

How to Get Your Dream Job on the Web

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What can I do to increase my chances of being hired as a web copy editor?

- **Do** familiarize yourself with basic HTML, with using a CMS, and with social networks, paying particular attention to how and why people share content. These are skills that all journalists use daily on the web.
- **Do** know basic sourcing standards and where to go to fact-check certain information. Fact-checking is its own skill, but many research desks and copydesks are one in the same (or work very closely) at digital publishing companies.
- **Do** know your grammar rules and fine-tune your editing skills! If you don't have much professional copyediting experience, enroll in a class or a certificate program; check out Mediabistro or local universities/colleges for online classes or continuing-education programs.
- **Do** some research on copyediting (some recommended books: *The Elephants of Style* and *Yes, I Could Care Less* by Bill Walsh, the *Blue Book of Grammar and Punctuation* by Jane Strauss, *Woe Is I* by Patricia O'Conner); quiz yourself in areas where you feel you can improve (grammarbook.com is a great resource).
- **Do** familiarize yourself with commonly used style manuals, like *Associated Press Stylebook* and *Chicago Manual of Style*.
- **Do** tailor your résumé and cover letter to each job you are applying for.
- **Don't** use wacky fonts, a photo, images, or a font size smaller than 11 in your résumé. One page is ideal (especially if you don't have a ton of professional experience). Always lead with professional information rather than education.

- **Do** show some personality in your cover letter: an anecdote related to the position you're applying to, what it is about the company you admire, or something on the site you've read recently that you loved. The hiring manager should want to meet you after they read your letter. This is also where you can explain any holes in your résumé.
- **Do** create a cohesive image on social media that best reflects you/your personal brand.
- **Do** find the contact information of the copy chief or managing editor at a place you'd love to work, and ask if you can set up an informational interview or take a copy test. Being proactive before a job listing even goes up can make a lasting impression on a hiring editor.
- **Do** spell the name of your contact correctly!
- **Don't** include any typos or inconsistencies in formatting or style in your résumé and cover letter.
- **Don't** point out how many typos and errors you've noticed across the site.
- **Do** offer to volunteer your services (as much time as you can afford) in terms of offering pro bono copyediting work for a website, organization, or newsletter you love.
- **Do** follow up after an in-person interview with a handwritten thank-you note.

What's the copy test like?

Copy tests can vary from place to place, but generally:

- In-person paper tests: length of time varies — about an hour or two. Likely includes a combo of sentences/stories to edit and a headline- and dek-writing exercise.
- On the web/over email: depends on the publication — but similar to in-person tests; there could potentially be added research/fact-checking component; often, you'll edit, track changes, and make comments/suggestions in a doc.
- For both: You'll likely have access to an in-house style guide, style manuals, and/or a dictionary.

Some examples of sentences you might encounter:

1. Lisa suggested that the team 1) work on defence, 2) learn to hit, and 3) new manager.
2. The President will speak on gun control legislation tomorrow morning at 10 a.m.
3. Mark it down the history books: April 26, 2013 was the the day the White House joined tumblr.
4. I wore a Betsy johnson dress to my high-school prom and my date wore John Lennon styled glasses.
5. I was visiting Karen last Fall when I something that peaked my interest.
6. I wish I was dead!
7. The hit song Let It Go came from what movie?
8. Arresting the suspect, Sabrina was questioned by the policeman.
9. The terribly-decorated apartment was in dire need of an interior designers rescue.
10. Every morning at 9 a.m. I have a bowl of Fruit Loops and a Mocha Latte.
11. My sister Sarah is a quiet bookish-type.
12. Jenny is a transgendered woman and had a sex change operation in 2012.
13. Last semester, I got all As and Bs except that I failed Chemistry.
14. I took a roadtrip to Charleston, South Carolina last year with my dog, a chihuahua named Lenny.
15. That 2 year old is adorable.