How to Get Your Dream Job on the Web

#ACES2017 @styleguide
Hello!

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You’ll learn about...

- Important Skills
- Networking and Your Personal Brand
- Job Hunting
- Increasing Your Chances
1. Important Skills

i.e., what you should know and what you can learn
So... what do I need to know?

You should...

1. Be a strong copy editor!
2. Know how to edit various types of stories for different platforms (website, app, social sharing, video)
3. Spend a lot of time reading
4. Communicate clearly, concisely, and effectively
5. Have good people skills
And what else?

A few secondary skills:

1. CMS, Slack, and video-editing software
2. Analytics, data, and SEO tools
3. Basic HTML
4. Basic fact-checking/sourcing
5. Social media — especially how the voices and audiences of those platforms differ
6. A solid grasp of "webspeak" and the internet
7. Awareness of both global audience and variations in regional English

*These are all intuitive, learnable skills!*
And remember:

Do not underestimate learning on the job... seriously. It happens more than you think — especially for entry-level positions.
But how is editing for the web different?

Being a good editor is still vital, but you should also...

1. Be OK with a faster, often unceasing and demanding publishing schedule.
2. Be able to edit quickly but efficiently, and to jump between tasks.
3. Be flexible about letting go of traditional rules (and knowing when to do so).
4. Be hyperaware of your audience and how they consume/share your content.
5. Be skeptical of “unlimited space” — web editors should often be even more discerning than their print counterparts.
And what about headlines?

Headlines compel readers to click — they’re advertisements for stories, not summaries.

- Copy editors often collaborate with reporters, editors, and writers on web headlines (as well as those for social, video, and app sharing).
- Simple, conversational, plain English is best — ask yourself, How would I tweet this?
- Optimize headlines to see what performs best (traffic-wise); simple tweaks can make a big difference.
Here are some examples...

These headlines give readers a reason to care about (and share!) a story.

**This Pro-Trump "Fact-Checking" Website Is Run By An American In Russia**
When contacted by BuzzFeed News, Clint Ehrlich said he is behind the site trying to debunk “bogus claims about Mr. Trump and Russia's government.”

**Republicans Just Voted To Permanently Prevent Federal Funding For Abortions**
The House passed legislation Tuesday that would also prohibit federal subsidies for any health care plan that covers abortions. Next, it goes to the Senate, where it is unlikely to pass.

**People Are Having A Hard Time Dealing With Suicide Squad’s Oscar Nomination**
The year is 2017 and we all live in this Hot Topic now forever.

“Pro-Trump ‘Fact’ Site Run By American In Russia”

“House Passes Abortion Bill”

“Suicide Squad’s Nomination Spurs Controversy”
2. Networking and Your Personal Brand

i.e., making and maintaining contacts, and presenting your best self
Don’t let networking scare you!

It’s just socializing with people you want to work with — think of it like dating.

- Be yourself.
- Be truthful and sincere; get to know people beyond helping you with an “in.”
- It’s OK to reach out to people in the absence of a job listing — you should!
How do I build my network?

Use the tools you probably already use every single day.

- Sign up for meetups via local professional groups, your alma mater, ACES, LinkedIn, Meetup, etc.
- Check your social networks. Media people often *live* on Twitter during the workday.
- Set Google Alerts.
Do your research and be prepared.

- If you ask someone to meet with you, do your research, know the company basics, and have specific questions.
  
  🎉 “What went into the decision to make the BuzzFeed style guide public?”
  
  🚫 “Tell me about BuzzFeed.”

- Be sure to send a thank-you note/email.
Maintain your contacts.

Follow up.

- Remind them that you exist!
  - A simple one- or two-line email can go a long way. Say hello, tell them what you’ve been up to, share a link.
- Take them for coffee/a drink next time they’re in town.
Create your personal brand.

Think about how you look to someone who might hire you.

- Follow editors and organizations that you admire; emulate them.
- Craft your bio to show off your passions.
- Share your thoughts on "word stuff" and be consistent in what you post.
- Have a complete, up-to-date LinkedIn profile — no selfies!

Please, don’t be these people.
LinkedIn = more professional

Twitter = more personality
What else can I do for my ~brand~?

Supplement your experience (or lack thereof) and highlight your interests.

- Start a podcast, newsletter, Twitter, or Tumblr separate from your personal one.

Some great examples of language projects you might want to emulate:

- The Allusionist
- Lexicon Valley
- Slate
- Merriam-Webster
- Conscious Style Guide
- Quibbles & Bits from the Buzzfeed Copydesk
3. Job Hunting

i.e., crafting your résumé, writing a cover letter, and following up
What should my résumé look like?

Break down your relevant experience and skills clearly and concisely.

- Tailor your résumé — it’s OK (and often necessary) to have more than one version!
- Use plain language and keywords.
- Mirror the language in the job posting.
- Keep it to one page.
And what about my cover letter?

It should NOT be a carbon copy of your résumé.

- Answer: Why are you right for this position at this company?
- Be brief and enticing; show off your personality.
- DO YOUR RESEARCH! Address your letter to a human.
- Connection to the company? Talk about it.
- Be specific about your availability.
- No typos, inaccuracies, or inconsistencies.
Find a person.

Link to your work.

Show off your personality.

Expand your résumé.

Tout non-résumé achievements.

Use your connection to the company.

Use an anecdote (and humor where it’s appropriate).

State your purpose.

Mirror the job posting’s language.

“I know how this publication works!”

“I want to work here because...”

Use a simple, straightforward closing line.

