Editing your grant (or how to self edit)

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Overview

- **Why it's hard to edit your own work**
- **Tips for editing you**
- **Tips for editing others**
- **Summary**

It's generally much easier to edit than to write – except when you're editing what you wrote.

Why is it hard to edit your own work?
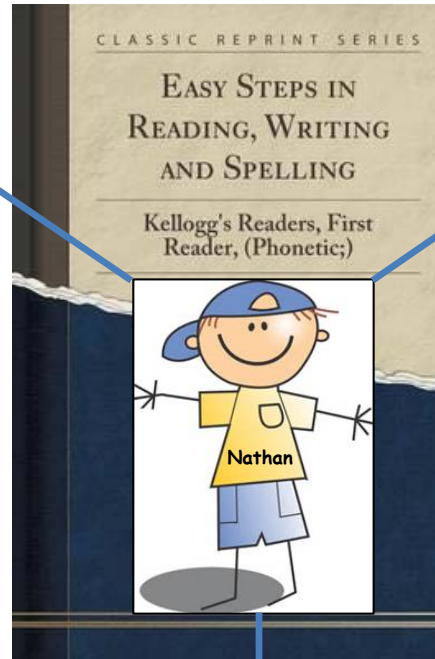
Why is it hard to edit your own work?

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The brain filters information and must/should/does ignore most of it
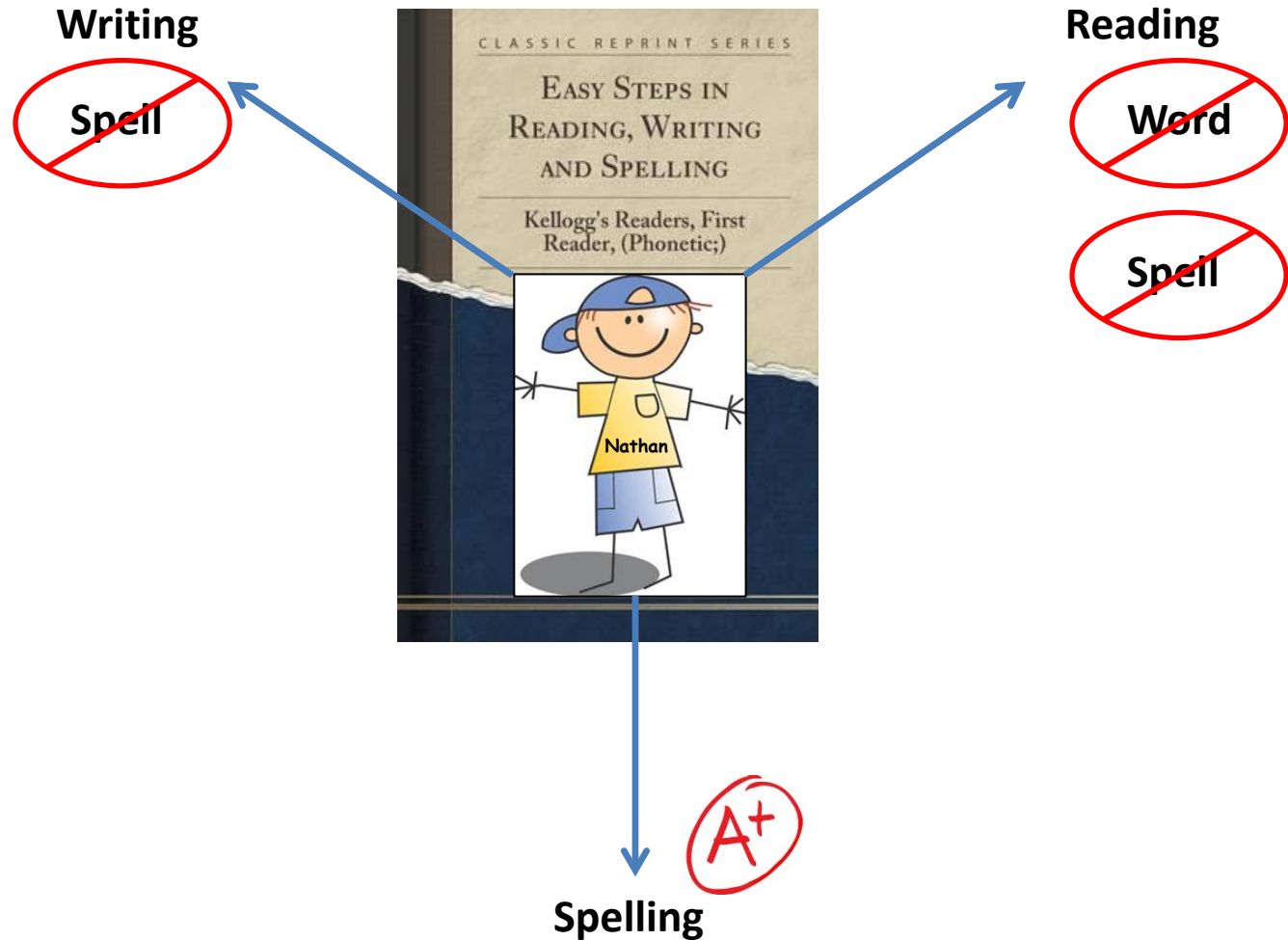
Why is it hard to edit your own work?

