



# How does a copy editor pivot to video?

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# Why does video matter?

Copy editors are word people.  
Why should we care about this  
new medium?

1. Video storytelling is becoming a huge focus area for audiences and publishers
  2. Video presents storytelling opportunities that text-only content does not
  3. Copy is a valuable resource in the creation of all content
  4. We can't improve content that we're not involved in
  5. Improving video content helps prove our value to leadership
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# 28%

The percentage of people in the U.S. who consume some or most of their news via video

Source: [“Digital News Report,” Reuters Institute](#)

# Why copy edit videos?

Four main reasons

1. Clarity and accuracy
  2. Trust and transparency
  3. Consistency across platforms
  4. Distribution of responsibility
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# What we've learned from copy editing videos

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- Content that is edited consistently has a consistent voice, across platforms and across formats
- Video teams benefit from the quality control aspects of copy editing, and learn better reporting through being held accountable by a copy team
- Audiences really do notice errors in videos, and because it's harder to update a video than a written story, errors live longer and do more lasting brand damage
- It's a point of pride to be able to say we hold our videos to the same high standard that the rest of our content faces

# Process

How to copy edit a video, from  
start to finish



# Video production

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For us, there are five main types of video:

1. “Facebook video”: Script written based on existing story, produced with stock footage or existing imagery.
2. In-studio with staff: Loose script written up with main points to be made in the video. Shot in studio with a staff writer.
3. In-studio/in the field with interview: Staff member prepares interview questions, does usual research. Shot in studio or in the field with staff member and interviewee.
4. Face-to-cam: Can be self-shot and submitted or filmed by our staff in studio. Subject is a guest who says what they want, usually their own experience.
5. Totally scripted: Staff writes script to be used verbatim for filming.

# How do we do it?

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1. Before filming, producers prepare either a script or a fact sheet that copy can fact-check for accuracy. If it's a script, this version also gets a standard style-and-grammar edit.
2. After filming, producers update the script to match what was captured during the shoot.
3. Script comes back to copy along with the video, so copy can confirm its accuracy to what was filmed and mark any necessary changes.
4. Copy sees the video one final time after all changes have been input, to make sure nothing was missed and everything was implemented.

# Copy editing a script

## Glossary of terms:

- SOT (sound on tape): Recorded audio to be used in its original form
- VO (voiceover): Usually recorded in studio, can often be re-recorded to correct errors
- Time code: Point in a video file where a particular clip can be found
- V1, V2, etc.: labels for source footage
- IMG1, IMG2, etc.: labels for source images
- radio edit: initial edit after filming

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/18hnY\\_GHUdc39L6kjjocreE5-ghlysgDuiDXU\\_8v4aKw/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/18hnY_GHUdc39L6kjjocreE5-ghlysgDuiDXU_8v4aKw/edit?usp=sharing)

MB2985\_US\_Is\_Losing\_The\_New\_Space\_Race

Date: 03/09/2017

Vertical: News

Location: Main

Type: News

Video narrative: Video, stills + text

Format: 16x9

Story Producer: Leah

Suggested Story:

<http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/china-wants-visit-mars-by-2020-beat-nasa-set-first-manned-moon-base-1556304>

<http://gulffnews.com/news/uae/government/buzz-aldrin-uae-can-be-vital-part-of-space-coalition-1988713>

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-4227854/UAE-build-CITY-MARS-2117.html>

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2017/02/16/the-uaes-ambitious-plan-to-build-a-new-city-on-mars/?utm\\_term=.ed9710020622](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2017/02/16/the-uaes-ambitious-plan-to-build-a-new-city-on-mars/?utm_term=.ed9710020622)

SOURCE

V1:

<https://www.c-span.org/video/?425158-1/white-house-says-complex-gop-health-care-plan-needs-explanation&live=>

STORY:

1. MATTE: THE U.S. IS LOSING THE RACE TO MARS
2. [TK] THE **UNITED ARAB EMIRATES** IS OUTPACING AMERICA'S EFFORTS TO MAN THE RED PLANET
3. [TK] THE UAE JUST REVEALED THEIR AMBITIOUS PLAN TO **BUILD A CITY** ON MARS BY 2117
4. [TK] THE PLAN WILL CREATE A TEAM OF SCIENTISTS TO DEVELOP FASTER WAYS TO GET TO AND FROM MARS
5. [TK] BY 2021, THE GROUP WILL SEND OUT AN UNMANNED PROBE
6. [TK] THE UAE FIRST LAUNCHED THEIR OWN SPACE AGENCY IN 2014
7. [TK] AND IN 2015, THEY PARTNERED WITH FRENCH AND BRITISH SPACE AGENCIES
8. [TK] ACROSS THE GLOBE, **SPACEX** IS ALSO TAKING PART IN THE NEW SPACE RACE

# On-screen edits

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- After a video is produced, we edit it again, comparing with the script to make sure all the text was copied over correctly and doing a thorough scan for any errors missed in the first edit
- Frame.io is a useful productivity tool that saves editors time with uploads and allows editors to append comments directly to a video timestamp
- Use the script as your guide throughout the editing process; changes should be reflected there as the team makes them

# Frame.io

The screenshot displays the Frame.io video player interface. At the top, there is a thumbnail for the video titled "OP\_132\_MassShoot...". Below the thumbnail, the video is playing, showing a man identified as "Steve Israel, Former Congressman". The video player includes standard controls such as play/pause, volume, and a progress bar showing 00:31 / 01:22. The resolution is set to 540p. On the right side, there is a "File Information" section with "0 Comments" and a "Sort by Oldest" option. A search bar for comments is also visible. At the bottom, there is a chat input field with the text "lowercase 'congressman' |" and a "00:31" timer with a checkmark and a play button.

