# WRIT6001: Professional Editing

*Week 4 Seminar: Lower order editorial concerns*

# 'Lower order' concerns

Substantive editing: typically between higher and lower order forms of attention

*Style manual* (2002): "Substantive editing concentrates on the content, structure, language and style of a document" (p. 256)

Copy editing: typically involves attention to sentences and individual words

*Style manual* (2002): "The purpose of copy editing is to remove mistakes, inconsistencies or other infelicities of expression that could irritate or confuse readers—or embarrass the author" (p.256)

Proofreading: essentially about checking a document

*Style manual* (2002): "The principal aims of proofreading are to verify that there are no discrepancies between [approved versions of a document], that the document is complete and that the standard of presentation is suitable for publication" (p. 257)

# Language and style

McKenzie, *The Editor's Companion:* "Language creates and controls the world: the act of naming brings concepts into existence and imposes order on chaos" (94)

> What are some examples of this 'worlding' activity? How does our everyday language help us to make order?

"All living languages exist in a state of tension between growth and decay. Languages change because playfulness and the desire to impress are universal human traits; they grow in response to technological innovation, cultural contact and social developments." (94)

> What are some linguistic tensions you are aware of in English usage?
>
> How have innovation, cultural and social change influenced changes in English language in recent decades?

3

# The style guide

- reference works designed support *consistency* and *correctness* in language use
- different emphases and formats
- general forms e.g. *Style manual*
- academic style guides e.g. APA, MLA
- organizational and brand style guides e.g.

https://intranet.sydney.edu.au/services/marketing-communications/our-brand.html

> "Our 'brand voice' is an expression of our vision, values and people. Like them, it is **passionate, intelligent** and **brave**.
> Our brand personality would express those traits in our brand voice…
> - **passionately**
> - **with bravery**
> - **and intelligence**"

***Style guides form an interface between higher and lower order editing***

A Dictionary
OF
MODERN ENGLISH
USAGE

BY

H. W. FOWLER

Joint Author of *The King's English*
*The Concise Oxford Dictionary*
and *The Pocket Oxford Dictionary*

OXFORD
AT THE CLARENDON PRESS
LONDON : HUMPHREY MILFORD
1926
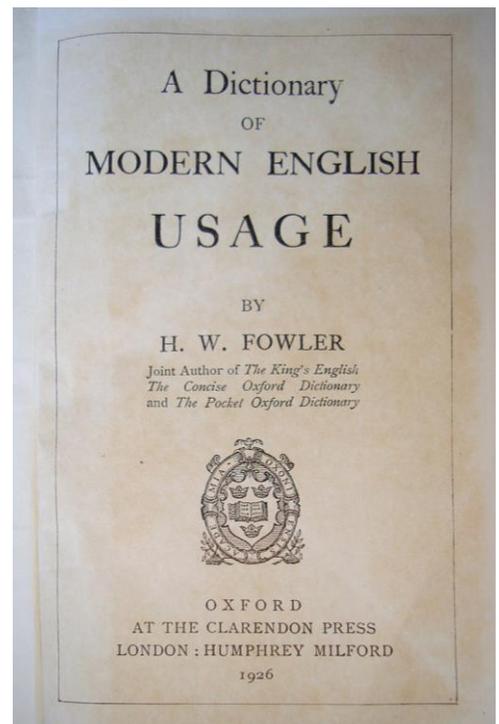
4

# What is 'Plain English'?

"The writing and setting out of essential information in a way that gives a cooperative, motivated person a good chance of understanding it at first reading, and in the same sense that the writer meant it to be understood" (Martin Cutts, *Oxford Guide to Plain English*, 2009: xi).

*writing and setting out*: an approach to both style and structure

*essential information*: informed by the view that people ought to have access to information that affects their lives (e.g. legal, medical, government documents)

*at first reading:* promotes engagement with your text, but also respects the value readers place on their time

*in the same sense*: against ambiguity and/or deception; in favour of openness and honesty from governments, NGOs and corporations

5

# A historical precedent

From George Orwell, "Politics and the English Language":

1) Never use a metaphor, simile, or other figure of speech which you are used to seeing in print.
2) Never use a long word where a short one will do.
3) If it is possible to cut a word out, always cut it out.
4) Never use the passive where you can use the active.
5) Never use a foreign phrase, a scientific word, or a jargon word if you can think of an everyday English equivalent.
6) Break any of these rules sooner than say anything outright barbarous.