Writing

Reading

Spelling

You use different parts/pathways of your brain to perform different tasks –
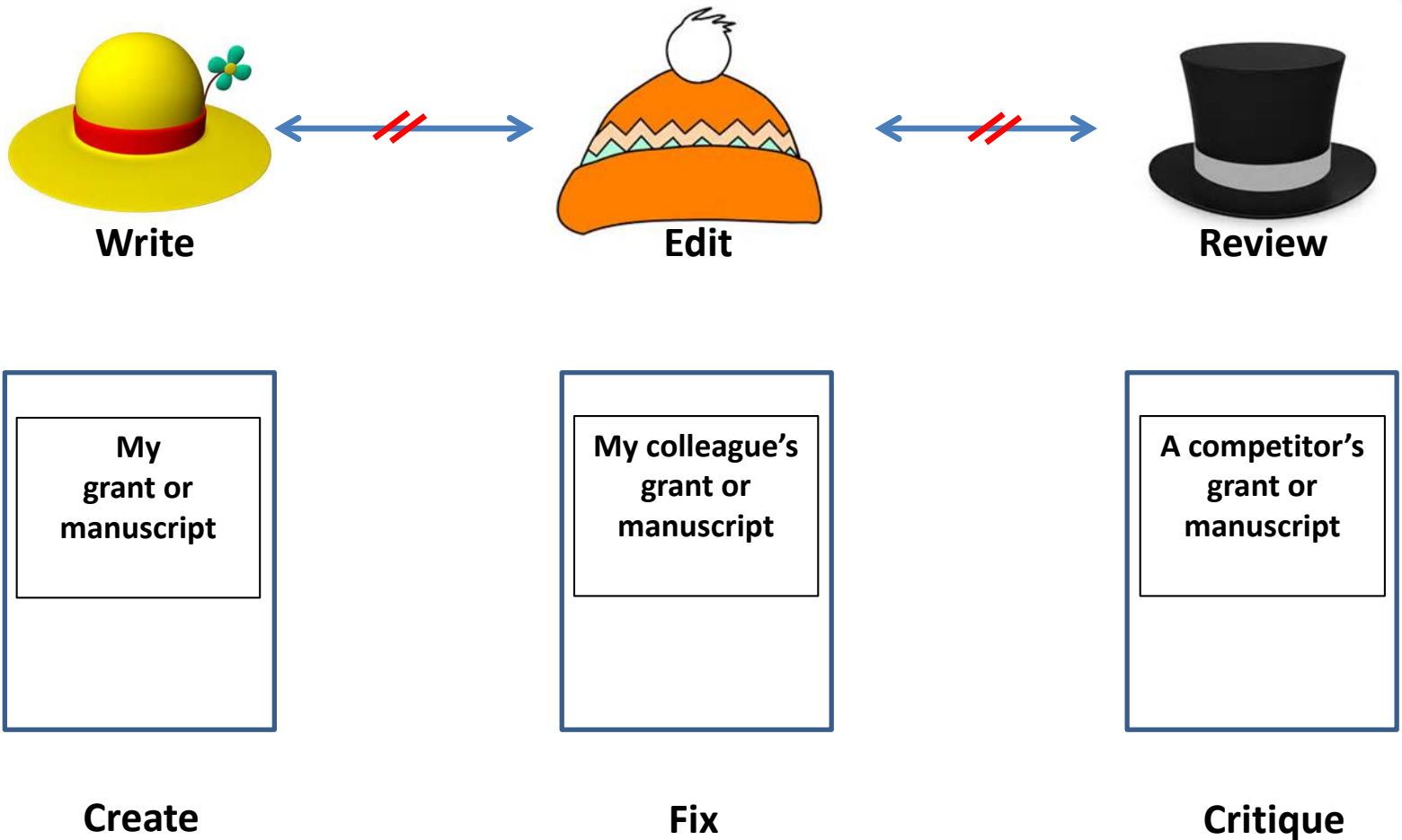
Why is it hard to edit your own work?