# Calls copy has to make

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- How do you format quotes?
- Do you use italics? How?
- What do you do if someone stutters or uses lots of filler words?
- How do you handle a source stating a fact that's not totally accurate?
- Is the background imagery a fair accompaniment to the text or audio?
- Does the script have a solid structure and foundation?
  - Here's how we do it: [Mic Official Style Guide, Video Addendum](#)

# Challenge: Brevity and timeliness

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- Even text-heavy videos are more limited than a written story would be. Copy has to work extra diligently to ensure clarity without adding significant text.
- At times, it may be appropriate to ask that the visual elements of a script change in order to ease the burden of adding text to the screen for clarity. For example, a chart could replace a list of numbers, and the text would be reduced to a simple description.
- Videos take longer to produce than stories, but that doesn't mean their deadlines always get extended. Oftentimes, copy will have to work extra quickly to edit a script or video to meet the rushed production schedule.

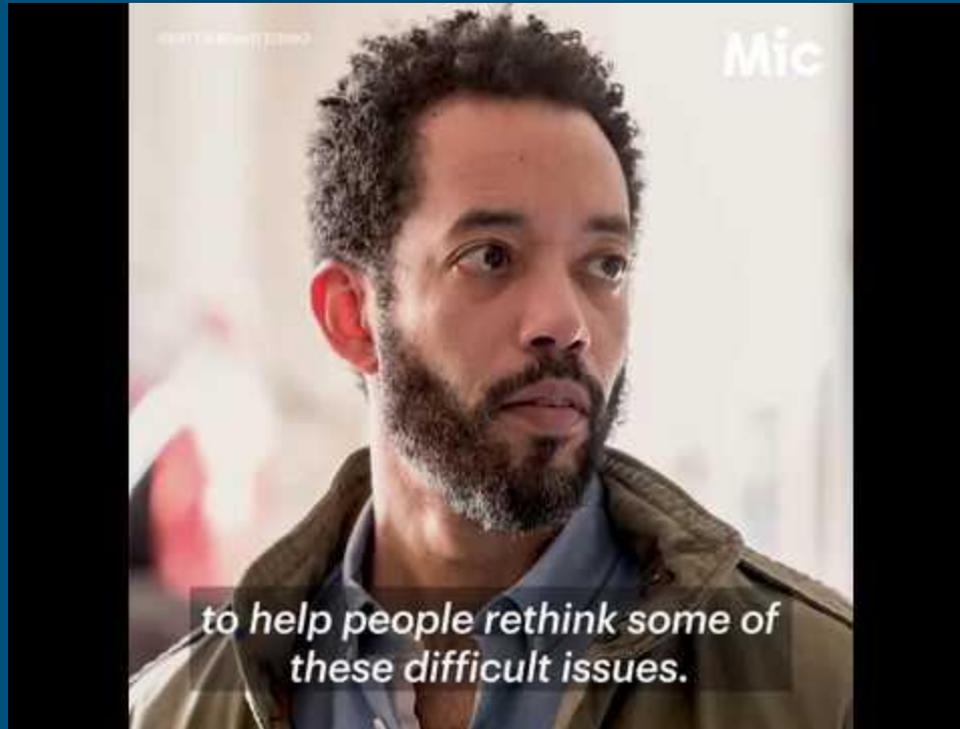


- Example: Using visual elements to present information visually, allowing the spoken components to be less wordy

# Challenge: Pre-recorded assets

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- With some video elements, what you see is what you get; you can't always request that something be re-shot to remedy poor grammar or awkward phrasing, and incorrect facts will need to be cut or otherwise amended.
- Where pre-recorded assets are unclear, copy editors have to suggest workarounds to give the audience full context.
- To resolve these issues, copy editors must work closely with producers on storytelling aspects that copy usually stays out of. Instead of just saying "don't do this," there's more pressure to suggest alternatives.



- Exception: Allowing the reporter to say “Wyatt” after first reference because “Cenac” sounded too much like “snack” when recording VO

# Challenge: Thinking visually

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- What works for a text story won't always work for a video; likewise, video provides opportunities to display information (and use formats) that won't work in a text story. Copy has to adjust its expectations of what the text of a video will accomplish, given the visual assets that will accompany it.
- Solutions to issues must also consider visual options, which may be outside a copy editor's comfort zone
- When editing a video, copy must think about how the text and visuals complement each other, editing text while keeping visuals in mind
- Especially where copyright and fair use are concerned, matching the visuals to the text can be crucial



- Copyright consideration: To ensure our fair use defense was rock-solid, we advised on adjusting the script to use very specific clips

# Challenge: Training the team

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- Most video teams aren't used to being copy edited. Many places divide up copy editing responsibilities (especially fact-checking) among producers, and video editors are usually completely foreign to the concept of a copy editor. The first step to introducing copy editing to your video process is teaching the team what copy editing is and how it will be helpful to them in particular.
- A lot of tension on our team in the early days was resolved when we told producers to just try doing it our way for a few days — they realized that it did actually make things smoother, and they didn't mind continuing.

# How do I convince my team to copy edit videos?

Know your workplace.

- What has the team struggled with?
  - Are readers noticing errors or inconsistencies in your video product?
  - Are your producers trained fact-checkers?
  - Are your videos particularly fact-heavy or text-focused?
  - What non-video projects has copy contributed to that have similar challenges to video?
  - Do your competitors copy edit their videos?
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# The end result:

A beautiful, informative,  
accurate video



Questions?  
Comments?