

From the impossibly messy desk of the President



Welcome 2021. There is a faint aura of optimism rising above the slough of despond. Travel is still being cancelled, but a handful of people have been vaccinated. Masks are being worn through entire theatre performances, but at least there are theatre performances again. The end of JobKeeper will be worrying for some of you. I do hope that all of you find the work you need to sustain you, both physically and mentally, this year.

Congratulations to those who passed the accreditation exam. Well done! Commiserations to those who missed out this time. All that hard work will not have gone to waste.

Our valiant committee continues to strengthen. We are welcoming new members; planning general meetings; reviewing the revised contract for the new website while maintaining the old one; and managing our finances ably. The newsletter thrives. We have lively but respectful meetings. I could not have asked for a better team to manage us through last year.

Our new sound equipment is still a work in progress, but meetings are running very smoothly. It was great in February to be able to hop successfully from the view of Neil James to his slides, then to the ASG website. I marvelled. Ngairé is still looking for volunteers to learn all this from her; she's not available in April, so we will find out what we can and can't do without her!

The Hobart conference which IPEd had scheduled for late June has been changed from a geographical location to an internet location. Do check out the interesting program and consider attending virtually. I'm looking forward to it. The British CIEP conference, scheduled for Glasgow in September, will also be virtual, so that's another opportunity to hear fascinating speakers from foreign parts in the comfort of your armchair.

The AGM this year will be at the end of October. Our VP is researching venues, ably assisted by committee members. Please keep Wednesday 27 October free. Meanwhile, I look forward to seeing many of you at Angela Savage's talk in March and Pamela Hewitt's in April. We'll keep you posted about topics and anything else that might interest you.

Stay well.

Eris Jane Harrison AE
President

In this edition

News

From the President
Professional Development
IPEd News
Membership
Members' notes from the field

Features

February meeting: The Australian Style Guide with Neil James
Grammar Gremlins No.4: 'Now I lay me down to sleep ...'
Words of the Year and the Decade
CSE monthly meetings – the how, what and who
Back Page Bloopers

The Canberra Society of Editors acknowledges the traditional owners of country in the Canberra region and their continuing connection to land, culture and community. The Society pays its respects to the elders of the Ngannawal and Ngambri people, past and present.

Professional Development

Having ended 2020 with a focus on training for the accreditation exam, we are again considering general training topics for the year. I am currently working on several suggestions and hope to offer our first training for 2021 in April.

Ideas so far include fiction editing; digital accessibility; advanced Word macros; and an editing 'skills package' that incorporates separate sessions on copyediting, grammar, and the role of editing.

Many training providers are continuing to conduct their courses exclusively online, which not only has the benefit of being able to tap into training resources around the country with relative ease, but also allows CSE members to participate from anywhere.

We want very much to provide training on topics that are of interest and use to you as members, so don't forget, if you have an idea for a topic, let me know and I'll try and track down a suitable provider.

You can contact me via the CSE website by going to 'About' > 'Contact us' and selecting 'Workshops and courses', or simply reply to any of the general society emails and your suggestion will find its way to me.

Nigel Brew AE
Professional Development Coordinator

Institute of Professional Editors (IPEd) News

IPEd Editors Conference

The [10th IPEd Editors Conference](https://iped2021.org.au/program/), 'Editing on the Edges', will be held online from Monday 28 June 2021 to Wednesday 30 June 2021. Registrations are now open, see <https://iped2021.org.au/program/>

Resources for academic editors

The Standing Committee on Academic Editing (SCAE) has developed resources for academic editors which are now available in the members-only section of the website.

Mentoring, moving forward

Extra activities are planned for the Mentoring Program. Check out the IPEd mentoring page.

Workshops

Don't forget that IPEd branch meetings everywhere are now available to us all via Zoom. Check out all the offerings on the IPEd website. There is a small charge and non-members can often access them.



Punctuation is important people!

Proper punctuation can save children from a terrible fate (even worse than being bad at grammar).

Space: the difference between a kid napping and a kidnapping.

Punctuation can also save your relationships.

If you don't think punctuation is important, try forgetting the semicolon when you tell someone 'I'm sorry; I love you.'

And finally, it can save lives.

Today we're going to learn to cut and paste kids!

