# UNIT 1 PRINCIPLES OF EDITING

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## 1.0 OBJECTIVES

After you have gone through this unit, you should be able to:

- define news editing;  
- describe the principles of news editing;  
- describe the functions of news editing;  
- describe the duties, responsibilities and qualities of a sub-editor;  
- describe and discuss the problems encountered in news editing; and  
- edit news items.

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

In a news organization, editing plays a pivotal role. A news item or a news story, as it is called, is written by hurried reporters, and is rough-edged like raw diamond. Hence, the copy is polished and honed by a team of editors, who form the Editorial Desk. The team, also called the desk persons, works under tremendous pressure and severe time constraint. The desk persons work well past midnight, and ensure that your newspaper reaches you on time in the morning.

The present unit will take you through a newsroom, introduce you to the desk persons, and explain their role, functions and responsibilities. As you read through, you will identify the principles of editing. You will also see how news is sifted, checked for accuracy, judged, edited, given a shape, designed into a format, and made readable and presentable.

In this unit, we shall also examine unedited copy and demonstrate how it is made print-worthy. For your convenience, a brief list of terminologies and a glossary appears at the end. Read the unit carefully, and honestly carry out the exercises which are given in this unit in the form of Check Your Progress and Activities. This will help you to acquire editing skills.
1.2 EDITING AND ITS NEED

A newspaper office or news agency receives a large assortment of news items. These originate from different sources, mainly local sources and wires (teleprinter and telex). The news copy is written by experienced and inexperienced people, and, hence, lack uniformity. The copy has different shapes, follow a different style, and generally lack readability.

The news reporters are the main news writers. They are in a hurry, especially in the evenings, when the news development gathers momentum. The copy written by them under pressure is bound to carry errors of all types. In any newspapers, there is always a shortage of space for all news items, which are received in the office. The newspaper's advertisement department is ever eager to grab the valuable but limited space. Moreover, newsprint and means of production cost a lot of money. Ultimately, a newspaper's success largely depends on the space and its most efficient, judicious and economic use. Hence, within the space set aside for news, as much news as possible needs to be packed to serve a divergent readership. Considering these factors, editing of the news copy becomes essential.

Activity 1

Before you proceed, engage yourself in an exercise. This exercise would help you to discover that the space for various news items in the newspaper is shrinking. The money power of the advertising world is taking up a lot of space in the newspapers.

- Pick up a copy of a newspaper which you subscribe to;
- Consider only the first three pages of it;
- Measure the space given to the news coverage;
- Measure the space given to various types of advertising; and
- Calculate the percentages.

Use the space given below for your exercise:

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1.2.1 What is Editing

All incoming news items, collectively called copy, is sifted, before being processed, to achieve a balance of news between that originating within the organisation and that pouring in from outside. Sorting out and sifting also helps induce parity between the well-written articles and those written by the inexperienced reporters. In the process, the unwanted matter gets weeded out. Only the newsworthy stories are finally selected. These are checked for grammar, syntax, facts, figures, and sense, and also clarified for betterment, and are condensed for economy of space.

1.2.2 Definition

News editing is tailoring news items or a news story to the required shape and size, using the right kind of expressions and symbols. A copy is edited to highlight the "news sense" in a story, and to bring uniformity of language and style in an issue of a newspaper.
1.3 NEWSROOM

The newsroom in a newspaper or a news agency office is the hub of the entire activity in a news organisation. The Editorial Desk (also known as the Editorial Department or Copy Desk or News Desk) is the nerve centre of a newsroom. It is here that everyday the newspaper issues are planned and made.

However, in a news agency, the news desk is the final stop before a story is sent to the transmission room or creed room for transmission on the wires. In news agencies, where news operations are computerised, such as the Press Trust of India (PTI) or the United News of India (UNI), the edited copy is transmitted directly to the newspapers by the News Desk itself.

1.3.1 Desk Management

The newsroom is headed by an editor or a chief editor or an editor-in-chief or a chief news editor. The designation varies according to the choice of the organization. He plans and directs the day’s news operations. He is supported by a team consisting of the news editors, chief sub-editors (chief sub), senior sub-editors and sub-editors (sub).

The news desk usually operates in three shifts: morning, afternoon and night (till late in the evening, even up to 2.30 a.m.). In between, there are two link shifts—morning and evening—which are headed by the news editors and or chief subs. They are also called ‘slot’ men. Ideally, in a newspaper, it is the news editor who plans and directs page-making, while the chief sub helps and implements it.

In a news agency, news editors and chief subs looks after the smooth functioning of the news desk. They plan and write “leads” (updated versions of developing stories). Here, there is an additional shift called “Extra Night” (from 2 a.m to 8 a.m.), which is managed by a senior sub-editor.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answers.

ii) Compare your answers with the ones given at the end of this unit.