Image source:
http://www.writeincolor.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/george-orwell.jpg
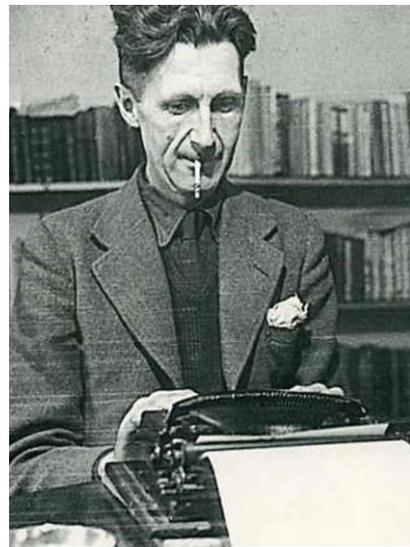
6

# Plain English: the basics

- Keep your sentences short
- Prefer active verbs
- Use 'you' and 'we'
- Use words that are appropriate for the reader
- Don't be afraid to give instructions
- Avoid nominalisations
- Use lists where appropriate

Source: http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/free-guides.html

Some others:
- Put your points positively when you can
- Use only as many words as you really need
- Average sentence length: 15-20 words
- Avoid sexist (or racist etc.) language
- Use accurate punctuation and good grammar

7

# Plain English:
# Trim the Process Clutter for Efficiency

| | Choose | |
|---|---|---|
| during the course of | | during |
| for a period of 3 years | | for 3 years |
| in a timely manner | | promptly |
| is in the process of recruiting | | is recruiting |
| is responsible for the management of | | manages |
| on a regular basis | | regularly |
| the risks associated with | | the risks of |

https://www.plainenglishfoundation.com/free-writing-tools#

8

4

# Plain English:
# Simplify prepositional phrases for precision

## Simplify prepositional phrases for precision

| Choose | | not | |
|---|---|---|---|
| in | | | contained in |
| for, to | | | for the purpose of |
| with | | | in connection with |
| to | | | in order to |
| about, for, to | | | in relation to/with regards to |
| without | ✔ | | in the absence of |
| if | | | in the event that ✘ |

9

# Plain English:
# Shun fancy-pants phrases for readability

## Shun fancy-pants phrases for readability

| Choose | | not | |
|---|---|---|---|
| because | | | as a consequence of/due to the fact that |
| after, at the end of | | | at the conclusion of |
| in line with, under | | | in accordance with/pursuant to |
| despite, although | | | notwithstanding |
| most | | | the majority of |
| the rest of | ✔ | | the remainder of |
| use | | | utilisation ✘ |

10

# Plain English:
# Condense 'Officialese'

> It should be noted, that instances of discrimination are abated by the implementation of policies with respect to our workplace environment and in view of this if it is considered that the lodgement of a complaint is required the matter, should be raised, with the appropriate authorised anti-discrimination officer within the organisation.

**Officialese (52 words)**

> Our policy is to have a workplace free from discrimination. If you have a complaint, please tell our anti-discrimination officer.

**Plain English (20 words)**

11

# Plain English: Use correct punctuation

**Progress**                                      **Result**
                                                    5/6

**Which sentence uses commas correctly?**

We would like to hire you for the position however, we need to check your references first.

Our company sponsors the PLAIN conference, which happens every 2 years.

The man in the line-up, who has a grey moustache, was the man I saw fleeing the scene.

I have authorised a refund and issued a cheque for the full amount, please visit our office to collect it.

Next   Close

**Progress**                                      **Result**
                                                    6/6

**Which sentence uses commas correctly?**

We would like to hire you for the position however, we need to check your references first.

Our company sponsors the PLAIN conference, which happens every 2 years. ✔

The man in the line-up, who has a grey moustache, was the man I saw fleeing the scene.

I have authorised a refund and issued a cheque for the full amount, please visit our office to collect it.