Sample Cover Letter

Dear @em_dash3,

An obituary that described my cold, dead hands clutching an Associated Press Stylebook marked my retirement as managing editor of my college paper. The Chicago Manual of Style loomed over my body, a jilted lover symbolizing the life of a history major I was leaving behind to become a journalist.

My sick obsession with style, grammar and punctuation is something that I’ve carried out of that newsroom and applied to every editorial role I’ve held since. I’m the type of person who gets featured on Jim Romenesko’s blog after tweeting how excited she was about getting an AP Stylebook T-shirt; someone who New York Times columnist Nicholas Kristof retweets after she found his name misspelled in the paper; the person whose relatives buy her usage guides and grammar books for Christmas and her birthday. I thrive on the minutiae of copy editing that many find exhausting, and when I read BuzzFeed’s description of the copy intern position, I knew I was a perfect match.

I’m motivated, hardworking and ridiculously organized. Even though I’m taking five graduate-level journalism classes, I still make time to work as the lead entertainment producer for the award-winning multimedia site TheNewsHouse.com and copyedit GreenRoomReviews.com, obliterating Oxford commas every chance I get. On these sites, I’m able to combine my love for culture writing and editing in a fast-paced environment.

I’m a pop culture and Internet addict across multiple platforms. I’m writing a magazine story about the Internet fan communities and cult TV status of “Arrested Development,” and interviewed Aaron Carter (yes, the “Aaron’s Party” one) in February. I also recently did my first BuzzFeed post — “15 Pieces Of ‘Arrested Development’ Merch You Need Right Now” — and it’s made it to both the DIY and front pages of the site with over 100,000 views.

But I don’t only consume BuzzFeed’s content. I’m also interested in how the company works. I met two editors — Mike Hayes and Matt Stopera — when they spoke at Newhouse this year. Hearing Mike discuss the site’s shift toward wider news coverage just a few short weeks before BuzzFeed’s blanket coverage of the Boston Marathon, coupled with Matt’s talk on Internet virality, confirmed that BuzzFeed is not only what’s next, it’s also what’s now.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to speaking with you.

Sincerely,

Megan Paolone
What if I don’t get a response?

Try not to worry too much.

- **DO:**
  - Send a follow-up email to the hiring editor/manager.
  - Find a person — not just HR or a contact form. Do a little sleuthing!
  - Send a (handwritten!) thank-you note to everyone you met and/or spoke with.
  - Be realistic about your expectations.

- **DON’T:**
  - Contact someone via their personal email.
  - Email more than once if you haven’t heard back.
What about when I get the interview?

Most of all, make sure you’re prepared.

- Do your research (yes, it’s that important) and make sure you have a few questions to ask.
- Be humble — even if you’ve got this.
- Be ready to answer questions about your editing style, how you deal with other editors, and what you enjoy about copyediting and language.
- Dress the part — even if you’re interviewing on the phone or via Skype.
4.

Increasing Your Chances

i.e., enhancing your skills and acing your copy test
I don’t have much experience — what can I do?

There are a few things!

1. Consider volunteering some of your time.
2. Ask if you can help keep mistakes out of copy at your favorite local publication, website, or newsletter.
3. Offer your services to friends or colleagues.
4. Enroll in a copyediting class or certificate program.
5. Start a side project.
How else can I increase my chances?

Do...

○ Familiarize yourself with coding basic HTML, using a CMS, and understanding sourcing standards.
○ Know your grammar rules and copyediting basics.
○ Familiarize yourself with common style manuals.
○ Consider applying to a position outside of where you’re based — remote work is real on the web!

Don’t...

○ Include any typos or inconsistencies in formatting and style in your résumé/cover letter.
○ Point out how many errors/typos you’ve noticed on the site you’re applying to.
○ Worry about creating a portfolio.
So what’s the copy test like?

Copy tests can take a variety of forms.

● **In-person paper tests:**
  ○ Length of time: varies, about an hour or two.
  ○ Most likely: 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. Potentially: added research/fact-checking component.
  ○ Often: 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.
Above all else, make sure you follow the rules.

- The fastest way to annoy a hiring manager:
  - ask questions that are detailed in the test’s instructions
  - fail to follow those instructions
- Be respectful of someone’s time.
- “Let me know what I missed” is not always a possibility.
And what about what you get the job?!

First of all, hell yeah! Celebrate. And then:

- Consider your offer.
  - Is it the company you want? What are the other benefits? Continued learning? Free snacks?

- Negotiate, negotiate, negotiate!
  - Check sites like Glassdoor and reach out to contacts to get a sense of salary.
  - Don’t be afraid to ask for other benefits

- Why do you deserve what you’re asking for?

- Enjoy your new position!
So, to get that job...

**Work on your skills.**
Fine-tune the core skills you already have (editing, communication, reading) and pick up a few others you might not (HTML/CMS, sourcing, web stuff).

**Network with people whose jobs you want.**
They'll have the best advice to help you get where they are.

**Build your brand.**
Be active on social media; follow the editors and organizations you admire, participate in conversations, and share your thoughts.

**Do your research and be prepared.**
This goes for networking, applying to jobs, and interviews — show you cared enough to go the extra mile and learn a little more.

**Be yourself.**
Network genuinely. Tailor your résumé and cover letter to each position to let your personality shine.

**Avoid typos and inconsistencies.**
Most hiring editors will immediately disqualify any potential copy editors who have these.
Thanks!

Any questions?

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BuzzFeed Style Guide

http://bzfd.it/quibbles
Quibbles & Bits Monthly Newsletter