Writing

~~Spell~~

Reading

~~Word~~

~~Spell~~

CLASSIC REPRINT SERIES

EASY STEPS IN
READING, WRITING
AND SPELLING

Kellogg's Readers, First
Reader, (Phonetic;)

Nathan

A+

Spelling

You use different parts/pathways of your brain to perform different tasks – And they don't always 'talk' to each other when they do it.

Why is it hard to edit your own work?

Different parts of the brain do different things, and different pathways are activated depending on the task

Write	Edit	Review
My grant or manuscript	My colleague's grant or manuscript	A competitor's grant or manuscript
Create	**Fix**	**Critique**

Your brain knows what you wrote – so it doesn't really read it

Why is it hard to edit your own work?

Rob Winton, 5+ years as a professional proofreader and editor
Answered Dec 2, 2015 · Author has **53** answers and **47.1k** answer views

The simple answer is that you can't proofread your own work effectively. I am a professional proofreader and I would still get someone else to proofread anything I've written that needed it (Quora posts don't count :)).

Confession time: I actually lost a contract because I sent an email out to someone without proofreading it properly. When it was pointed out how rude I had been, I had to read my email THREE times before I understood what the problem was, because what I had MEANT to write was not what I DID write. This is why I always get my wife to proofread any important emails etc. before I send them, and why I would hire a professional if I ever get around to writing that book!

Quora.com – Why is editing your own writing so hard…

Why is it hard to edit your own work?

The brain is doing what it's supposed to do

Writing   Filtering

Why is it hard to edit your own work?

Your brain is doing what it's supposed to do

Writing   Filtering

So how do
you trick
your brain?

Make it novel
See the parts
Switch hats

Tips for self editing – Make it novel

- **Time = Distance = Novel Object**
  - **Write early and put it away**

> "Put your manuscript down, I'd recommend at least two months. Six would be ideal. You really need to get away from it long enough to change your mindset. Unless you have a photographic memory, this technique will work. You'll transform into the one thing you crave feedback from: a reader."
>
> — [A.J. Flowers](), [A Guide to Writing Your First Novel]()

- **But…there's the ideal, and then there's reality**

Tips for self editing – Make it novel

- **Switch Format**
    - **Electronic to paper**
    - **Reading to speaking**
        - **This will help with punctuation and phrasing**
    - **Have someone else read it to you**

- **Go from back to front, or bottom to top**
    - **Read each sentence on its own**

Missing punctuation examples:

> VCAM-1 also know as cluster of differentiation 106(CD106) is a molecule that is expressed by the endothelium following stimulation by TNF-α or interleukin 1 (IL-1).

