

# WHAT JOURNALISM CAN TEACH YOU ABOUT GOOD EDITING

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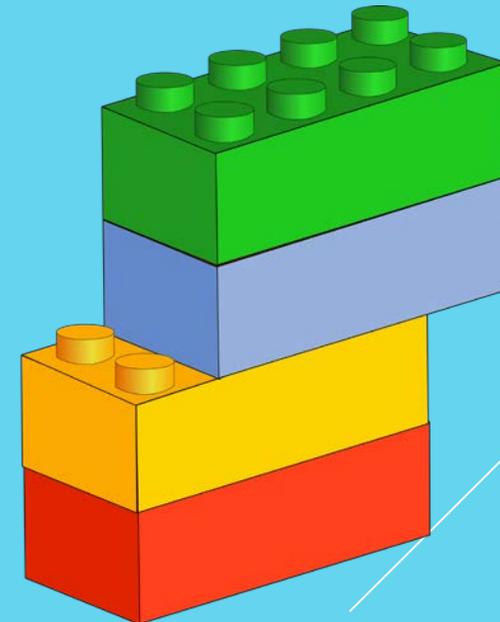
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# CONTENT AND STRUCTURE

# WHAT IS THIS?

Two basic building blocks:

- ▶ What is this about?
- ▶ What's the "nut" graf?



# WHAT IS THIS?

- ▶ What's this about?
  - ▶ Identify the topic

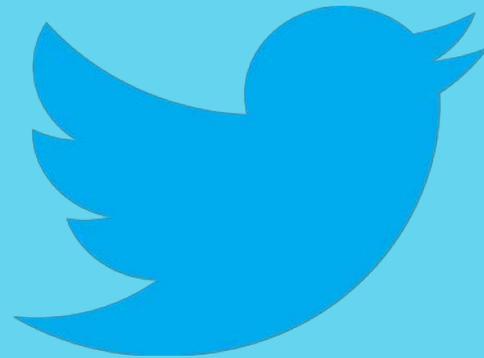


# WHAT IS THIS?

- ▶ What is this about?
  - ▶ Write the summary, tweet, headline
  - ▶ No more than 15 words



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# WHAT IS THIS?

**Prepositions** and **postpositions**, together called **adpositions** (or broadly, in English, simply **prepositions**),<sup>[1]</sup> are a class of words used to express spatial or temporal relations (*in, under, towards, before*) or mark various semantic roles (*of, for*).<sup>[2]</sup>

A preposition or postposition typically combines with a noun or pronoun, or more generally a noun phrase, this being called its complement, or sometimes object. A preposition comes before its complement; a postposition comes after its complement. English generally has prepositions rather than postpositions – words such as *in, under* and *of* precede their objects, such as *in England, under the table, of Jane* – although there are a few exceptions including "ago" and "notwithstanding", as in "three days ago" and "financial limitations notwithstanding". Some languages that use a different word order, have postpositions instead, or have both types. The phrase formed by a preposition or postposition together with its complement is called a prepositional phrase (or postpositional phrase, adpositional phrase, etc.) – such phrases usually play an adverbial role in a sentence.

A less common type of adposition is the **circumposition**, which consists of two parts that appear on each side of the complement. Other terms sometimes used for particular types of adposition include *ambiposition, inposition* and *interposition*. Some linguists use the word *preposition* in place of *adposition* regardless of the applicable word order.<sup>[1]</sup>

# WHAT IS THIS?

A preposition is a word (usually a short word) that shows the relationship between two other nearby words.

# WHAT IS THIS?

- ▶ The “nut” graf



# WHAT IS THIS?

- ▶ When you know “what this is about” and have a “nut graf,” making sure the piece is on target becomes a lot easier