Membership update

CSE memberships remain fairly static at around 140 members with new members joining and some memberships falling away. Attendance at monthly general meetings (last Wednesdays) is very encouraging with a mix of people dialling in and others coming along to the venue to meet and mingle.

Welcome to new members **Jess Cameron, Brendan Pigott** and **Marsali Mackinnon**. I hope to see your smiling faces at a CSE event very soon. The next one scheduled is 31 March, so visit the [CSE website](#) to check out upcoming general meeting dates and presenters.

Members' notes from the field is an opportunity to share a brief 'about me', some news, some achievement, some failure. It's open to all members.

To send a note: email Christine.editors@gmail.com by **COB any FRIDAY** to make the publishing deadline. Send Word doc or email of ~200 words. Will be published as received. Final decision to publish rests with the President.

Christine Belcher FPRIA
Membership Secretary

Members' notes from the field

This issue's member note is from Penny O'Hara, Associate Member

Rule number one: don't do it all at once.

That was the mantra of my editing teacher – local author and editor Irma Gold – during my studies at the University of Canberra. She taught me that editing is a staged process. That it starts with the big-picture, substantive editing stage. That it moves through the nuts-and-bolts copyediting stage. And that it finishes with the fine-detail, cherry-on-top proofreading stage.

As a substantive editing exercise, she presented our class with a piece of writing peppered with spelling and grammatical errors.

'Put down your red pen and just read,' she told us. 'Assess the piece's structure, logic and completeness. Don't correct anything yet.'

In other words, get the big picture right before jumping into the minutiae.

For many of us, it was a challenge. So much wrong! So much to fix! It took discipline and a huge effort of will to look past the mangled words and grammatical horrors and see the piece as a whole.

But, 12 years later, 'don't do it all at once' is a lesson that still resonates. It's one I practise daily – whether working on a corporate report, magazine article, book, web page or, indeed, any editing or non-editing project.

I've recently made an accidental sideways career move – from book and web editing to internal communications and policy development. I've been struck by how, without that solid grounding in a staged approach that we editors take for granted, there is often a (very human) tendency to jump into the detail and start tackling the small issues before stepping back and looking at the big picture.

Before asking questions like: Why are we doing this? Who is it for? What do we hope to achieve? Is this the best way of doing it?

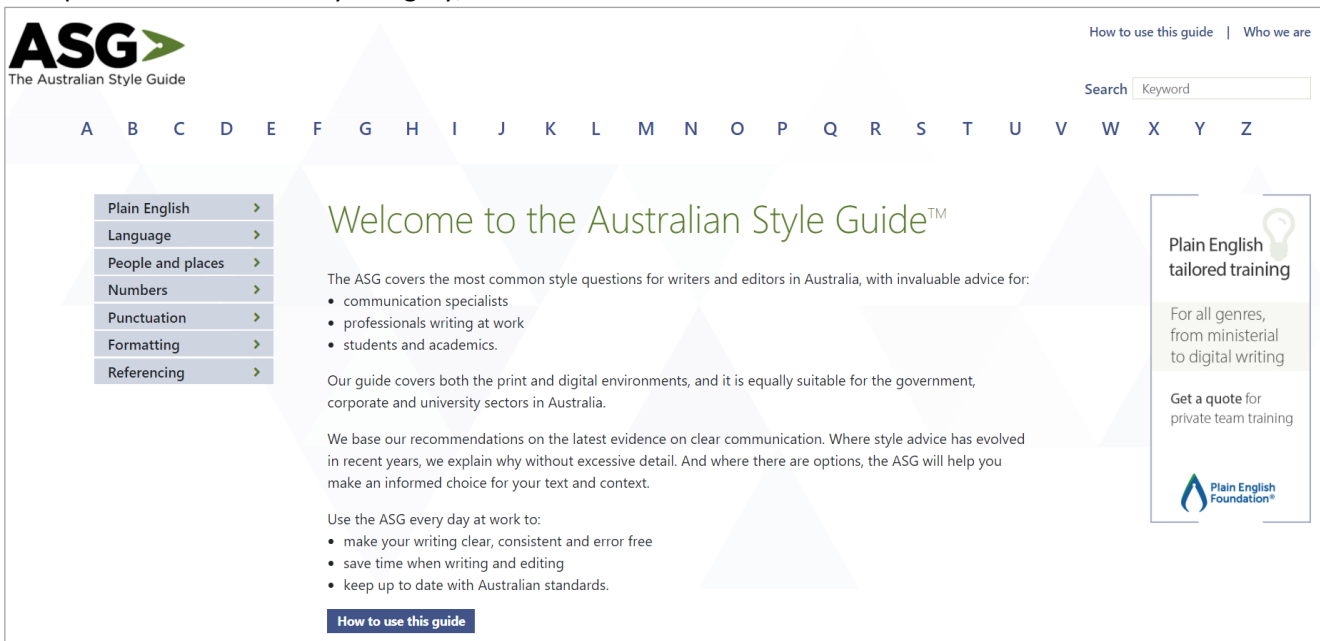
It has got me thinking about the valuable skills, expertise and insights that we, as editors, bring to a wide range of projects and situations. Big-picture thinking and a staged approach are just two such skills. As editors, we know how to negotiate tricky issues. We know when to hold firm and when to give ground. We know the importance of understanding our audience or users. We know how to schedule and budget. We offer so much more, across a wide range of contexts, than just quality assurance. We are about so much more than getting the grammar right.

