Students then construct their own news story about the interview according to the elements of a news story.

Extend

Each student acts as an editor and reviews the first draft of a partner's news story. Partners use an editing rubric to provide feedback for the writing.

Evaluate

Students reflect on the lesson and complete an Exit Ticket activity to answer two questions: What is one

thing I learned about being a copy editor? What can I do to improve my writing going forward?

Standards

ACT College and Career Readiness Standards - English (6-12)

SST 501: Recognize and correct disturbances in sentence structure (e.g., faulty placement of phrases, faulty coordination and subordination of clauses, lack of parallelism within a simple series of phrases)

ACT College and Career Readiness Standards - Writing (6-12)

L&C 202: A score in this range indicates that the writer is able to: -Compose sentences that sometimes have clear structures -Produce writing that has distracting errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics and only sometimes conveys meaning clearly

Oklahoma Academic Standards for English Language Arts (Grade 7)

7.2.W.1: Students will apply components of a recursive writing process for multiple purposes to create a focused, organized, and coherent piece of writing.

7.2.W.2: Students will plan (e.g., outline) and prewrite a first draft as necessary.

7.2.W.4: Students will edit and revise multiple drafts for organization, transitions to improve coherence and meaning, using a consistent point of view.

7.2.W.5: Students will use resources to find correct spellings of words (e.g., word wall, vocabulary notebook, print and electronic dictionaries, and spell-check).

7.5.W.1: Students will write using correct mechanics with a focus on commas, apostrophes, quotation marks, colons, and semi-colons.

Oklahoma Academic Standards for English Language Arts (Grade 7)

8.2.W.1: Students will apply components of a recursive writing process for multiple purposes to create a focused, organized, and coherent piece of writing.

8.2.W.2: Students will plan (e.g., outline) and prewrite a first draft as necessary.

8.2.W.4: Students will edit and revise multiple drafts for organization, transitions to improve coherence and meaning, sentence variety, and use of consistent point of view.

8.2.W.5: Students will use resources to find correct spellings of words (e.g., word wall, vocabulary notebook, print and electronic dictionaries, and spell-check).

8.5.W.1: Students will write using correct mechanics with a focus on commas, apostrophes, quotation marks, colons, and semi-colons.

Attachments

- [Editor's Paragraph—A Way With Words - Spanish.docx](#)
- [Editor's Paragraph—A Way With Words - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Editor's Paragraph—A Way With Words.docx](#)
- [Editor's Paragraph—A Way With Words.pdf](#)
- [Interview Organizer and News Story Template—A Way With Words - Spanish.docx](#)
- [Interview Organizer and News Story Template—A Way With Words - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Interview Organizer and News Story Template—A Way With Words.docx](#)
- [Interview Organizer and News Story Template—A Way With Words.pdf](#)
- [Lesson Slides—A Way With Words.pptx](#)
- [News Story Editor Checklist—A Way With Words - Spanish.docx](#)
- [News Story Editor Checklist—A Way With Words - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [News Story Editor Checklist—A Way With Words.docx](#)
- [News Story Editor Checklist—A Way With Words.pdf](#)
- [News Story Elements Card Sort—A Way With Words - Spanish.docx](#)
- [News Story Elements Card Sort—A Way With Words - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [News Story Elements Card Sort—A Way With Words.docx](#)
- [News Story Elements Card Sort—A Way With Words.pdf](#)

Materials

- Editor's Paragraph handout (attached; one per student)
- Interviewer Organizer and News Story Template (attached; one per student)
- Lesson Slides (attached)
- News Story Editor Checklist (attached; one per student)
- News Story Elements Card Sort (attached; one set per group of three students)
- Sticky notes (one per student)
- Red pens (one per student)

Engage

Teacher's Note: Lesson Preparation

Prior to the beginning of the lesson, print and prepare the attached **News Story Elements Card Sort** according to the [Card Sort](#) strategy. Print on heavy or card stock paper if possible, and cut the cards into one set of twelve for each group of three students. For example, if your class size is thirty, prepare at least 10 card sort sets. (Tip: many teachers find it helpful to place card sort sets in small sandwich bags for reuse.)

Use the attached **Lesson Slides** to guide the lesson. Begin by sharing **slide 1** with students. Continue to **slide 2**, and discuss the Essential Questions of this lesson, then the lesson objectives on **slide 3**. Distribute a copy of the attached **Editor's Paragraph** handout to all students. Display **slide 4**. Ask students to work independently to edit or correct the paragraph like a copy editor does—by looking for errors in punctuation and spelling, incomplete sentences, issues with subject/verb agreement, and so on. Additionally, ask students to find one instance where the writing is awkward and improve it by rewriting.

Allow about 5 minutes to edit the paragraph. Then, display **slide 5**, which shows the correctly edited paragraph. Have students compare their own editing work with the slide. Ask students how their work is similar to, and different from, the edited paragraph.

Ask students to pair up (or assign partners) for the [Think-Pair-Share](#) strategy. Ask partners to discuss the two questions on **slide 6**: *What did the paragraph tell you about the job of an editor? Do you need these skills for the real world?*

Optional Modification For Distance Learning

Consider creating multiple copies of the attached Editor's Paragraph handout using Google Docs. Assign two or three students to each copy of the Editor's Paragraph and have them collaborate virtually. Students can add notes to the document and collaborate as a group using the "chat" feature in the document. You may also consider making this activity a discussion board post to which your students can respond directly. [Download all attachments](#) to use this lesson in [Google Classroom](#).