How to look at the parts

- Make focused passes through the text to look at a specific issue
- Don't read
- Use a checklist:
  - spelling
  - grammar
  - punctuation
  - spacing
  - capitalizations
  - jargon, technical terms
 - consistency
  - images and diagrams
  - referencing

References: www.germanna.edu/tutor/documents/PaperSelf-EditingJuly2012.pdf
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/561/01/ Copyright ©1995-2013 by The Writing Lab & The OWL at Purdue and Purdue University.
http://www.oxbridgeediting.co.uk/blog/top-proofreading-tips-speed-proofreading-61/

General Proofreading Tips – Spelling, Grammar, Spacing

- **Look for underlining by spell check and grammar program**
  - **Don't read, just look for color**
  - **Go through them one at a time**
  - **If it's correct, add it to the dictionary**
  - **This won't catch all errors (eg your vs. you're)**

- **Look at spacing**
  - **Don't read the sentences, just look at the spacing between sentences and words**
  - **Switch the document to left justification to look at spacing**
  - **Use paragraph markings:**
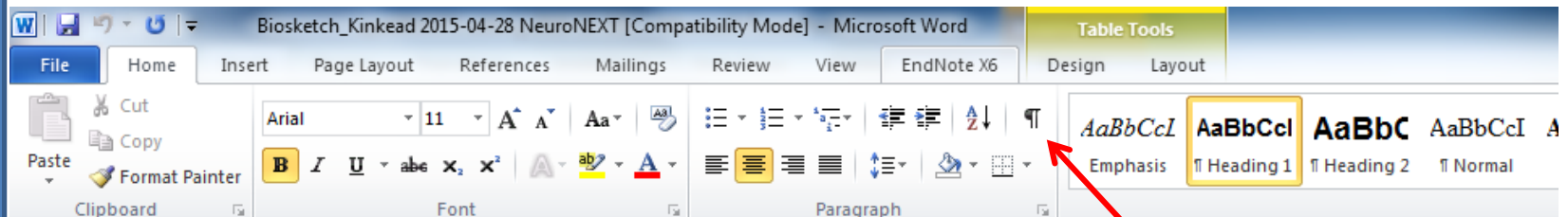
General Proofreading Tips - Jargon

- Eliminate jargon, slang, clichés, and euphemisms in favor of more precise language
- In grants - write for a scientist not in your field
- In manuscripts – know the journal audience
- Don't write down, write clearly

Example:

Jargon: You can often improve on expletive sentences.

More Accessible: You can often improve on sentences that start with *There are*.

References: www.germanna.edu/tutor/documents/PaperSelf-EditingJuly2012.pdf
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/561/01/ Copyright ©1995-2013 by The Writing Lab & The OWL at Purdue and Purdue University.
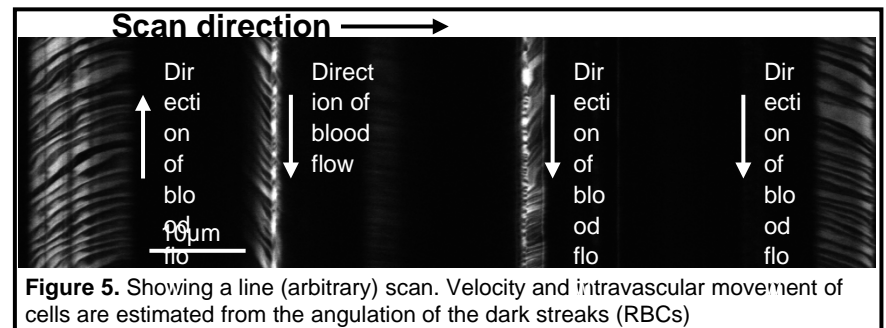
General Proofreading Tips - Consistency