Features

The Australian Style Guide

In February, Dr Neil James presented on the Australian Style Guide (ASG). As the Executive Director and co-founder of the Plain English Foundation, Neil is committed to providing an accessible, free resource to a wide audience including professionals in many fields, editors, academics and students. It is pitched for use across the government and corporate sectors and sets out to be engaging and entertaining.

Neil's presentation was certainly engaging and entertaining as he took members through 'style on the spectrum'. The ASG interface spans 7 categories (breaking news: numerals less than 10 are **in**, as is **bold** for emphasis rather than less readable *italics*). The 7 categories are Plain English, Language, People and Places, Numbers, Punctuating, Formatting and Referencing. Under these, ASG has limited itself to 120 main entries and 450 sub-entries. ASG has multiple search functions: by category, A-Z and direct search.



The screenshot shows the homepage of the Australian Style Guide (ASG). At the top left is the ASG logo with the tagline 'The Australian Style Guide'. To the right are links for 'How to use this guide' and 'Who we are'. A search bar is located below these links. A navigation menu with letters A through Z is displayed. On the left, a sidebar lists categories: Plain English, Language, People and places, Numbers, Punctuation, Formatting, and Referencing, each with a right-pointing arrow. The main content area features the heading 'Welcome to the Australian Style Guide™' and a list of target audiences: communication specialists, professionals writing at work, and students and academics. Below this, it states the guide covers both print and digital environments and is suitable for government, corporate, and university sectors. A section titled 'We base our recommendations on the latest evidence on clear communication...' explains the guide's approach. A 'Use the ASG every day at work to:' section lists benefits like making writing clear, saving time, and staying up-to-date. A 'How to use this guide' button is at the bottom left. On the right, a box promotes 'Plain English tailored training' for all genres, from ministerial to digital writing, and offers a quote for private team training, with the Plain English Foundation logo at the bottom.



ASG balances explanatory content and brevity by offering three transparent layers of information, and is forward-leaning in contentious areas, for example promoting the singular 'they', and title case to replace italics. A fourth layer might contain the more detailed discussion of issues at a later stage.

Although a print version may be considered, ASG has been released as a completely digital resource and is mobile responsive. Feedback buttons encourage ongoing testing, and there is a survey monkey link for full user experience testing.

Members discussed inclusive language and ASG's decisions on readability. The presentation was really clear and promoted ASG well in what has the potential to be a confusing array of style manual options.

Neil signing copies of his books for IPEd mentoring scheme co-Chair Ted Briggs. Photo from Leanne Pattison.

Just to recap, there is also the Australian Government Style Manual (AGSM) that has been put out by the Australian Government's Digital Transformation Agency and the Australian Manual of Style (AMOS), which is the Biotext-Macquarie University partnership.

While all three of the new 2020 style manuals have much in common, I find it helpful to distinguish them this way: AGSM is the definitive manual if you're in government (and it's free), AMOS is definitive for science and the academy (but it's subscription-based so I have yet to check it out) and ASG is a great, accessible and informative public resource that is also free and phone-responsive.