1) Following are some statements. State whether they are true or false:

a) The newspapers receive news stories only from their staff reporters. ( )

b) The news items originating from various sources are written by the experienced reporters. ( )

c) All the news items pouring into a newsroom are collectively called COPY. ( )

d) The heart of a newspaper is its newsroom. ( )

e) A special shift in a news agency is called ‘Extra Night’. This means, a reporter has to work a full night, once in a month. ( )

2) In the space provided below, show the main phases of newflow and editing procedure.
1.3.2 What Makes News?

News has a number of characteristic elements. Five conventional determinants of the news values are:

i) Proximity: The nearer the origin of news, i.e., the closer it is to home, the more is its impact. For example, on a particular day, there may be 45 deaths in a boat tragedy in Bangladesh. But, on the same day, a local bomb blast that kills five people is sure to have more impact on the readers.

ii) Timeliness: News grows old quickly. It decays and perishes fast. The more recent its occurrence, the more worthy it is. On the contrary, an event that happened six months back, but is discovered and reported now could grab the front page. For example, the bank securities’ scan involving Harshad Mehta and others, or the Bofors gun deal.

iii) Prominence: Names make news and the newspapers like to use as many local names as possible. For example, if the Vice-chancellor of a university gets hurt while playing cricket, few people will take note of the incident. But, if a public figure like a minister is injured in a game, we have a more interesting story. When the film celebrity, Satyajit Ray, and the Nobel Laureate, Mother Teresa, were hospitalised, most papers carried everyday reports on their health.

iv) Consequence: A reader’s interest is aroused in a large measure if an event or occurrence affects him, and more so, if he participates in the event. He is eager to know what will this mean to him in the long run. How will it affect him and his family. For example, weather stories attract consistently high readership. A brief storm that leaves behind some casualties, and causes heavy damage in a town or city, will receive better coverage, will be given a good display, and attract large readership. A steep hike in the prices of petrol, cooking gas, milk or an increase in water and electricity tariffs will have widespread consequences.

v) Human interest: Any interesting story about people and their peculiarities, and their infinite variety, make for wider readership. The human interest stories are pure identification. These are the little things that have happened, or could happen to yourself or to your neighbours or friends. These stories are worth little or nothing as news in any strict sense. Yet these are worth telling. For example, a 30-year-old woman with a baby in her arms is trapped in a building on fire. Such a story interests the readers.

The five elements cited above, generally, have a direct bearing on a majority of news stories. In addition, there are various other elements that could come into play in judging the news:

i) To be newsworthy, a story must interest a large number of the readers.

ii) A story’s worth is determined by its impact on the readers. That’s why the functioning of the government and the politicians receive a lot of coverage. On the contrary, lack of impact sometimes makes news; and also, the unusual, odd, provocative, intriguing, moving and educative make news.

Scientific discoveries, even the hints of some, find space in the newspapers. For example, any seeming step toward the cure of cancer or AIDS is sure to generate headlines, even though the scientists might not have discovered the drug or vaccine. But the hint will be newsworthy. Archaeological events, relating the present to the past, could make headlines. The state and local news always rank as the major focal points in the newspapers. These are followed by (the order of selection depends on the Desk) accidents, accords, agreements or pacts, announcements, business, the common people’s interest (rise in milk or sugar prices), crime, cultural events disasters, education, elections, environment, fashion, health, labour, obituaries, and tragedies.
Activity 2

Pick up a recent edition of a newspaper. Concentrate only on the first page. You might come across at least ten important news items. Now, make a sincere effort to determine which element made each of those newsworthy. Is it timeliness? or human interest? or what? You could find out that a combination of two or more elements made an item newsworthy.

Start the exercise. For your convenience, you could use the following space and columns:

Name of the Newspaper: ..........................................................

Date of issue: ..........................................................

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Headline of news item</th>
<th>Element (s) responsible for making the item (s) newsworthy</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

1.3.3 How to Edit a Copy?

A news story must play upon the event reported therein. Ideally, read every story, preferably thrice—once for familiarisation, once while you edit, and the third time to check your work. If the story has no glaring problems, and if you fully understand it, you would be ready to edit it. Now, you are concerned with spelling, punctuation, grammar, consciousness of expression, smoothness of writing, general accuracy and comprehensibility.

**Format:** A news story is divided into two parts—the opening para called the “intro” (introduction) or the “lead”, and the body. The lead describes, simply and briefly, what happened. The body documents and elaborates the lead.

Adequate attention should be paid to the lead, the most vital part of the story. Written in a single sentence, it should grab the reader and compel him to read the body.

Normally, the lead is in about 25 words, or may be less. At the maximum, it should be limited to 40 words. The intro. should be concise and crisp. It should not meander or puzzle the reader, but summarise the story. Details should be dispensed and blended in the subsequent paragraphs.
There is a famous example of an eye-catching intro:

"James Wilson lit a cigarette while bathing his feet in gasoline. He may live."

This is a masterpiece of economy of words in writing. It tells the whole story at once: the careless stupidity of the act, the swift of retribution and the grisly consequences, all conjured up in our minds in vivid detail.

