

## Levels of Editing

Knowing how deeply to edit is a skill that can take years to develop. For the sake of simplicity, I've divided this guide into the following categories:

- Grammar and Usage
- Style
- Functionality
- Logic and Factual Accuracy
- Clarity and Tone

Keeping these in mind will help you make a good choice on whether a change is necessary during an edit. And, if you do decide to change something, understanding the severity of the issue can help you come up with a solution that won't be time consuming and won't distort the meaning or introduce further errors.

### Grammar and Usage

The editor is expected to address all **grammar** problems (punctuation errors, missing words, sentence structure issues, and so on). Sometimes, this involves rewriting, but sometimes it's a simple fix, such as a deletion or insertion.

- **Incorrect:** In this course, student will investigate artificial intelligence.  
**Correction:** In this course, **students** will investigate artificial intelligence.  
**Correction:** In this course, **you** will investigate artificial intelligence.

Style dictates use of *you* in this case, but either way the grammatical error needs to be fixed.

- **Incorrect:** To check the results, the experiment was repeated.  
**Correction:** To check the results, **the scientist repeated the experiment.**

The passive voice isn't, by itself, a problem in this sentence. The problem is that the phrase *To improve the results* dangles; it doesn't have anything to modify. Changing passive to active is just one solution.

- **Incorrect:** The final project for this course the creation of an artificially intelligent life form.  
**Correction:** The final project for this course **is** the creation of an artificially intelligent life form.
- **Incorrect:** The circuit that is integrated into the controlling structures of the implants serve to enhance the prescribed programs written into the coding underlayment.  
**Correction:** The circuit that is integrated into the controlling structures of the implants **serves** to enhance the prescribed programs written into the coding underlayment.

This example shows how a simple grammatical error can hide in a long sentence with specialized technical language.

- **Intentionally incorrect:** One morning, I shot an elephant in my pajamas. How he got into my pajamas I don't know.

This line from [Groucho Marx](#) has a misplaced prepositional phrase.

With **usage**, there's a range of acceptability (Bryan Garner's Language-Change Index). We should follow the well-established usage guidelines (if just to avoid seeming sloppy), but you'll have to make a judgment about whether to enforce some of the lesser known usage guidelines. (For example, if you're working on a revision, it may not be appropriate to make a course-wide change to fix an obscure usage recommendation.)

- **Problematic:** Let's discuss this farther.  
**Correction:** Let's discuss this **further**.

Although this is really just a usage issue, it's so well established that most people would see it as an outright mistake—something as severe as a grammatical error.

- **Problematic:** This document will help you to investigate artificial intelligence.  
**Correction:** This document will **help you investigate** artificial intelligence.

Garner recommends using just *help* without *to*. This is an example of a very mild usage guideline. No one can accuse the original of being outright incorrect; it's just *preferable* to follow the guideline.

- **Problematic:** Hand me the book which is on the table.  
**Correction:** Hand me the book **that** is on the table.

The clause *which is on the table* is essential to the meaning; without it, it's not clear which book is intended. Depending on the context, however, this could be "Hand me the **book, which** is on the table." (That is, a book has been established in the conversation, and it happens to be on the table.) This distinction (using *that* for essential clauses and *comma-which* for nonessential clauses) is worth enforcing. (See *Garner's*.)

- **Problematic:** His next book was *The Stranger* which was published in 1942.  
**Correction:** His next book was *The Stranger*, which was published in 1942.

In this example, the clause *which was published in 1942* is nonessential—additional information that could be deleted without changing the meaning of the sentence. (Note that *which was* could be deleted altogether: His next book was ***The Stranger*, published in 1942.**)

## Style

We must address deviations from **style** (SNHU, APA, Chicago), but style is a little more flexible than grammar. (For example, if we all agreed on it, we could decide not to use the serial comma.) Style is a set of conventions for things such as capitalization, punctuation use, typographical treatments, and so on. These standards (or preferences) help ensure that the material is consistent. They're policies. And they help make editing more efficient and effective.

## Functionality

Editors are expected to address anything that may compromise how well a course **functions**. Sometimes, this involves working with a CA to figure out an unusual setup or working with the ID to make sure there are good instructions for students. A lot of this involves cross-checking documents. Consider these questions:

- Do the prompts agree with the rubrics? Does the syllabus agree with the blueprint?
- Are the textbook and ISBN correct?

