

So, you want
to be a
copy editor.
That's great.

And you want to work at
XYZ newspaper, website,
broadcast outlet, radio,
TV station?

That's good, too.

What's next?

Practice,
practice,
practice

And, then the test

What can you expect to see
and what do you need
to know to pass a
copy editing internship test?
You know the one.
Or do you?

Know **stuff**, lots of stuff

- How many people sit on the U.S. Supreme Court?
- What's the difference between **loath** and **loathe**?
- Who was the founder of the Peace Corps?
- What's the **difference** between a hurricane and a tornado?
- What does EPA stand for?
- Tiger Woods – who is he?

What's **happening** now?

- Who is the president of Canada?
- What's the official name of the government sponsored insurance coverage plan for the U.S.?

Catch the error(s)... er ...

error(s)

- Volkswagon is only having trouble with one of their models.
- I feel nauseous when I think of the momento I lost.
- The workers poured **concrete/cement** to fix the sidewalk.
- He looks like he can pitch very well.

Getting **tricky**

- Look for **inconsistencies** (Lieberman vs. Liberman).
- Don't write around **confusing word pairings**, such as comprise/compose. They want to know that you know which is correct.
- Use your **dictionary**. It contains political leaders, geography, foreign words and other surprising info (Wedgwood china).
- Employ **common sense** (the first mention of a car being an automatic but a reference to using a clutch later in the story).
- Pay attention to **tiny details** such as a font change or a period being in bold type or a sentence not ending.
- Remember the **format** in tabular content or items such as recipes. Did the listing include the time of an event? If the recipe calls for frozen lobster meat, did you tell the reader when or how to thaw it?

Show that you care about **accuracy**

OK, so maybe you don't know the current president of France. Or Albania. Or how to spell Robert Oppenheimer. Or even who he is.

But never gloss over names, titles, addresses – check everything, make it accurate, check it again, ask about it.

Figure out where to find out **stuff**

If you're taking a test and you come across something that stumps you, don't just write, "I would look this up." Instead, write, "**check this in ...**" and name the site or sites or resource you would use.

(World Factbook by the CIA is impressive. Google not so much. Wikipedia – hang your head.)

Practice writing headlines

Almost every test has a headline writing section. And, you'll mostly likely have to do it the old-fashioned way – write it out and count it out. Know how to do that.

Read, **question**, get answers

- Several news organizations ask candidates to read a story and then write a list of questions to ask the reporter.
- Some sites also give internship/job candidates a “sentence from hell” or “the paragraph from hell” or even the “story from hell” to edit. Many editors confess to using a collection of raw text taken from the metro desk stories.

Does it **add** up?

- Math, usually of the simple variety, is frequently used in copy editing tests. Pay attention.
- It could be as simple as the numbers on the questions you are asked to answer don't add up – one skipped or one repeated.
- Percents and percentages are often used, too, in questions.

Critical critiquing

- Some desk chiefs might ask you to read and critique an edition or two of the newspaper.
- Be prepared with something pithy to say. Go way beyond “I liked it.” or “I didn’t find that to be very interesting.” **Really** critique it, but also be **fair** and **professional**.

The reporter seems to lack ...

- Background
- Information/understanding
- Went over the top – too much drama
- Too much opinion
- Story disorganized
- Assumes prior knowledge of topic
- Needs nut graph
- What else? (offer ideas for follow-up stories)

How to get better at that?

Perform **autopsies** on stories

From the editors:

- I want someone with **cultural literacy** who is well-read in diverse topics.
- The person should be **detail-oriented** with some **flexibility**.
- There are many **gray areas** in copy editing, and not all grammar rules apply in all situations.
- **Hypercorrection** is a sign that the person lacks natural fluency with language.

Know standard **editing** marks

TIP: Page 492 in the 2013 edition of The Associated Press Stylebook

Follow instructions

TEST GUIDELINES

We ask that you put down the time you started the test and the time you finished, but there really is no time limit for the test. You can take as long as you like, and it won't count against you (unless you take, let's say, three hours). Most people take about an hour and fifteen minutes, an hour and a half. But if you're wondering whether to read through it one more time or turn it in because you think you're taking too long, read through it one more time. I know when I took the test I found many things that I had missed the previous read-through(s).

This test has a lot of misspellings, grammar problems, and word usage problems. We also want to see how you punctuate sentences. As for the style questions (what gets capped, spelled out, quoted or italicized, etc.), if you are using a certain style (e.g., Chicago Manual, Words Into Type, Associated Press), just jot the name in the margin. Otherwise, use your best judgment and try to be consistent.

You can write any queries in the margin. Basically, though, we're looking for a line-by-line edit. If you need to rewrite a sentence to fix a grammar problem, fine, but we're not expecting a substantive edit, so don't move whole paragraphs around or rewrite whole sections.

Follow **instructions**

- Do exactly as directed. Not being able to follow instructions is a **red flag** to a potential employer or supervisor.
- Know what resources are permitted.
- Return the test in a timely manner (if taken outside an office).
- Read your own comments, and make sure those don't contain errors.
- If you write or type information, run spell check, and print the content to proofread before submitting.
- If you are asked to submit 5 clips, submit 5. Not 6, not 3.

Scoring tests

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- But if you interview several nice and qualified people, it's a **valuable tool** to narrow the candidate list.
- **Miss or Mr. Congeniality.** And if someone's test is really awful, they're out no matter how personable they are.

Where to get help to be prepared for **the test**

First and foremost, read the publication.

Get familiar with its sections, styles, voice, content, editors, writers, staff.

Books to know and love

“The Associated Press Stylebook”

“Working with Words: A Handbook for Media Writers and Editors”

Webster’s New World College Dictionary

“When Words Collide: A Media Writer’s Guide to Grammar and Style”

“The Glamour of Grammar” by Roy Peter Clark

“Grammar for Smart People” by Barry Tarshis

Useful online resources

- Dow Jones News Editing Internship tests from the previous 15 years:
- <http://www.editteach.org/specialprojects?id=>
- What's happened this year – month-by-month breakdown:
<http://www.infoplease.com/news/2013/current-events/>
- ASME internship program
- <http://www.magazine.org/asme/internship-program>

Practice, practice, practice

Did we say practice?

The **BIG** day

Good morning. **How are you?**

- Learn how to say good morning.
- **Really**
- Get **names** right. It's important.
- How well-rounded are you?
- Can you get along with others?
- Carry on a conversation with a stranger? For 20 minutes – without talking about religion, politics or your health.
- Perfectionists – organized – what does that mean?
- Show 'em you can **think**.

What **to take** with you

- A sharpened pencil in a case (so you don't break off the point)
- Another sharpened pencil
- And another – be prepared
- Resources (if allowed)
- A purse or business-like case that's big enough to hold everything but not so big that you have to fumble around to find those pencils.

What **not** to take with you

- A cup of coffee or any other beverage
- Your earbuds (well, maybe put them in your purse/case in case they want you to listen to a video)
- A friend
- An attitude of entitlement
- Dress as if you mean it – well, let's hope you can figure that out.

Good luck

(Remember to write a thank you note when you get back home.)

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