In a sense, we do not need to read on. But, we all would. We would want to know more about James Wilson, why he was soaking his feet in gasoline, where he was performing this act, and so on. And, all this would be told in subsequent paragraphs, in a logical order.

This particular example is what is called a "teasing" intro, for it arouses our curiosity and makes us read on.

**Opening para:** Conventionally, the news story has followed the "inverted pyramid" structure. The most significant information is placed at the top, the story's beginning and other details follow in their order of importance. Thus, the story tapers to smaller and smaller details, until it disappears. It may begin with the five Ws and one H, i.e., the who-what-why-when-where and how lead. Basically, a news story should answer what, when and where. The answers should find place in the opening para. The three other questions — who, why and how — do not necessarily arise in all the news copy. In case they do, the answers are accommodated in the subsequent paras. Each succeeding para should add an essential detail without being dependent in content or style on what follows.

The inverted pyramid style enables

i) a new story, to be self-contained, even if paras are deleted at the bottom due to space; shortage [consequently, a coherent story is left at each point where it could be cut];

ii) a hurried reader to skip over many stories in a short time by just reading the opening paras [those with greater interest could read a story completely];

iii) a sub-editor, to write the headline gets in the gist in the first few paras; and

iv) a sub-editor to change the order of paras or insert new material, even after the matter has been sent to the press for composing.

If the news is not in the opening para, trace out where it is buried. Bring it to the top, and also locate its supporting details. If there are two important news points or angles that vie for the top spot, assess and evaluate which one is better and more catchy. This could call for rewriting the entire news item.

**Check Your Progress 2**

**Note:** i) Use the space given below for your answers.

ii) Compare your answers with the ones given at the end of this unit.

1) Answer each question in one sentence:

a) What are the five elements that make news?

b) Why are the local news items form the major focal points of a newspaper?
c) Why should one read a news item thrice while editing it?


d) What are the two parts of a news item?


e) What should be the content of a lead?


f) Why should each paragraph of a news item be almost independent of the paragraph which follows it?


Next, see if the second para supports the lead. It should deliver the promise made in the opening para. The third para should continue the development implicit in the lead and in the second para. The paras should preferably be of one sentence, and not more than two. This helps a lot while trimming the story, and makes for easy comprehension by the reader. If there are any direct quotes, ascertain if these should be retained. Find out if there are opinions, and if there are, make sure these are suitably attributed, i.e., given within quotes.

**Rewriting:** While editing a story, the sub-editor should, as far as possible, look for errors in spelling, grammar and syntax, and correct these and 'pass' the copy. But an instant second look might sometimes compel him/her to rewrite it. The opening para may lack the punch, or the copy may seem confusing, or the news may be hidden below. Hence, rewriting may become necessary for the sake of clarity. Highlight the news point, taking care to avoid distortion and respect the facts produced by the reporter. Sometimes, the reports obtain the information but fail to exploit it. This could happen particularly when reporting the press conferences and disasters.

### 1.3.4 Headlines

Every morning, when a reader looks for something interesting in a newspaper, it is the heading which catches his eyes. After scanning the headings, he settles down to read the story in detail.

A story, however well-edited, would not attract him unless it is given a heading or headline, the most vulnerable spot in a newspaper. The headline attracts the reader to go through the story. It tells him what the story is about. Thus, a headline sells the story. Besides, a headline serves the reader in several ways.

The size of the headline determines the importance of a story: the larger or bolder the headlines, the most important is the news story.

Writing a headline is like applying the finishing polish on a well-crafted piece of furniture. While writing headlines, you should keep the following points in mind:

i) A headline should speak. It should say something which educates and entertains the reader. Avoid headlines like, Lok Sabha, S.D. Sharma.
ii) A headline should stimulate the readership, and lead you to reading the story under it. The news items with bad headline do not get read.

iii) A headline should be sharp, and convey the essence of a story.

iv) A headline should be active and positive.

v) The best headline is written in the present tense, because it provides a sense of immediacy. The use of the present tense verbs lends an air of urgency and freshness to the news, making it up-to-date. The past tense headlines make it seem that the publication is reporting history. Here are a few examples:

"Child Case": Trial Begins  
Punjab Militants

PM Arrives in Paris  
Kill 4 Policemen

Harshad Mehta Arrested  
4 Engineers Abducted

vi) Use commonly-known abbreviations:

vii) Never split names between lines of a headline.

For example:

RBI Governor Venkita

Ramanan Retires

It is a bad headline, and should be avoided.

viii) Single quotation marks (' ') should be used in headlines, since double quotation (" ") marks consume more space. Single quotation marks are more attractive.

ix) Articles much as 'the' 'an' and 'a' are generally not used in headlines.

x) Above all, common sense should remain the primary rule in determining clarity.

**Kicker**: Kicker is another conventional headline, usually a one-line heading with a second line (kicker) above it in a different style and half the type size. It extends no more than midway above the main line. Kicker headlines are used to dress up a page by lending variety.