# WHAT IS THIS?

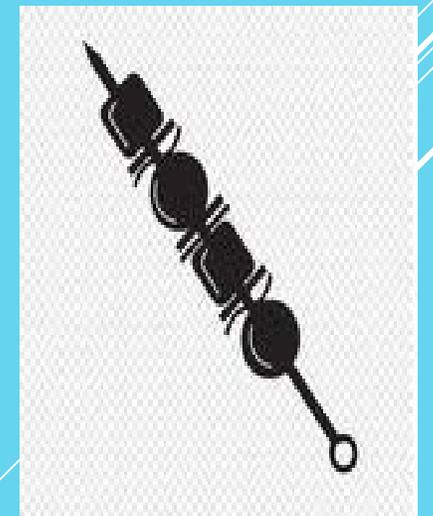
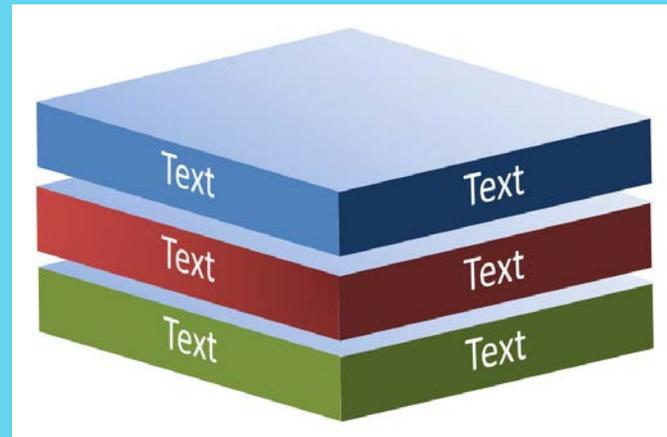
- ▶ Identify the structure
  - ▶ When you know what it's supposed to look like, it's easier to see where it fails.



# WHAT IS THIS?

Identify the structure

- ▶ Common forms for informational writing
  - ▶ Boxes/kebab



# WHAT IS THIS?

Identify the structure

- ▶ Common forms for informational writing
  - ▶ Time



# WHAT IS THIS?

Identify the structure

- ▶ Template based?
- ▶ How flexible is it?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• State the aim or the goal</li></ul>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• List the materials that are required</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <hr/></li><li>• <hr/></li><li>• <hr/></li><li>• <hr/></li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Steps involved in chronological order</li></ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. <hr/></li><li>2. <hr/></li><li>3. <hr/></li><li>4. <hr/></li><li>5. <hr/></li></ol>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Conclusion (was the goal achieved)</li></ul>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

# WHAT IS THIS?

Identify the structure

► Fiction



# WHAT IS THIS?

- ▶ The inverted pyramid
  - ▶ Used for news
  - ▶ Still appears at top of most informational pieces



# WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, HOW, WHY

- ▶ The basic questions in journalism
  - ▶ One is primary in each sentence/paragraph/section



# HOW IS THE INFORMATION PRESENTED?

- ▶ Direct information is better than indirect
- ▶ If indirect is used, be sure it's deliberate, and be sure it works



# HOW IS THE INFORMATION PRESENTED?

## ► Active versus passive



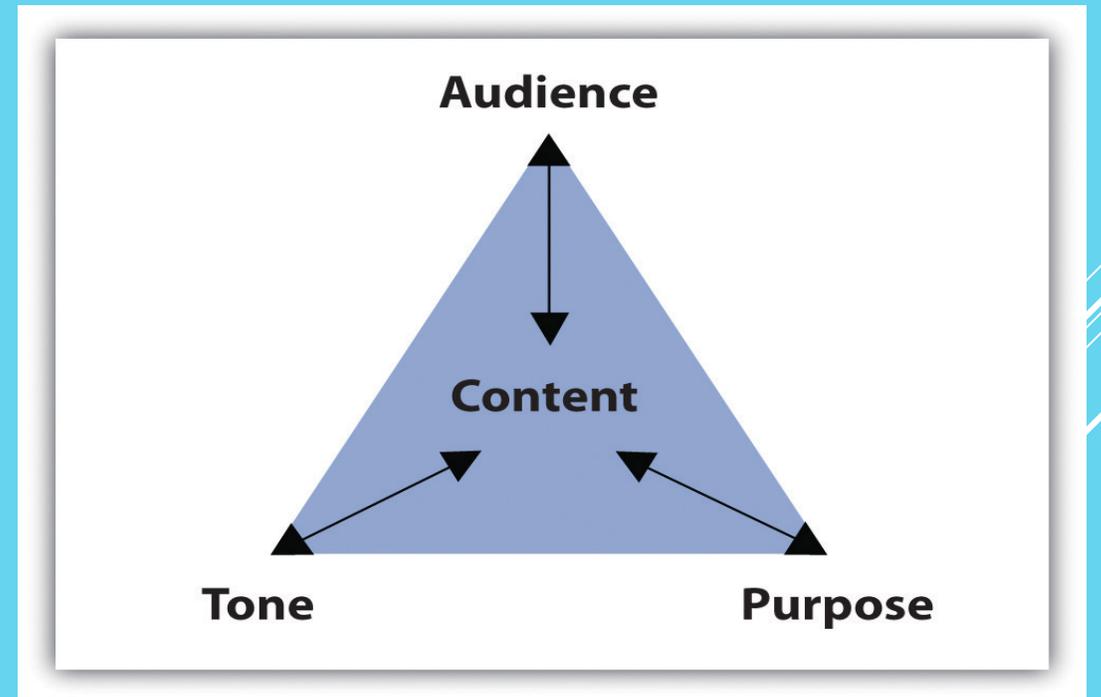
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# HOW IS THE INFORMATION PRESENTED?

