

How to Edit Like a Pro



Identify the author's key points, eliminate needless text, and let verbs do the heavy lifting. As you revise and polish, do so with empathy.

Robby Brumberg, Ragan Communications

Editing is not unlike janitorial work.

Someone makes a mess, and it's our solemn duty to clean it up. Of course, tidying up text is a mere fraction of what we do. On any given day, we must combine the distinctive skills of butchers, therapists, diplomats, reporters, middle managers and teachers. (Some tasks require hostage negotiation

tactics.)

Unfortunately, there's no comprehensive manual providing universal instructions for editors. Our work is neither math nor science. Much of what we do boils down to personal preference, stylistic nitpickery and the measured guidance of the Associated Press. However, that doesn't mean we can't be analytical, intentional, strategic and precise in our approach.

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Here to help you edit like a pro is former Ragan executive editor, Rob Reinalda, 2019 winner of the prestigious ACES Robinson Prize for excellence in editing. Below are his most helpful tips, along with a few pointers of my own (which I've either learned through repeated blunders or subconsciously cribbed from him).

Reinalda recommends six steps:

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