The top is the kicker

**THE BOTTOM IS THE MAIN HEADLINE**

**Hammer**: Hammer is the reverse of kicker, but, usually, in all capital letters. The big type is the kicker and the smaller type the main headline. One word, or two at the most, will suffice of the hammer. By virtue of their size, hammers impress the readers with their importance. But too many hammers on one page may dilute that significance, and destroy the look of the page.

For example:

**THUNDERSTORM**

Trees, hoardings uprooted

**Activity 3**

Go through the different newspapers. Note the way the headline are written. Read, particularly the headlines of the newspapers, analyse their format, style and relevance to the story given below each headline. See the positioning of the news items. See whether you agree with the way the newspapers have laid out the item.
1.3.5 Leads

This lead is different from the one we have already talked about above. Suppose there is a train accident at Aarah, about 60 km. from Patna. Just an hour before the first edition of a newspaper goes to the press. The first information reports from the Railways, or any other sources, convey the news about the accident but give scanty details. There is no precise mention about casualties. It will take about two hours for a reporter to reach the scene to get the first hand details. But we cannot wait till the reporter telephones from the spot or comes back to file the story. We must cover the story in the first edition. The story may be written thus:

Patna, Oct. 15—at least five passengers were killed and several wounded when three bogies of the Magadh Express derailed tonight at Aarah, about 60 km. from here, the railway sources said.

Details are awaited.

Details will pour in once the reporter reaches the site, and a composite story would crystallise. Besides, the Railways Ministry, in New Delhi, will give the official version. There shall also be eyewitness accounts. Hence, many news items are bound to flow in on the same event. All these are tied together, highlighting the major facts, and the Lead is written for the newspaper’s city edition.

A Lead is a device, used mostly in the case of developing stories, for updating the top or changing the story’s emphasis in the light of new information of facts as these unfold.

Such stories include a strike, a 24-hour bandh, a river flood, an air crash or a train accident or other mishaps, a conference or a political meeting, an election, a visit to a state by a VIP such as the Prime Minister or the President. As the story advances with the day, all these may require one or more Leads, like the Second Lead, Third Lead and finally a Lead all.

Besides, a Lead is used to tighten loose ends of a dispersed story. A tie-up will provide a combined top for different items relating to a single subject or related development, namely, the Independence Day or Republic Day celebrations, religious festivals, etc.

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Check Your Progress 3

Note:

i) Use the space given below for your answers.

ii) Compare your answers with the ones given at the end of this unit.

1) State the three main functions of a sub/editor.

2) State true or false:
   a) A headline should contain 5 Ws and H. (  )
   b) A headline need not be active and catchy. (  )
   c) A headline should be written in the present tense as far as possible. (  )
   d) Uncommon words make a headline attractive. (  )

3) Answer in one sentence each:
   a) What is a kicker?

   b) What is a hammer?
1.4 COPY EDITOR

A copy editor or sub-editor is a bridge between a reporter and the reader. He/she has divergent roles to perform, and does one or more of these tasks while editing (subbing) a copy. He/she need not execute all these functions simultaneously. But, on any given day, he/she will be required to play all these roles.

A copy editor, generally known as the sub-editor or desk person, is a gatekeeper and image builder who protects a newspaper's reputation. He/she is a surgeon who performs surgery, and a priest who conducts a happy marriage between speed and efficiency. He/she is a tailor, too. He/she is an unglamorous backroom worker, who does a thankless but stupendous job, and represents the last stage. No one can see his/her edited copy except the proof readers, who, if smart and vigilant, may detect faults with subbing (editing). A desk person takes all the blame; he/she rarely gets any credit, and remains anonymous.

1.4.1 Duties of a Copy Editor

A copy editor or a sub-editor receives, sifts, processes and issues news items after giving them a final shape.

A copy editor/sub-editor:

i) removes rough edges from the copy and polishes it to make it presentable;
   [Any story that comes into the newsroom is often raw, blunt, and rough edged. The first task of a sub is to remove rough edges so that the copy makes sense. This will make the copy pleasing and presentable to the readers.]

ii) adjusts the copy to the style of his newspaper;
   [Style is essential, particularly, to a newspaper, and every news organisation follows its own style. It is a device to maintain consistency and, thus, the credibility of a newspaper.]

You may ask what difference would it make if "P" in Parliament is written in the capital letter at some places and in small letter at other. It does make, for at least two reasons: style lends a sense of craftsmanship, and it affects the reader at two levels — consciously simplifies, and clarifies and corrects the language.

Hong Kong
Hongkong

Fertiliser
Fertilizer

Only one of the above should be followed consistently.

iii) A reader who scans through his morning newspaper is in a great hurry. Hence, a copy editor should carve out each story in a familiar language so that it runs smoothly through the average reader's mind. Smooth writing ensures smooth reading. Simple, direct sentences are more directive. Also, he/she should delete cliches, extraneous words, jargon, ambiguities, non-descript adjectives and adverbs.