- ▶ Identify the tone
  - ▶ Is it appropriate for the audience?
  - ▶ Is it appropriate for the publication?



# HOW IS THE INFORMATION PRESENTED?

- ▶ Identify the tone
  - ▶ Think of news, feature, column, sports, style, food sections, all with different tones, but with one overall tone for the publication



# HOW IS THE INFORMATION PRESENTED?

## ► When tone goes bad

A gang of five robbers, evidently oblivious of the finer points of kohlrabi and fresh poblano peppers, invaded Fairway Fruits and Vegetables, one of the culinary citadels on Manhattan's Upper West Side, just before midnight closing time Sunday night. They made 40 terrified employees lie in the sawdust, forced a manager at gunpoint to open two safes and snatched up \$10,000.

But it was not just a piece of carrot cake. Two police officers on community patrol happened to look into the normally bustling produce market on Broadway, between 74th and 75th Streets, and saw an unfamiliar sight: lights blazing and no one around amid the shelves of eggplant and jicama, figs, zucchini and Brie.

As the officers called for reinforcements and approached the entrance, a white car sped away from the curb -- in it, three thugs escaping with the loot. Somehow, a fourth slipped away too, perhaps in the rush of prone employees who took heart at the sight of the officers, sprang up and made a dash for freedom.

But the fifth robber, armed with a submachine gun, went the wrong way, down into a storage basement all de sac, where he encountered a dozen workers hiding and quaking behind sacks of produce. Trapped, he dropped his weapon and tried to mingle with the innocent when the officers ordered everyone to come out with their hands up -- but he was quickly pointed out and seized.

# HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT?

- ▶ If your mother says she loves you, check it out
  - ▶ Ask your author
  - ▶ Ask yourself



# MANAGING THE TIME

# MANAGING THE TIME

- ▶ Triage editing
  - ▶ Your time is finite
    - ▶ What **MUST** you do?
    - ▶ What **CAN** you do?
    - ▶ What do you **WANT** to do?



# MANAGING THE TIME

## ▶ Triage editing

- ▶ What MUST you do?
  - ▶ Know before you go
    - ▶ Balance platform, audience, publication, content
  - ▶ Spelling? Grammar?  
Facts? Structure?



# MANAGING THE TIME

- ▶ Triage editing
  - ▶ What CAN you do?
    - ▶ Choose to do a few things WELL



# MANAGING THE TIME

- ▶ Triage editing
  - ▶ What do you WANT to do?
    - ▶ Take yourself out of the equation