- **Check for consistency in acronyms, genotypes, etc**
  - **Using different words for the same thing makes your message harder to understand**
- **Use the same term for the same thing – every time**
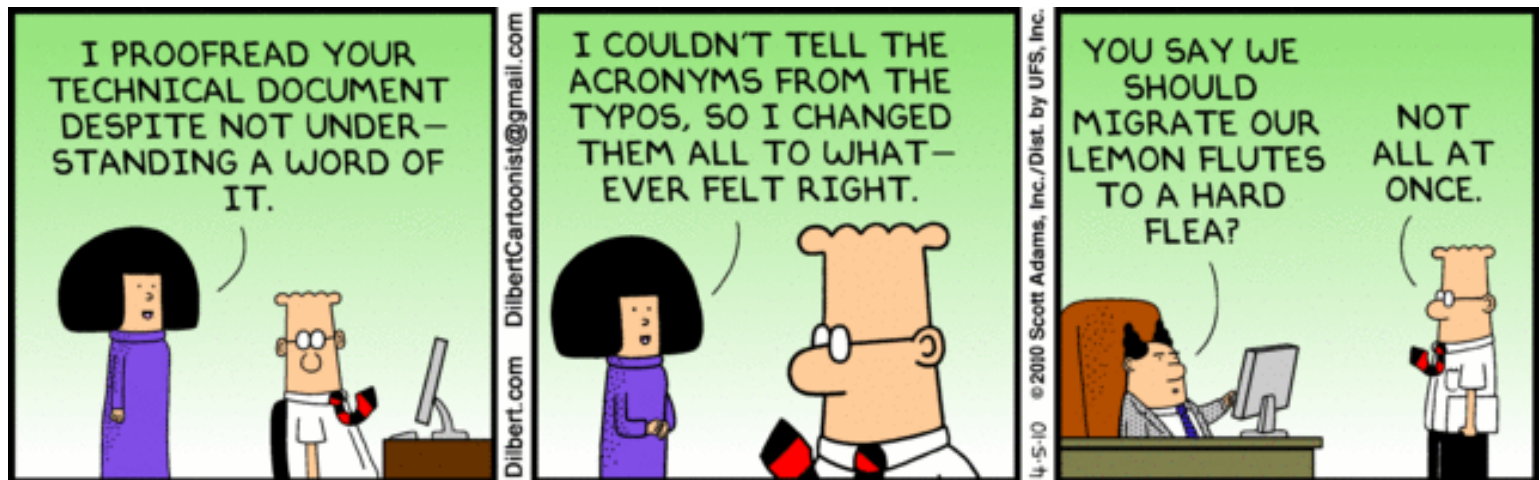
Example from a grant: Knockout mouse, sickle mice, Townes humanized sickle mouse model, Townes mice, wild-type sickle mice, Townes sickle mice

General Proofreading Tips - Figures

- **Look at each figure**
  - **Referenced in text?**
  - **Numbered in order?**
  - **Can you see all of the figure and the legend?**
  - **Print to PDF**
    - **Check that it looks the same**
    - **Check resolution**
    - **Check that it didn't change the resolution of the text**
- **Figure legends**
  - **Helps to indicate why the figure is there**
  - **Define all abbreviations**
  - **Type of information depends on why the figure is being included**
    - **Data**
    - **Method**
    - **Background**
    - **Summary**

Scan direction ⟶

Direction of blood flow

Direction of blood flow

Direction of blood flow

Direction of blood flow

10 μm

Figure 5. Showing a line (arbitrary) scan. Velocity and intravascular movement of cells are estimated from the angulation of the dark streaks (RBCs)

How to look at parts

- **For each sentence, ask:**
  - **Why is this here?**
    - **Is it introducing new information, ideas, or analysis? If not, edit or delete**
  - **Is it necessary for the reader to know?**
    - **Look for unnecessary words or information**
  - **Is it true/accurate?**

From the Aims:

> Noonan syndrome, a developmental disorder characterized by congenital heart disease, dysmorphic facial and chest features, proportionate short stature, and mental retardation, bears an increased risk of progressing to juvenile myelomonocytic leukemia. The goal of this project is to evaluate novel targets for prevention of leukemic progression in Noonan syndrome.