As far as possible, the predicate should be close to the subject. If an intervening clause removes the verb too far from the subject, the reader could lose track of the sentence and its meaning.

For example,

Half an hour after leaving Minister Lovell (Oxon) aerodrome, the St. Francis, an all-wing aeroplane, claimed to be the safest ever flown, designed by Mr. Percival Nesbitt Willoughby of St. Leonards-on-Sea and his pilot Hugh Nichol Olley of Carmarthenshire, crashed to their deaths near Bicester.]

(From the South Wales Echo's 50 years column, 11 July 1989).
iv) Tailors story length to space requirements.

v) Detects and corrects errors of fact.

vi) Simplifies, clarifies and verifies meanings.

vii) Adjusts stories to make them objective and fair.

If a controversial matter is reported, then there are bound to be two sides or different points of view. Hence, all the points of view must be fairly presented. Carrying only one version and ignoring others in the coverage will amount to taking sides.

viii) Adjusts stories to make these legally safe.

You should avoid using adjectives of pejorative nature with respect to persons. However, unpopular a person might be the law will protect him against defamation.

In matters before the courts, the cases of both the petitioners and defendants must be given space in the report.

For example,

When reporting an accident between a car and a bus, avoid writing who hit whom, unless it is established through a judicial inquiry. It should be described as a "collision".

ix) Rewrites and restructures stories extensively, where necessary. As far as possible, the sub (editor) should look for errors in spelling, grammar and syntax, and clear the copy. But, an instant second look may sometimes compel him/her to rewrite it. The opening para may lack the punch, the copy may seem confusing, or the news may be hidden below. Hence, rewriting may become necessary for the sake of clarity.

Highlight the news-point, taking care to avoid distortion and respect the facts produced by the reporter. In case the copy is badly written, show it to the reporter. Sometimes, the reporters obtain the information, and fail to exploit it. This could happen while reporting the press conferences and major tragedies such as plane or train accidents.

x) Follows the policy of the newspaper.

Sometimes a newspaper may support the policies of a particular political party, and, hence, would avoid criticising it. Even though you have a different opinion, you shall have to follow the paper's policy.

xi) Corrects copy in the interest of good taste.

xii) Avoids sensation.

xiii) Removes those points that could be called undue publicity or 'puff'.

xiv) Deletes doubtful words and sentences, following the thumb rule "when in doubt, leave out". Every story does not require all these treatment. But, every day, some story or the other will require any or most of these operations; a sub frequently performs these functions.

A copy editor/sub-editor should make sure that words are spelt correctly. A spelling error is a major error, and reflects badly on the credibility of a newspaper. A few moments spent on checking the spelling of a word will keep the reader's mind at ease.

The following is the check-list of some most commonly misspelled words, which a copy editor should store in his memory:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbot</th>
<th>Arraign</th>
<th>Collision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abyss (but Abysmal)</td>
<td>Assassin (Assassinate)</td>
<td>Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abhorrence</td>
<td>Assault</td>
<td>Commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accelerate</td>
<td>Atoll</td>
<td>Connoisseur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodate</td>
<td>Battallion</td>
<td>Consensus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accumulate</td>
<td>Cafeteria</td>
<td>Contemptible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affidavit</td>
<td>Caribbean</td>
<td>Criticise</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aggressor</td>
<td>Centenarian</td>
<td>Cylinder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apartheid</td>
<td>Circuitious</td>
<td>Deleterious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analogous (Analogy)</td>
<td>Coconut</td>
<td>Delicacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definite</td>
<td>Inoculate</td>
<td>Renege</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dietician</td>
<td>Innocuous</td>
<td>Reprehensible</td>
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<tr>
<td>Denunciation</td>
<td>Liaison</td>
<td>Sacrelegious</td>
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<td>Diarrhoea</td>
<td>Litterateur</td>
<td>Secretariat</td>
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<td>Discreet (Discretion)</td>
<td>Manoeuvre</td>
<td>Seize</td>
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<td>Dissention</td>
<td>Mischievous</td>
<td>Separate</td>
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<td>Eccentric</td>
<td>Misspell</td>
<td>Shepherd</td>
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<td>Ecstasy</td>
<td>Mickle</td>
<td>Sheriff</td>
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<td>Ecstatic</td>
<td>Niece</td>
<td>Siege</td>
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<td>Embarrass</td>
<td>Occasion</td>
<td>Sizable</td>
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<td>Occult</td>
<td>Susceptible</td>
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<td>Gaiety</td>
<td>Occurrence</td>
<td>Suspicion</td>
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<td>Gauge</td>
<td>Omission</td>
<td>Supersede</td>
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<td>Grievous</td>
<td>Paediatrics</td>
<td>Supersession</td>
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<td>Harass</td>
<td>Parallel (Unparalleled)</td>
<td>Sycophant</td>
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<td>Haemorrhage</td>
<td>Passenger</td>
<td>Tranquil</td>
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<tr>
<td>Homicide</td>
<td>Paranoia</td>
<td>Threshold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homogeneous</td>
<td>Peaceable</td>
<td>Vaccilate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyperbole</td>
<td>Persuasion</td>
<td>Vacuum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypocrisy (Hypocrite)</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>Violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immolate</td>
<td>Plague</td>
<td>Weird</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impeccable</td>
<td>Playwright</td>
<td>Yacht</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imposter</td>
<td>Portuguese</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impugn</td>
<td>Principal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Incidentally</td>
<td>Principle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incompatible</td>
<td>Propeller</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorruptible</td>
<td>Psychiatrist</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indict</td>
<td>Querry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Pronounced indite)</td>
<td>Rarity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous</td>
<td>Reconnoitre</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indomitable</td>
<td>Reconnaissance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inevitable</td>
<td>Recommend</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingenious</td>
<td>Regrettable</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingenuous</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Remember, the following are spelt thus:

Dy Jekyll & Mr Hyde
Jawaharlal Nehru
Panjab University
Raja Rammohun Roy
Zakir Husain

The words “society” and “parliament” are not preceded by an article:
The Society, the Parliament is wrong.
The following words have the same singular and plural form:
aircraft, hunting, equipment, furniture, staff.

How would you edit the following report for a newspaper?

1) New Delhi, Nov. 5 — About five persons died and twenty-three others were injured in a devastating fire that the broke out in the Ajmeri Gate area in the heart of Delhi in the early hours of today morning.

Ten shops in the busy locality were also gutted in the fire. The loss is estimated at about Rs. ten lakhs.

Those who were injured were removed to Irwin Hospital which was nearest to the scene of fire. Fire fighting operations were hampered as a result of the fact that hundreds of people had gathered to see the scene of fire.

The made-up story given above contains some verbiage. Here is one way to edit it, along with reasons for changes:

2) New Delhi, Nov. 5 — Five people were killed and 23 injured in a big fire at Ajmeri Gate in Old Delhi early this morning

Ten shops were also gutted. The injured were admitted to Irwin Hospital. Fire fighting operation was hampered due to the presence of a large crowd.

Our reasons: ‘About’ should not be used with five, eleven, twenty-three and the like. It could be used with twenty, fifty, hundred, etc.

3) Figures from one to nine are spelt out. From 10 upwards, it is in numerals.

4) We replace devastating with ‘big’ which is simple and space-saving.

5) The verb ‘were’ is common for killed and injured.

6) When we say ‘fire’, ‘broke out’ is redundant.

7) ‘Ajmeri Gate’ is in Old Delhi, which is more specific; we delete ‘area’ which is superfluous.

8) ‘Today morning’ is wrong. The correct word is ‘this morning’. Using ‘early today’ would be still better.

9) ‘In the busy locality’ is again redundant.

10) When we say ‘gutted’ it means destroyed in fire. Hence, ‘in the fire’ is absurd. The loss of goods estimate in terms of money should preferably be avoided, unless it is mentioned by an official spokesman. The sufferers may claim heavy damage, even if the amount is less, quoting the news report and the newspaper.
11) The injured are ‘admitted’ or ‘taken’ to hospital or ‘a hospital’ (but never ‘the hospital’). Only ‘bodies’ (not ‘dead bodies’) are ‘removed’.

12) Once more, ‘which was nearest to the scene of fire’ is redundant.

13) The last para may be deleted. But, if retained, the sentence should be tightened. Here, ‘operations’ is wrong. It is ‘operation’.

Here is another made-up report.

The Union territory of Delhi was the leading city in India in the number of traffic deaths recorded in the year of 1990. The Ministry of Surface Transport said today.

Here is one way to edit it:

Delhi led the country in traffic deaths in 1990, the Ministry of Surface Transport reported today.

Check Your Progress 4

Note: i) The following are some parts of the news items. Write each of these in a more direct and concise form in the space provided for them.

ii) Compare your items with the ones given at the end of this unit.

1) A district level monitoring cell has been set up in Meerut district in Western Uttar Pradesh to promptly dispoise off complaints from the Harijans and to give them protection of their interests.

2) Absolute perfection is difficult to achieve.

3) Increasingly, people are moving away from city to the surrounding areas.

4) The tenants were seeking participation in the making of price policy.

5) The police are anxious to know the whereabouts of Raja.
1.4.2 Qualities

The production of a newspaper calls for undivided attention of 200 to 300 people in different departments, as it is delicate and complex process. There is tension since a deadline is to be met. In a news agency, the deadline is 'now'. Amidst this tense atmosphere, the sub-editor has to perform his job meticulously. He should possess certain qualities to discharge his functions efficiently.

The sources of the essential qualities of a copy editor/sub-editor are:

Calmness: Be calm and composed, come what may. You should not get excited when a big story breaks — be it a disaster, calamity, the assassination of a big political leader or the collapse of a government.

Decisive: Take quick and correct decisions. The editorial department has no place for indecisives.