# MANAGING THE TIME

## ▶ Triage editing

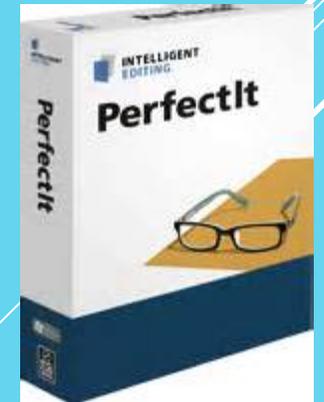
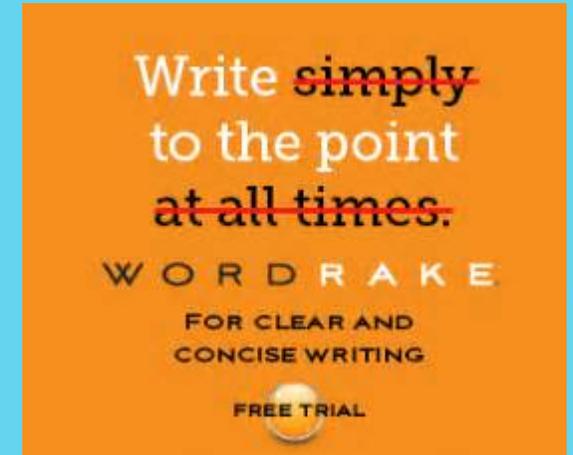
- ▶ Let the little stuff go

- ▶ What's worse: a dangling modifier or an unclear sentence?



# MANAGING THE TIME

- ▶ Use tools, but wisely
  - ▶ Grammarly, PerfectIt, Lingofy/Tansa, Spellcheck, etc.
  - ▶ What do you use and when?



# MANAGING THE TIME

- ▶ Use tools, but wisely
  - ▶ Macros



# WHEN TO BREAK 'RULES'

- ▶ Where does the "rule" come from?
  - ▶ Why does it exist?



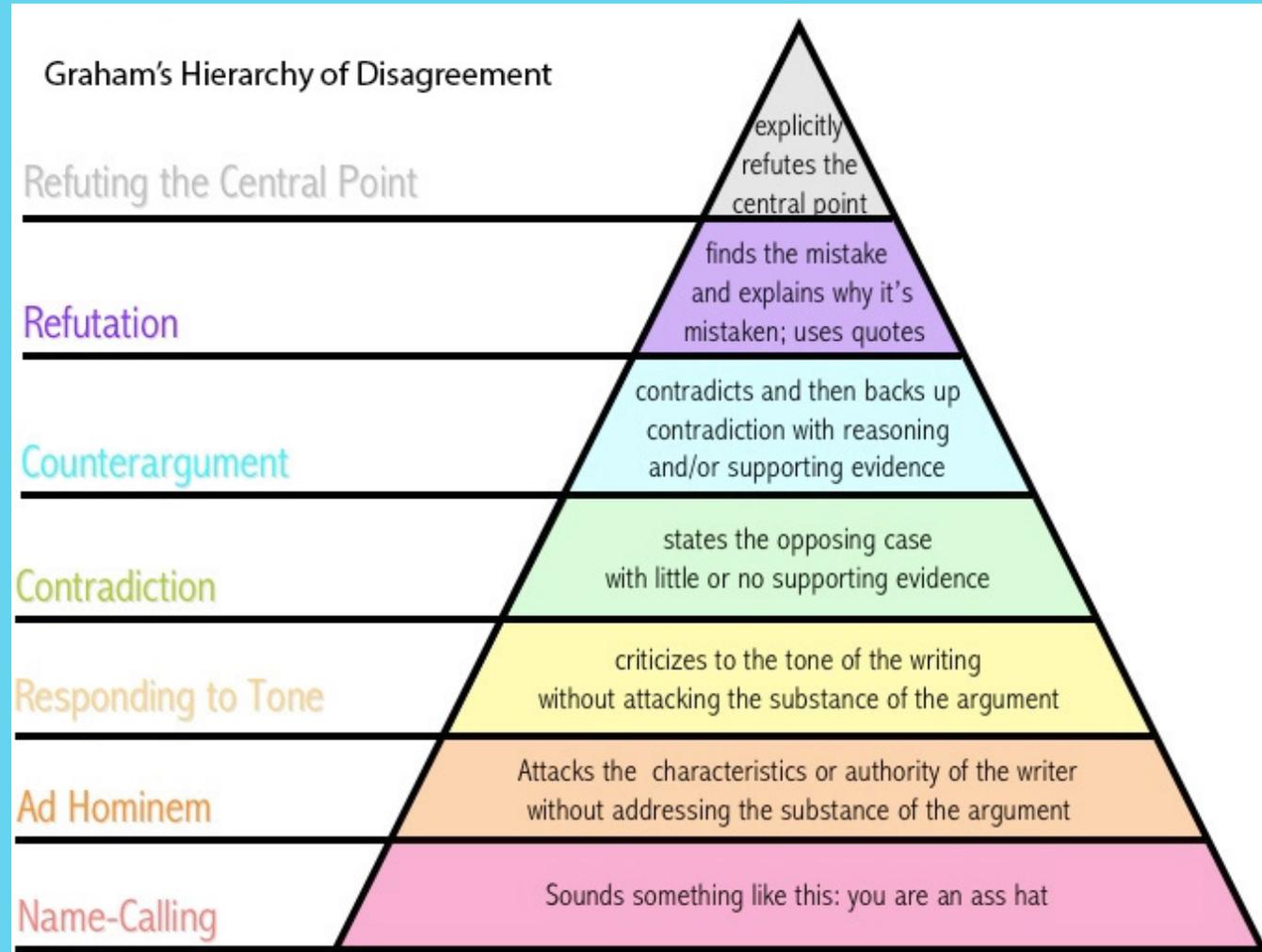
# WHEN TO BREAK 'RULES'

