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Editing: the Art of Good Revisions and Better Writing

Watch a recording of the session here

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Editing for Good Writing

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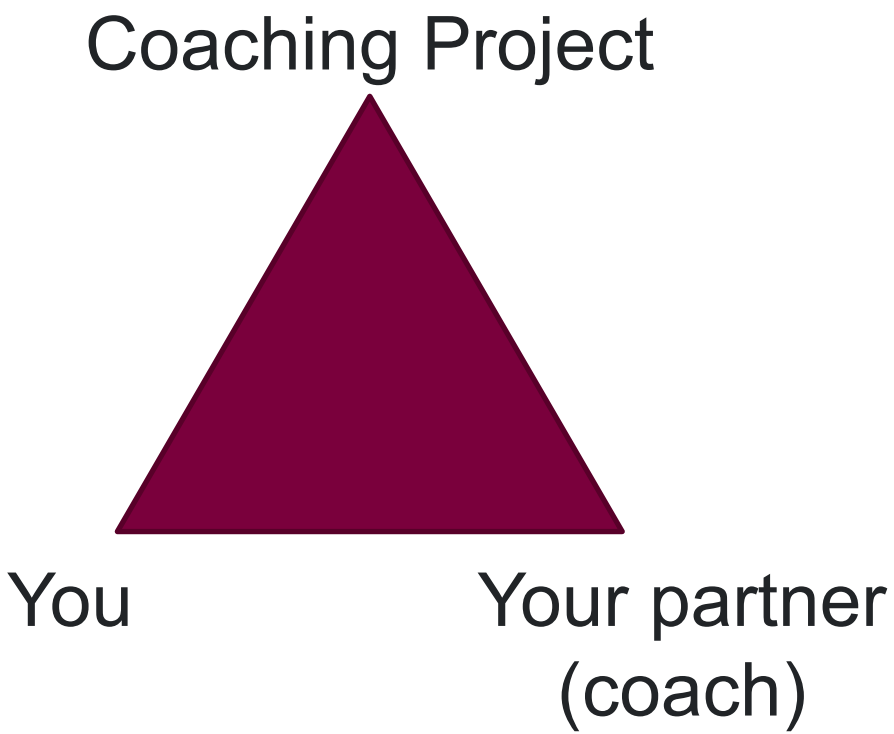
> Substitute ‘damn’ every time you’re inclined to write ‘very;’ your editor will delete it and the writing will be just as it should be.
>
> — Mark Twain

Learning Objectives

- Understand four different types of editing
- Apply basic processes for different types of editing
- Understand approaches to responding to conflicting or incorrect feedback

Editing is Coaching

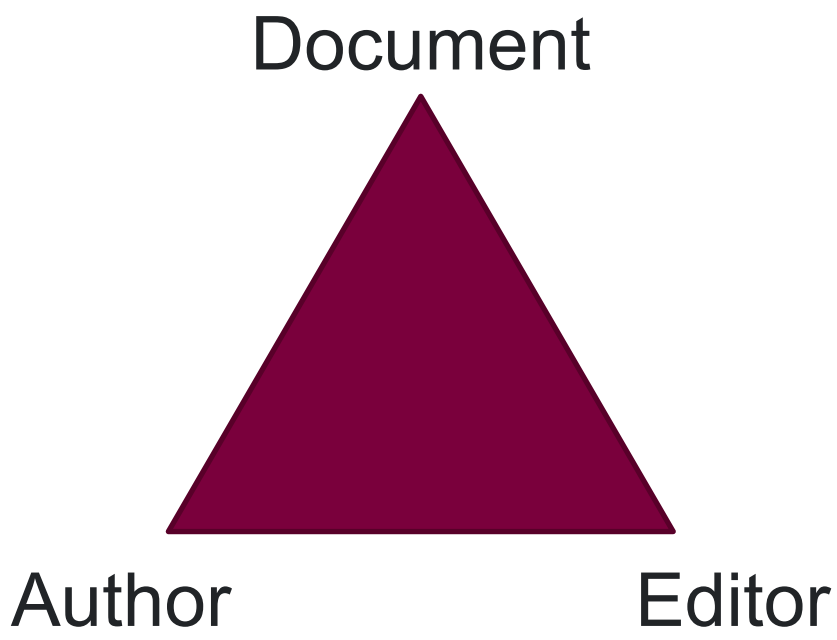
A coach supports a learner or client (or colleague) in achieving a specific personal or professional goal by providing training and guidance



Risdon C. Tips for Collective Skill Building and Collegial Support. DFM Research Knowledge and Skill Builder, 2018/10/23

Editing is Coaching

An editor supports an author in achieving a specific goal by providing training and guidance