Non-partisan: Never take sides; be non-partisan.

Memory: Have a sharp memory for counter-checking facts, if necessary.

Grasp: Size up the situation as it unfolds, and estimate its relevance.

Know your reader: Know the particular readership. This means you should engage one hand with subbing, and the other with the pulse of the reader.

Self-confidence: Have confidence enough to correct a bad copy written by anyone, even the senior most reporter or the paper's editor.

Mature: Be mature enough to correct only bad copy, and not just make changes for the sake of changing.

Sceptical: Do not accept anything at face value. You should approach everything as a source of potential error.

Knowledge: Be a jack of all trades, because a sub handles a wide range of stories (from killings to oil prices to satellite launch). You are required to have some knowledge about these, including how these compared with the past events, how the names of different nationalities are spelt. A good editor should store most of the information as it comes across, and search for more.

Stability: Have enough stability to work under pressure.

1.4.3 Tools

The copy editor will require a set of tools, the lack of which may lead to loss valuable time while subbing the copy. These aids are indispensable. Often, you may come across problems of spellings and facts, arising out of an average day's handling of the news. You should focus on the errors, and correct the name. A list of references shall include:

- A standard unabridged dictionary, English — English;
- A book on who's who;
• A good atlas;
• Maps—India and World;
• Indian Constitution;
• Style book;
• Police diary;
• Press laws;
• Library or morgue with clippings files;
• Roget’s Thesaurus;
• An encyclopaedia;
• List of council of ministers at the Centre;
• List of MPs in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha; and
• H.W. Flower’s Modern English Usage.

1.5 LANGUAGE

The basic building blocks of journalism are words. You should respect the words, and follow the way these are arranged and strung together. Any misplacement of words could twist the meaning. Hence, you should pay attention to punctuation marks, grammar and syntax. All these are important in the sentence construction.

Punctuation Marks: Punctuation problems start and almost end with a comma. This little mark causes more trouble than the rest put together. Consider these examples:

Ravi says Soma is an idiot.

Ravi, says Soma, is an idiot.

Observe how the placement of the comma has changed the meaning. Remember that commas define relationships within a sentence.

Punctuation marks bring in clarity and better readability. At the same time, too many of these clutter a story.

There should be no comma after a verb unless it is immediately followed by a parenthesis.

One of the areas of punctuation in which mistakes are often made is the dash and the hyphen. These serve two nearly opposite purposes, but are often mixed up.

A dash is used to create a pause for emphasis, or to provide an abrupt change of thought, or to introduce a phrase or clause in parenthesis. Thus, a dash separates, and is spaced; the whereas, a hyphen joins the two, often unconnected, ideas. It is not spaced, and is half the size of a dash.

For example:

Stella has blue eyes—clear as a bell—and black hair. The dash is a big, lively, perhaps even dramatic mark. Observe the use of hyphen: Sixty-eight, ball-point, full-scale.

1.6 EDITING MARKS AND SYMBOLS

Slug: A news item or story may run into several paras, and also exceed one page. If running into pages, a news story has to be kept track of from amongst various stories, and chronologically arranged. Hence, these paras, in a page, are divided into two of three parts. Then, these parts are ‘slugged’ and numbered, i.e., given a label, which
identifies that story for that particular day, and helps the editor on duty to bring
different parts together. Related stories are slugged to make the relationship clear.

Slug is an identification mark or tag. It is often the key word in a story and written on
top left or right of a page. For example: On a day like 15th August, 26th January,
festivals, disasters and press conferences, there are bound to be several stories related to
the same subject. So, 'Day' will become the Master Slug. And for each story a 'Sub-
slug' shall be used, e.g., 'Day-PM' will be the slug for the story relating to the Prime
Minister's speech on the occasion. Thus, PM is the 'Sub-slug', with 'Day' serving as
the 'Master Slug'.

Editing Symbols: As soon as you start editing a copy, the first symbol you use is for
paragraph indentation. Even if every para is indented, you should mark this symbol on every para. This would help the typesetter in knowing that you want paragraph to
begin at that spot. Mark it like this.

\[\text{Paragraph mark}\]
\[\text{No para}\]
\[\text{Run on}\]

The para starts from here.
This should be a paragraph.
But this should not be.
This is a different mark.
Join this with the above sentence.

\[\text{Insert a word}\]
\[\text{Insert a letter}\]
\[\text{Delete a letter}\]
\[\text{Delete a letter}\]
\[\text{Transpose mark}\]
\[\text{Change to caps}\]
\[\text{Change to lower case}\]
\[\text{Abbreviate}\]
\[\text{Change to italics}\]
\[\text{Spell out}\]
\[\text{Change to a word}\]
\[\text{Change to a figure}\]
\[\text{Separate words}\]
\[\text{Join words}\]
\[\text{Close up}\]
\[\text{Period or full stop}\]
\[\text{Insert a comma}\]
\[\text{Insert a hyphen}\]
\[\text{Insert (open) quotes}\]
\[\text{Insert (close) quotes}\]
\[\text{Insert a dash}\]
\[\text{Restore deleted word}\]
\[\text{Insert apostrophe}\]
\[\text{Centre the line}\]
\[\text{Delete letters}\]
Insertion of a comma needs this mark \ called a caret, an all-purpose mark. If the caret looks up, with the point at the top, the comma goes under it. If the caret is upside down, punctuation goes above as for an apostrophe. The caret is also used for colon and semicolon.