- ▶ How difficult is it to make the content follow the rule?
- ▶ Are there special circumstances?

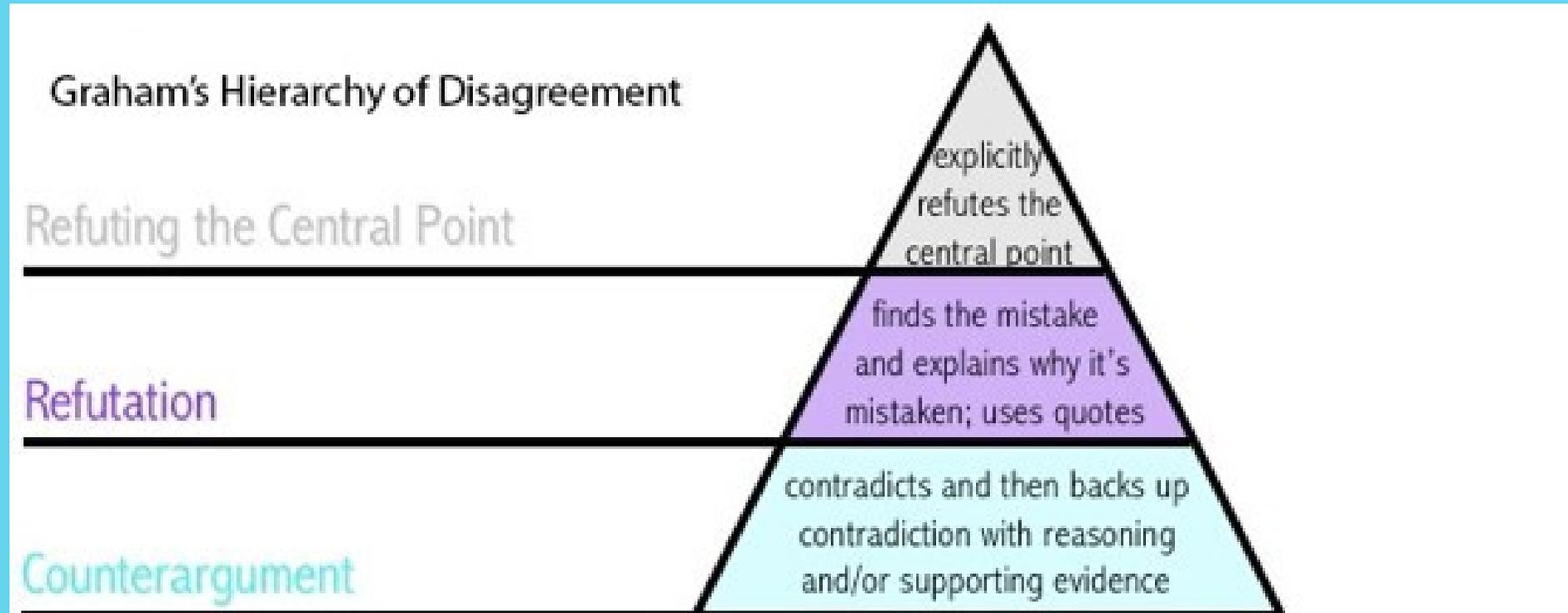


# HANDLING WRITERS AND THEIR EGOS

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## The Three Cardinal Rules of Editing