From the Innovation:

> The proposed project is innovative because it explores a novel target therapy for … chemoprevention for Noonan syndrome.

Is this accurate?

References: www.germanna.edu/tutor/documents/PaperSelf-EditingJuly2012.pdf
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/561/01/ Copyright ©1995-2013 by The Writing Lab & The OWL at Purdue and Purdue University.

How to look at parts

- Look at transitions between sentences
  - Is it clear why you are telling a reader something?
  - Readers shouldn't have to make their own jumps in logic; use transitions and topic sentences to guide them.
  - Try not to list facts
    - You can do this in a review – not in a grant
  - Tell the reader how a fact relates to other facts, or why it's important

- Check paragraphs for topic sentences that summarize the main point and content of the paragraph
  - Alternate would be a heading that summarizes the paragraph

General Proofreading Tips - Parallelism

- **Parallelism Errors**

    Not Parallel: Kids like singing, chatting, and check their phones.

    Parallel: Kids like singing, chatting, and checking their phones.

Parallel example: Before and after

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Before	**After**
In an emergency, the Area Warden's main functions include:	In an emergency, the Area Warden's main functions include:
❖ Assisting and directing persons …	❖ assisting and directing personnel … to safe locations (evacuate or shelter-in-place)
❖ Wardens to either evacuate or shelter-in-place patrons	❖ controlling personnel movement …
❖ Positively control the movement of persons …	❖ checking their designated areas …
❖ Designated areas are checked …	❖ ensuring personnel do not gather…
❖ Persons are not to gather …	❖ preventing unauthorised people from…
❖ Preventing unauthorised persons from …	

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http://cybertext.com.au/10490.htm

General Proofreading Tips – Passive vs active

- Use passive voice only where appropriate (generally methods or results of scientific papers)
  - Use active voice to increase directness

Avoid passive zombies

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❖ Active vs passive?

❖ Let's make it simple:
  - If you can add 'by zombies' after the verb, your sentence uses passive voice.
  - Example: *A report will be submitted.* becomes *A report will be submitted* **by zombies**.

❖ Active voice makes it clear who is doing the action—i.e. you can't add 'by zombies' to the verb
  - Example: *We will submit a report.*

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Switch your brain from writer to reviewer

- **Read the review criteria and look for specific answers**

- **Look for the hypothesis**
  - **Break it down and make sure the aims/experiments address the hypothesis as written**

Write　　　　　**Edit**　　　　　**Review**

Editing others – How to give the most effective feedback

- **Know who the audience will be**
    - **Experts in the field**
    - **Non-expert scientists**
    - **Lay person**
- **Know what the format should be**
- **Know the review criteria**
- **Use what you have learned when you review**
    - **Pay attention to what you do when you are evaluating/critiquing vs editing**
        - **Journal review**
        - **Grant review**

When Reviewing/Editing for Others:

- **First impression**
  - **How many tries to follow first paragraph?**
  - **Can you visualize where this project is going?**
  - **Like/Dislike?**
  - **Interesting?**
  - **Important?**
  - **Impressions of the writer:**
    - **Organized**
    - **Logical**
    - **Trustworthy (careful, accurate, detailed)**

- **Proof reading (go through the same checklist)**
  - **Check one item at a time**
  - **Try not to read**

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Specific Aims: The MOST Important Page

Reviewer Impression:
- **I understand**
- **This is interesting**
- **This is important**
- **I want to advocate**

Secondary Impressions:
- **This investigator is organized, accurate, clear, logical**
- **This project is reasonable**
- **This project has a high probability of success**

yes, yes, yes
yes, yes, yes, yes

Failure of the Specific Aims has a devastating and cascading effect on the review. After struggling with it, the reviewer goes on to the Background and Significance section. The review of the literature and discussion here may be pertinent but lost on a reviewer who does not understand what the proposal is all about. As reviewers, at this point we usually abandon any attempt to follow a line of logic … All in all, it is very difficult for mere science to overcome such a psychological handicap imposed on the reviewer.

