Editing for Managers, Scientists, and Engineers

These visuals come from *The Craft of Editing* (Springer-Verlag, 2000).
The Craft of Editing

Editing isn’t a cosmetic process. It’s a thinking process.

Richard Rhodes, author
*Making of the Atomic Bomb*
Although editing is a large subject, we will focus on the editing that occurs in the sign-off process.

**Editing documents:**
- Reviewing
- Line editing
- Online editing
- Proofreading

**Reducing friction:**
- Actions by authors
- Actions by editors
Before editing someone’s document, you should first consider your constraints.

- Audience of Document
- Format of Document
- Process to Publish Document
- Formality of Document
- Other Editors of Document
- Politics and Ethics
Three aspects of the writing affect the way that editors assess documents:

- **Content**
- **Style**
- **Form**
Editing for content involves deciding what message to send

- Is the content complete?
- Is the content correct?
- Is the content appropriate?
Editing for style involves deciding how to communicate the message

Focus on language

Focus on structure

Focus on illustration
Editing for form concerns whether the communication is properly presented.
What variables determine how much change you make?

- Importance of Change
- Consistency of Change
- Disposition of Writer
- Difficulty of Change
A well-done edit has three characteristics: clarity, consistency, and hierarchy.

- Clarity
- Consistency: effect, effect, effect, affect
- Hierarchy: most important, next most important, least important
One convention is to circle comments, but not added words or letters.

Last year, city engineers came up with a plan to address the tetrachloroethane-contaminated soil required to be excavated for planned thoroughfare construction that will occur within right-of-way adjacent to Building 1817, which houses the Genetics Laboratory.

*au: are you implying that Chem E contaminated the soil?
Reducing the friction between editors and authors calls for action on both sides

**Authors**
- Identifying constraints
- Submitting outlines early
- Allotting time for editors
- Mulling over criticisms

**Editors**
- Identifying pet peeves
- Negotiating gray areas
- Establishing boundaries
- Controlling tone
- Understanding authors
Pet peeves are those rules that you enforce more strictly than other editors do

- naked “this”—avoid
- bureaucratic nouns—avoid
- “however” to join two independent clauses—avoid
- series comma—use
- exclamation point—avoid
When editing someone’s writing, consider tone

Edit one another as you would wish to be edited

Lead with the positive