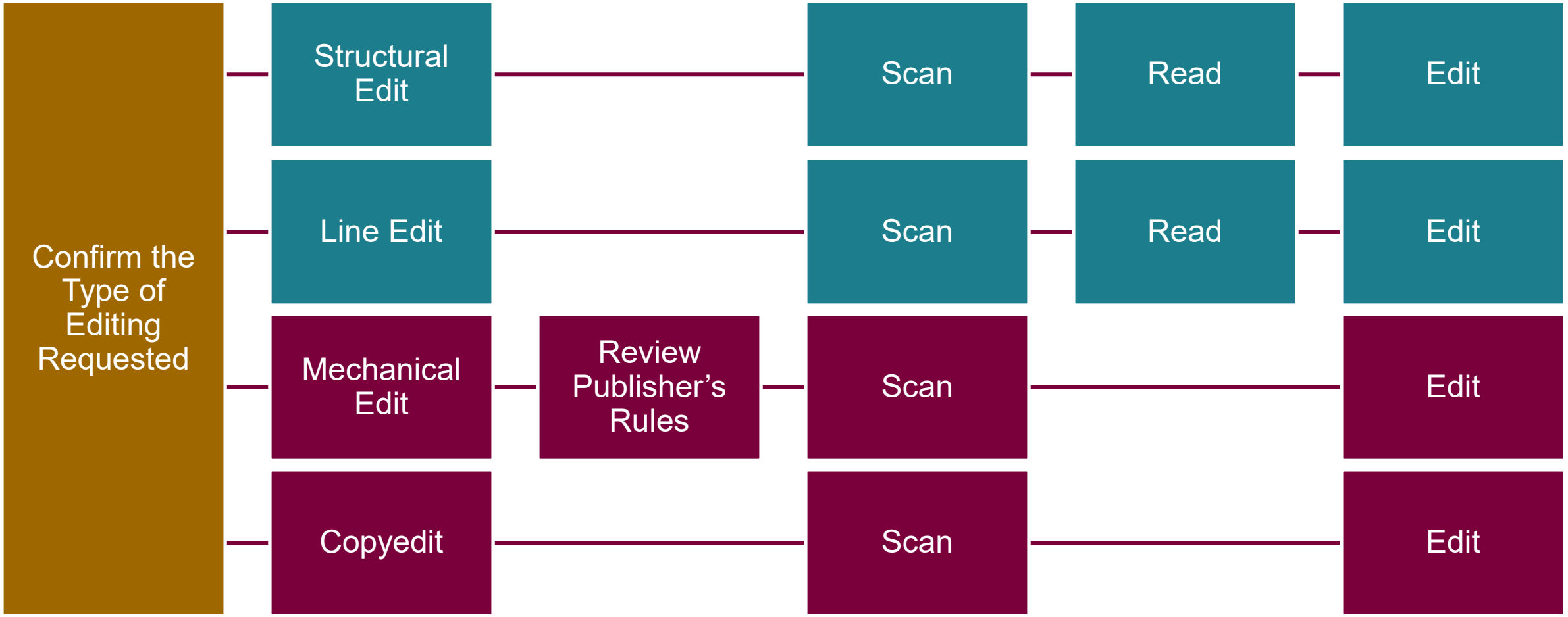
Adapted from Risdon C. Tips for Collective Skill Building and Collegial Support. DFM Research Knowledge and Skill Builder, 2018/10/23

Four Types of Editing

- Structural Editing (Substantive Editing)
  - Structure, organization and presentation of writing across sentences, paragraphs, sub-sections and the whole piece
- Line Editing (Stylistic Editing)
  - Looking at the writing line-by-line, considering word choice, sentence structure — generally, tightening individual lines
- Mechanical Editing
  - Applying defined style rules
    e.g., the specific spellings or citation style used by the publisher
- Copyediting
  - Fixing spelling, grammar and punctuation mistakes.