Ogden and Goldberg (2002) Research Proposals: A Guide to Success

Editing for others - read for:

Structure:

- **Sentence structure**
  - **Varied**
  - **Simple**
  - **Direct**
  - **Linked to each other**
- **Paragraph structure**
  - **Short**
  - **Topic sentence**
  - **Summary point**

# Editing for others - read for:

Content:
- **All information is relevant**
- **Leads reader from one step to the next**
- **In logical order**
- **Provides all necessary information**
- **Clear why information is being given**
- **Accurate**

Approach:
- **Check tense**
- **Check level of information**
  - **Too much vs too little**
  - **Consistent between aims**
- **Consider alternative answers**
- **Look at controls**
- **Rigor and reproducibility**

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Summary

- **Make it novel**
- **Look at parts**
- **Change your hat**

- **Adjust your goals and comments based on the amount of time you have**

- **Practice writing and editing**

- **When editing for others – consider discussing in person**
  - **Record the discussion?**
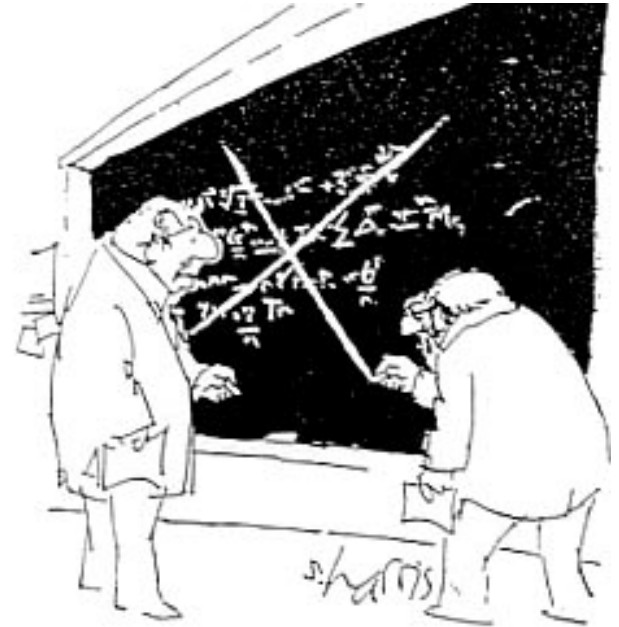
"That's it? That's peer review?"

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Resources

Editing:

- Coursera (coursera.org) – lots of free courses through Emory
    - **Writing in the Sciences**
    - Conjunctions, connections and adverb clauses
    - Learn English
    - Adjectives and adjective clauses
    - Business English communication skills
    - Presentations: Speaking so that people listen

Resources

Editing:

- http://www.law.cuny.edu/legal-writing/students/grammar/editing/editing-self.html
- **References: www.germanna.edu/tutor/documents/PaperSelf-EditingJuly2012.pdf**
- http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/561/01/ Copyright ©1995-2013 by The Writing Lab & The OWL at Purdue and Purdue University.
- http://www.oxbridgeediting.co.uk/blog/top-proofreading-tips-speed-proofreading-61/
- http://lifehacker.com/5968996/how-to-edit-your-own-writing

Writing:

- http://www.quickanddirtytips.com/education/grammar/grammar-girls-editing-checklist
- http://cybertext.com.au/10490.htm
- https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/editing-and-proofreading/