Correct!        Next   Close

https://www.plainenglishfoundation.com/free-writing-tools#

12

# Plain English: Use simple punctuation





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13

# Rewrite the following for *readability*

The pedestrian link may not be fully operational at the time of opening of the commercial towers, which may result in significant pedestrian travel issues for the retail precinct.

The Company may require an audit of the Business comprising an examination of such business records and financial records as necessary to ascertain financial results for the period in question.

14

# Rewrite the following for *readability*

Until such time as the resource requirements associated with the performance of the essential basic functions of the position are fully understood, it is difficult to make predictions as to the capacity of the officer to engage in policy development activities.

During the preparation of any proposals I would encourage dialogue between yourself and the finance manager to ensure that there is a shared understanding of the budgetary issues affecting your team.

15

The pedestrian link may not be fully operational at the time of opening of the commercial towers, which may result in significant pedestrian travel issues for the retail precinct.

If the pedestrian link is not ready when the commercial towers open, people will not be able to walk to the shopping area. ✔

The Company may require an audit of the Business comprising an examination of such business records and financial records as necessary to ascertain financial results for the period in question.

We might need to audit your business's records to confirm the financial results for the period. ✔

Source: https://www.plainenglishfoundation.com/free-writing-tools

16

Until such time as the resource requirements associated with the performance of the essential basic functions of the position are fully understood, it is difficult to make predictions as to the capacity of the officer to engage in policy development activities.

We do not yet fully understand what resources the position needs for its main functions, so we cannot easily predict whether the officer can also develop policy. ✔

During the preparation of any proposals I would encourage dialogue between yourself and the finance manager to ensure that there is a shared understanding of the budgetary issues affecting your team.

As you prepare proposals, please talk to the finance manager so you both understand any issues with the team's budget. ✔

Source: https://www.plainenglishfoundation.com/free-writing-tools

17

Rewrite this paragraph for **readability**.

*Share your suggestions with the class.*

Example from: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/federal-eye/wp/2015/01/28/dhs-social-security-and-sec-take-top-honors-for-plain-federal-writing/

TFA and the Teaching Fellows programs may attract different types of candidates than other routes to certification—these differences can arise both from the programs' approaches to recruitment and selection and from the teachers' decisions on which programs to apply to and attend. Therefore, differences in effectiveness between TFA teachers and comparison teachers, and between Teaching Fellows and comparison teachers, reflect the influence of both differences in the types of individuals who choose to enter teaching through TFA or a Teaching Fellows program versus some other training program and differences in the recruitment and selection procedures and training and support the programs offer. The study cannot rigorously disentangle these components.

18

# Copyediting activity

*This excerpt from Chateaubriand's* Memoirs *has been hastily transcribed, and contains numerous errors of usage, spelling, grammar, punctuation, tense etc.*

Edit this text for accuracy and consistency.

On may 17th, in the year of 1793, I disembark at Southhampton on my way to this same city of London, an obstinate and humble traveller coming from Jersey. Nobody took notice of me. On May 18, Willy Smith, the mayor of Southhampton, handed me a travel permit for London and there was a copy of the Alien Bill attached to it. It describes me in this way, in English: "Francois de Chateaubriand, french orifice in the emigration army, five ffet four inches high, thin shape, brown hair and brown-side whiskers." I am modest and I share the least expensive carriage with a few sailors they on leave. I changed horses at the most mutable inns. Poor sick unknown I entered a rich opulent city where Mr Pitt reigned. I finded lodgings six shillings a month, under the lathes of a garrot at the end of a little street off the Tottenham Hotspurs Road, which a cousin from Brittany had prepared for me.

(Adapted from Chateaubriand, *Memoirs From Beyond The Grave,* NYRB edition, translated Alex Andriesse, p. 240)

19

# Final activity and/or homework

- For your *individual editorial project,* you need to identify a professional or public document to analyse and evaluate
- Ensure that you have decided on which document you will examine by the end of Week 4.
- **Draft an outline, and one paragraph, of your editorial analysis/evaluation to discuss during week 5.**

Critical questions:
- what language or style choices have been made in this text? what are their effects?
- could the language be clearer or more precise?
- is language and style consistent throughout?
- could word choices be altered to change the tone, voice or 'feel' of the document?
- are there any mistakes or inconsistencies in the text which require editorial attention?
- does it conform to a particular style or usage guide? should it?

20