Explore

Display **slide 7**. Discuss how editors plan, review, and revise content for publication. Discuss the various career possibilities of being an editor. Tell students that later in the lesson, they will act as editors for a news story. Continue to **slide 8**, showing the "inverted pyramid" writing structure. To understand the job of a news editor, students need to know the elements of a good news story. Explain to students that, because news readers want the facts of a story as quickly as possible, reporters put the most important information and facts in "the lead," or the story's opening paragraph. The lead answers these pressing questions: Who? What? When? Where? Why? How? The next paragraph provides supporting information and additional details of the story. The third paragraph is also supporting information, but of lesser importance. The conclusion wraps up the story, summarizes findings, or includes details about future developments that may be still to come.

Move to **slide 9**, and explain the difference between writing a news story and other types of writing. For example, news stories do not offer opinions. They are fact-based, and written in short and clear statements. The lead contains most of the information, and the supporting paragraphs can include quotes, eyewitness statements, or other details.

Continue to **slide 10**, and pass out the prepared **News Story Elements Card Sort** sets. Place students into groups of three. Ask each group to match the news elements, such as "headline," "lead," etc. with the part of the story, according to the [Card Sort](#) learning strategy. Display slide eight, again to reinforce the order of the news story and as a reference for students. Allow 10 minutes for this activity. After groups are finished, have them check their card sorts with the suggested order on **slide 11**. If groups have a different order, ask them to explain their order and why it makes sense to them. If their rationale seems sound, accept other variations of the card sort order.

Optional Modification For Distance Learning

To make the Card Sort activity accessible for online or distance learners, you may choose to invite students to print and cut out their own Card Sorts. A web-based platform (e.g. Google Classroom) or a digital platform for sorting (e.g., [Desmos](#), [Quizlet](#)) can also be used to create a digital Card Sort. Students can place the cards in order and describe their thought processes for each step as part of an online discussion. [Download all attachments](#) to use this lesson in [Google Classroom](#).

Explain

Pass out a copy of the attached **Interview Organizer and News Story Template handout** to each student. Display **slide 12**, and introduce the next activity by asking students to look at the notes organizer section of the handout on the first page. Ask students to write down notes in this section of the handout as they watch the interview. Once ready, move to **slide 13**, which features an interview with Darrin Walters, a senior copy editor at the University of Oklahoma.

Embedded video

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=QAn9e5s8AMM>

Optional: Scaffolding For Note-Taking

If students are not adept at note-taking, consider providing additional supports. After the interview, if needed, allow students to partner and compare their notes with each other, adding information they may have missed or misunderstood. You may also choose to show the interview twice. This allows students to review their notes and add any further details they may have missed in the first viewing.

After students have taken sufficient notes, display **slide 14**. Direct students' attention to the News Story Template on page two of the Interview Organizer and News Story Template handout. If you feel it would be beneficial for your class, you may wish to review how to write a news story (slide 8).

Ask students to use their notes to write a news story about Darrin Walters and the work of a copy editor. Allow 20 to 30 minutes for students to write their stories, making time adjustments as needed.

Optional: News Story Modification

You may wish to modify the news story by requiring only one supporting paragraph instead of two.

Extend

After students have completed a first draft of their news stories, assign students to new working partners. Ask partners to trade news stories with one another. Pass out a copy of the attached **News Story Editor Checklist** handout to each student. Display **slide 15**, and invite students to act as editors for each other. Allow 15–20 minutes for pairs to edit their news stories by writing their suggestions on the checklist, or on their partner's draft.

After partners share the checklist and offer suggestions for improvement, allow another 15–20 minutes for students to rewrite a final version of their news story.

If time allows, ask for a few volunteers to share their news stories with the class.

Optional Modification For Distance Learning

To make use of this lesson in an online or distance learning environment, sort students into pairs or small groups, and have students share their stories using an application like Google Docs. [Download all attachments to use this lesson in Google Classroom.](#)

Evaluate

Have students turn in their final news stories. Then, pass out sticky notes. Ask students to write their names at the top of the sticky note. Invite students to complete the [Exit Ticket](#) shown on **slide 16** by briefly answering the following questions: *What is one thing I learned about being a copy editor? What can I do to improve my own writing going forward?* You may choose to have students post their Exit Ticket sticky notes on one wall of your classroom. You may also choose a few sticky notes to read and share with the class to conclude the lesson.

Optional Modification For Distance Learning

Exit tickets can be submitted by students in a variety of ways, such as through discussion posts or through the use of an online application such as [Padlet](#). [Download all attachments](#) to use this lesson in [Google Classroom](#).

Resources

- K20 Center. (n.d.). Bell ringers and exit tickets. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/d9908066f654727934df7bf4f505d6f2>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Card sort. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/d9908066f654727934df7bf4f506976b>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Think-pair-share. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/d9908066f654727934df7bf4f5064b49>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Google classroom. Tech Tools. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/tech-tool/628>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Desmos. Tech Tools. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/tech-tool/1081>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Quizlet. Tech Tools. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/tech-tool/666>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Padlet. Tech Tools. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/tech-tool/1077>
- K20 Center. (2020, February 24). ICAP - A Way with Words. [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/QAn9e5s8AMM>