- ▶ First, do no harm



# HANDLING WRITERS AND THEIR EGOS

## The Three Cardinal Rules of Editing

- ▶ If you can't explain it in plain language, you can't change it



# HANDLING WRITERS AND THEIR EGOS

## The Three Cardinal Rules of Editing

- ▶ No surprises

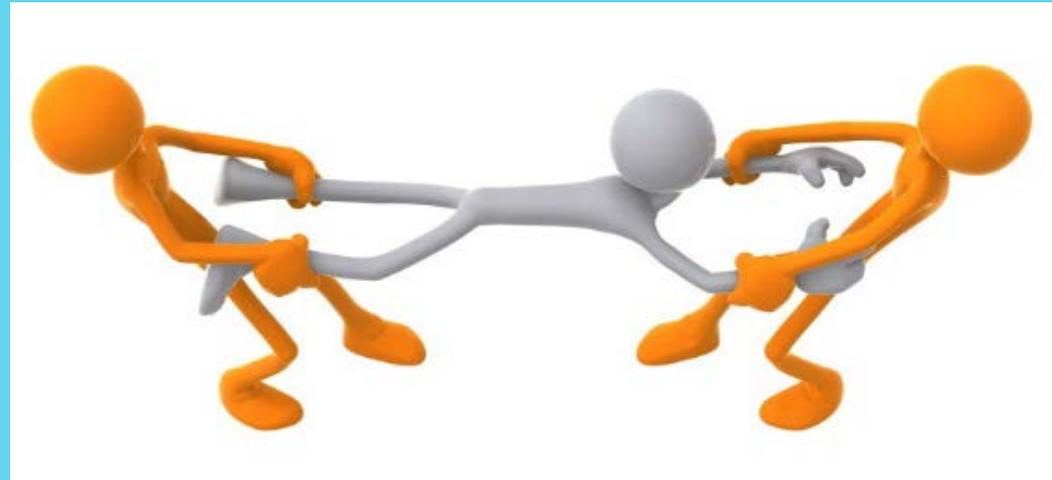


# HANDLING WRITERS AND THEIR EGOS

## The Three\* Cardinal Rules of Editing

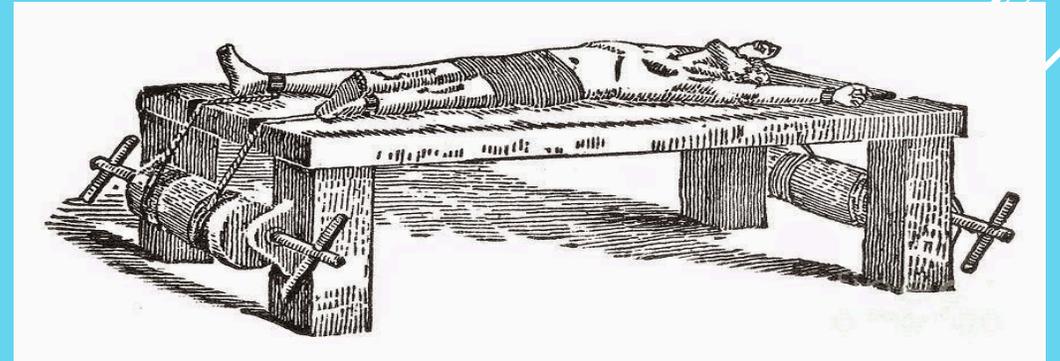
- ▶ In a tie, the writer wins

- ▶ \*OK, 3½ rules



# HANDLING WRITERS AND THEIR EGOS

- ▶ Make it about the content, not you or the writer
- ▶ Praise, then start the torture editing



# HANDLING WRITERS AND THEIR EGOS

- ▶ Think critically about why you need to make the change



# HANDLING WRITERS AND THEIR EGOS

- ▶ Make suggestions, not diktats
- ▶ Parry, but don't thrust back



# HANDLING WRITERS AND THEIR EGOS

- ▶ Emotions are fine, if they're not defensive



# HANDLING WRITERS AND THEIR EGOS

- ▶ Thank the writer, even through gritted teeth



# WHAT ARE YOUR STORIES?