

Getting close to PERFECT

We all want a perfect yearbook, right? In that vein, a friend recently sent me a link to an excellent article on the web about proofreading. It was an article about business proofing that you can find at www.creativepro.com if you want to read the entire article. I took what the author had to say and adapted it for yearbook. I hope it helps you and your staff strive for perfection.

Here are a few tips for better proofreading:

Proof in three stages. Proofreading a document once will help you catch a few errors, but not all. Instead, proofread three times, with a different intent each time.

- ✓ **First**, start with spelling, punctuation, and formatting errors—the kinds of things you were taught in school. Proof even if the copy comes fairly clean from a reliable source.
- ✓ **Second**, double-check basic information. For a yearbook nothing is more important than names, but also check graphs, scores, quotes and other info for content as well as spelling.
- ✓ **Third**, proofread again to make sure you didn't make any new errors while making corrections. To get as close to perfect as possible, you should go through this three-step process after every stage of your yearbook. For those doing their yearbooks with InDesign or PageMaker, that means do the three steps before you send pages in and again before you return proofs. For those of you who are using YearTech Online that means doing it once when the student marks the page as complete and once before the adviser clicks the submit button.

Proof right up until you submit your pages or your proofs. Errors are often introduced at the last minute when everyone is rushing to finish a deadline. Be uncompromising in your proofreading until the moment you click submit or mail a CD.

Pass it around. It's difficult to catch errors when you've been working on a spread for quite a while. So here's the rule of thumb: "If you create it, don't read it." Instead, ask someone else to proofread it for you, or better yet, ask two or three people.

Forget computer spelling and grammar software. These tools may catch some problems, but they can miss crucial errors and sometimes even provide incorrect grammatical and spelling suggestions. You can start with them, but don't rely on them completely. Always keep in mind that to, too and two are all spelled correctly as far as your spell checker is concerned. But your computer has no idea if they are used in the right place.

Strive for consistency. Is it "10" or "ten?" "Calif." or "CA?" Get a Style Guide. You will find the Associated Press Style Guide available in most bookstores or online. Or go to the JEA website (www.jea.org) and order the JEA Styleguide from their bookstore.

Proof hard copy. You can proof directly on your monitor, a method that can be of great assistance because you can zoom all around and move quickly. On the other hand, there's just something about hard copy that helps you spot errors. Never go to click submit until you have printed out a hard copy and looked it over.

Proof in quiet. Proofreading requires total focus. Turn off the phone, step away from e-mail, and find a quiet place to work. The library at your school might work. Any place you can be alone without outside distractions. That means no iPod either.