- Are document names consistent? (Is it **HAL 149 Investigating AI Rubric** or **HAL 149 Milestone Two Rubric**?)
- Is the final project deliverable stated clearly and consistently?
- Is all the standard language in place?

### Logic and Factual Accuracy

Read the material for **logic** or sense. If it doesn't make sense or is contradictory, it could cause problems for readers. (See "Illogic" in *Garner's*.)

- **Flawed:** The short paper should be 10 to 15 pages in length. Why is it called a *short* paper if it's 10 to 15 pages long?
- **Flawed:** The short paper should be at least 3 to 5 pages in length.  
**Correction:** The short paper **should be 3 to 5 pages** in length.

It doesn't make sense to apply the term *at least* to an entire range, which by nature includes lower and upper limits.

**Factual accuracy** isn't our main responsibility, and we aren't expected to fact-check every last thing in a course. But we are expected to pick out inconsistencies, and we should check the spelling of names, places, organizations, and so on. If we can't resolve the issue quickly and with reasonable certainty, the question should be put to the ID.

- **Incorrect:** His next book was *The Stranger*, which was published in 1943.  
**Correction:** His next book was *The Stranger*, which was published in **1942**.

We know 1942 is correct because it was mentioned earlier, but it's also easy to do a quick Google search to check it.

### Clarity and Tone

Some minor lapses of clarity can be left alone (or flagged so you can loop back to them). But if the problem is severe, recast. But be careful not to change meaning or create a new problem in the process.

- **Not ideal:** As we discussed in the previous module, it is important for you to remember that the systems we discussed in the previous module are systems that are integrated into the underlayment circuit. But that ain't nothing you can't handle, you magnificent coder, you!  
**Revision:** **Remember that the systems discussed in the previous module are integrated into the underlayment circuit.**  
**Lighter revision:** **It is important for you to remember that the systems we discussed in the previous module are integrated into the underlayment circuit. But this integration is simple to accomplish through effective coding.**

Although we try to remain as hands off as possible, this is a very inefficient and repetitive sentence, and it lapses into an extremely casual tone. (Assume the rest of the text is very academic writing.) **Be careful not to go too far.** Rewriting for the sake of rewriting takes up a lot of time, increases the risk of introducing errors, and may even erode the confidence and trust other groups have for the editorial group. The first revision is pretty heavy, so I've included a revision that addresses the inefficiencies and tone but largely retains the original phrasing.

## Big Example

- **Problematic:** Artificial Intelligence (AI) is the intelligence exhibited by machines or software. It is also the name of the academic field of study which studies how to create computers and computer software that are capable of intelligent behavior. Designing multiple systems, it is important to emphasize that the Circuit that was integrated into the Controlling Structures of the implants help to serve to enhance the presided programs written into the coding - or as yet uncoded – underlayment(s). As you begin Module Three and start to lay out and plan for the outline for the milestone for Module Three, the final project is due.

**Correction:** Feel free to correct this if you want to. It's got just about every type of problem mentioned.

## Helpful Resources

- [Grammar Girl's Editing Checklist](#)
- Chapter 1 of *Copyeditor's Handbook* (pp. 23–28 are especially interesting)
- Chapter 5 of *Chicago Manual* (Bryan Garner's contribution to CMOS). The rest of the manual is much more comprehensive than APA. It's okay to follow *Chicago* style guidelines as long as they don't contradict APA or SNHU style. (They generally agree.) Of course, citations should follow the proper style (APA for most, MLA for ELA, or Turabian/Chicago for history).
- *Garner's Modern American Usage*
- [Chicago Style Q & A](#)
- M-W (some usage notes, [not prescriptive](#))

## Common Issues

- Dangling or misplaced terms or phrases
- Faulty parallelism
- Ambiguous pronouns
- Subject/verb disagreement
- Inconsistent references to document names
- Capitalization (usually overcapitalized, but be careful)
- Punctuation (especially hyphens and dashes)
- Comma splices
- Spelling mistakes (especially proper nouns, which the eye tends to skip over), transposed vowels, and mistakes that are invisible to the spell checker (fist/first, peak/peek, its/it's)
- Inconsistent names
- Inefficient language