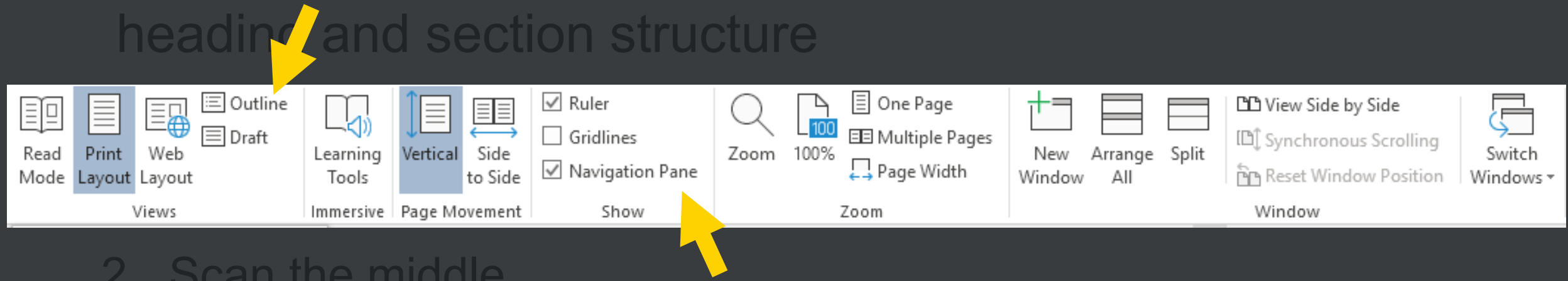
Adapted from Archway Publishing. Different Types of Editing.
www.archwaypublishing.com/Resources/Editing-and-Design/The-Different-Types-of-Editing.aspx

Getting to the Editing



Scanning

1. Use **previewing functions** of word processor to see heading and section structure



2. Scan the middle
3. Read the end

Adapted from University of Toronto Writing Advice Centre. Skimming and Scanning. advice.writing.utoronto.ca/researching/skim-and-scan/

Reading

- Don’t start to edit yet
  - **Read like a reader** not like an editor, these are different
- Make a note of the points that cause you issues as a reader
  - If line editing, look for these at the sentence level
  - If structural editing, look at the paragraph, segment or section and higher levels

"

Je n'ai fait celle-ci plus longue que parce que je n'ai pas eu le loisir de la faire plus courte.

I would have written a shorter letter, but I did not have the time.

— Blaise Pascal

Structural Editing: The Shape of the Building

Pyramid

- Full story builds over time
- Most important point comes at the end
- Each paragraph builds on the preceding paragraphs

What?

So what?

Now what?

Inverted Pyramid

- Reader could really stop at any point
- Most important point comes at the front
- Each paragraph builds on the preceding paragraphs

Now What?

So What?

What?

Structural Editing: Looking at the Doors

- Opening
  - Does it draw in the reader?
  - Does it properly set the tone of the document?
  - Does it introduce the topic?
- Conclusion
  - Does it *complete* the writing?
    - Ending must fit the genre and objective: should it be a summary, a call to action, the next steps for research, etc.

Dunham S. The Editor's Companion. Writer's Digest Books: Cincinnati, Ohio

> Ah, but they aren't violent *until* I've edited them.
>
> — Thelma Schoonmaker on editing Martin Scorsese's films

Line Editing: Language is Action

Britain is due to exit the world's biggest trading bloc on March 29, but it remains unclear whether British Prime Minister Theresa May's draft divorce deal agreed with the EU on Sunday will be passed by the U.K. Parliament when it votes on Dec. 11.

- Britain is due
  - to exit the world's biggest trading bloc
    - on March 29,
  - but it remains unclear
    - whether British Prime Minister Theresa May's draft divorce deal
      - agreed with the EU
        - » on Sunday
      - will be passed by the U.K. Parliament
        - » when it votes
          - on Dec. 11.

"U.K. can unilaterally scrap Brexit, Scottish politicians argue at EU's top court" CBC. www.cbc.ca/news/world/brexit-showdown-highlights-rifts-1.4921963

Copy Editing: Guides and Resources

- McMaster Style Guide
  - brand.mcmaster.ca/docs/writing-guidelines.pdf
- Strunk and White, The Elements of Style
  - Copy on dfmresearch drive, soon at Casey's desk
- Canadian Press Stylebook

Too Little Time? Combine Levels together.

- Mechanical and copy editing go well together
- Copy edit while line editing
- Try to leave structural editing on its own

“

Be yourself; everyone else is already taken.

— Oscar Wilde

Editing Yourself

- Give yourself space between reading and editing
- Give yourself space between editing and more editing
- Remember that **you're not the reader**

> Formula: 2nd Draft = 1st Draft – 10%. Good luck.
>
> — An editor's note to Stephen King from *On Writing*, 2000

Editing Exercise

- Structural editing
  - Sketch out the full article in point form
  - What is the overall structure
  - What might you change to improve the structure?
- Line editing
  - Try to re-write a few lines for better clarity
  - Find some word substitutions

RC's Perspective on Managing Feedback

- Always go back to the data
- Talk to a "specialist"
- You'll eventually have to just make a decision
- To feedback that still seems to be incorrect, respond and explain

Discussion: Conflicting Responses from Editors

- How have you handled multiple editors' (or reviewers') comments that conflict with each other?
- What about feedback that is incorrect?
- What do you feel *your* role is in managing feedback?
- What do you do with the comments or edits you don't follow?

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