Always note that editing marks are large and clear. You should make bold marks on the copy; timid and illegible ones may be overlooked by hasty typesetters.

1.7 LET US SUM UP

You are now in a position to comprehend what editing is. You have been provided with the background on the need for editing a news story, and how editing is done. The examples gave you some idea. We also took you inside a newsroom, and showed how a news desk functions. The news desk is like the heart of a living being. It is supreme, and plays a watchdog role. The sub-editor is the final authority and, ultimately, responsible for shaping a copy. He wears different masks during the course of a day.

Space is a major constraint in any newspaper. Simple economic considerations dictate that space should not be wasted. Despite limitation of space, comprehensive coverage need to be given to news. Hence, all information and facts that come in cannot be published. They have to be sized up, dressed and given an identity. This will ensure that every story earns its place in the paper's pages.

We have discussed the elements which make an item newsworthy. These elements are: proximity, prominence, timeliness, consequence and human interest.

We have discussed at length a very important element of a news item called lead. A lead is a shop window in a newspaper. It is the first and most important paragraph in a story. The lead entices the reader, gives him the essence of the story, and encourages him to read on.

We had discussion on another important element of a news item called 'headline'.

Basically, a good headline must do three things:

- Tell the reader what the story is all about;
- Give this information in quick and easy form; and
- Entice the reader to follow the story and 'read all about it'.

All these requirements are best met by using the 'Present' tense.

You can lead a horse to water, but you cannot make it drink. And, once you have placed your newspaper in the hands of your reader, you are faced with a similar problem: You cannot make him read it. But there is a way to persuade him to read your report, by the use of good headlines. Imagine a page of a newspaper without one single headline. The reader would be served a solid, grey, unpalatable mass of type, each story differing from its neighbour only in length. Apart from breaking up the page, headlines are needed to draw the reader's eye to each story, and attract him to read every word of it.

Anything that comes into the newsroom is often raw and rough. If allowed to be printed in the same form, a newspaper will lack credibility, and may not sell. A reporter is ever in a hurry, and is bound to commit mistakes — of spelling, grammar and syntax. Also, stories received from other sources may lack uniformity and style. All these need to be sorted out, checked, clarified, condensed, classified and arranged in their order of importance.

All these tasks are carried out by a sub-editor. He is a creative artist. A sub-editor should:

- Correct all errors of fact and expression in the copy;
- Condense or amplify the story to fit the space available.
• Make it conform to the typographical or literary style of the newspaper;
• Improve the story;
• Mark the copy for the printer; and
• Write headlines.

If he fails in these tasks, he can mar the newspaper.

A sub-editor should have an orderly mind, a sense of proportion, the power of quick and accurate decision, a store of general knowledge, and the ability to conjure it up when required.

He should also have some artistic appreciation, the gift of making swift decisions, awareness of management, production technique, and other sides of business.

Besides, a sub-editor should have the ability to work in an exciting atmosphere, without being distracted. He should have the power of concentration, a good memory, should be physically fit, and have a feeling of team spirit.

1.8 SUGGESTED READING

Gibnson, Martin L; Editing in the Electronic Era.

Garst, Robert E and Bernstein, Theodore M; Headlines and Deadlines.

1.9 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: MODEL ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

1) false
2) false
3) true
4) true
5) false

2) Staff Reports → Newsroom → Sub-Editors → Printing Press → Newspaper

Check Your Progress 2

a) The given elements which make an item newsworthy are proximity, timeliness, prominence, consequence, and human interest.

b) The local news directly affects the readers.

c) The two parts of a news item are (i) lead, and (ii) body.

d) the lead should say what happened.

e) If the editor would like to delete some paragraphs for various reasons, he may do so without bringing much changes in other paragraphs.
Check Your Progress 3

1) The three main functions of a sub-editor are to
   a) choose the news items for the newspaper;
   b) put these items in the correct format, and remove all the unimportant sentences; and
   c) correct the language, spelling and syntax of the news items.

2) a) false
    b) false
    c) true
    d) false

3) a) A ‘kicker’ is the first part of a headline, usually placed above the second part with the reduced half-size alphabets than the second part.
    b) A hammer is the opposite of a kicker.

Check Your Progress 4

1) A special cell has been created in Meerut district to dispose of complaints from the Harijans and to protect their interest.

2) Perfection is difficult.

3) More people are migrating to the countryside.

4) The tenants want a say in fixing of the price policy.

5) Police want to find Raja.

6) Shops were set alight in several cities following the riots.