In this embarrassment of riches, my only complaint is that there is still no equivalent manual for fiction writers – but perhaps we should be careful what we wish for, and the ASG's commitment to Plain English might make it the best all-rounder for those who work on the run and work across sectors. At any rate, Neil did a great job of promoting that idea.



Neil signing copies of his books for our President Eris Harrison. Photo from Leanne Pattison.

ASG is available at [Australianstyleguide.com](https://www.australianstyleguide.com). <https://www.australianstyleguide.com/home>

Elizabeth Ganter

Grammar Gremlin No 4 – ‘Now I lay me down to sleep ...’

In ‘Grammar Gremlins’ we look at parts of grammar that writers often get wrong, or that we editors aren’t sure how to explain to writers who make the errors.

The title of this edition of Grammar Gremlins comes from the opening words of a well-known children’s bedtime prayer. They illustrate perfectly a correct use of the verb **lay**. Yes, the prayer could have started ‘Now I lie down to sleep ...’ but it wouldn’t have scanned very well, and the author wanted to make clear that ‘I’ have control: I am placing my body down flat in a bed, in the same way as I might lay (place) a cloth on a table.

Lay and **lie** get very confused. **Lay** means to place something (in this case my own body) down while **lie** means to recline (with nobody – not even me – placing me in position for sleeping).

It gets more confusing: the past tense of lay is **laid**; the past tense of lie (meaning recline) is **lay**.

It gets worse: **lie** also means to tell an untruth. In that case, the past tense is **lied**.

Some examples might help:

My hens **lay** eggs every day. (present tense) Yesterday they **laid** six eggs altogether. (past tense)

I **lie** in bed at night. (present tense) I **lay** on my bed for an afternoon nap yesterday. (past tense)

If I **lie** instead of telling the truth, I will be punished. (present tense) Andrew **lied** about his age. (past tense)

Learn more about **lay** and **lie** in *Working words (revised edn)* by Elizabeth Manning Murphy, Lacuna Publishing, Sydney, 2019 – Chat 36 ‘Confusions’ page 139.

© Elizabeth Manning Murphy DE

Word of the Year and Word of the Decade

Word of the Year, 2020

As well as being a year of challenges, 2020 was a year of new words. Many of us became unexpectedly familiar with terms relating to disease patterns, quarantine procedures and vaccine development; not to mention all the neologisms (the word that refers to a newly coined word or expression).

When it came time for the annual announcement of 'Word of the Year' from some of the world's major English-language dictionaries, they had plenty to choose from!

Dictionaries select their word of the year in different ways. Some are voted on by the public, and some are chosen by a committee drawn from dictionary staff and other experts.

The *Macquarie Dictionary* here in Australia does both, and in 2020 it introduced a special category for COVID-related terms. It will be fascinating to see if these new terms survive and pass into our language in the future. How many of them do you think might still be around in 2029 as contenders for the word of the decade?

Macquarie Dictionary main category (Official)	Doomscrolling
Macquarie Dictionary COVID category (Official)	Rona
Macquarie Dictionary main category (People's Choice)	Karen
Macquarie Dictionary COVID category (People's Choice)	Covidiot
The Australian National Dictionary Centre (ANDC)	Iso
Merriam-Webster	Pandemic
Collins English Dictionary	Lockdown
Oxford English Dictionary	None; they couldn't agree on a single word to sum up the year

Sources: The dictionary websites, apart from ANDC ['Iso' named Australia's 2020 word of the year, beating coronavirus-related terms 'bubble' and 'COVID normal'](#) ABC News

Word of the Decade, 2010s

(Do we call this decade the teens? That might explain a lot! -Ed)

The team at the *Macquarie Dictionary* recently asked Australians to vote for the words which resonated most as their first official Word of the Decade.

After a record-breaking number of votes, **fake news** (the dictionary committee's word of the year from 2016) beat *mansplain* by a thin margin, with *First World problem* coming in a close third.

More information about the selection of the Word of the Decade is on the [dictionary's website](#).

The *Macquarie Dictionary* described its Word of the Decade shortlist as 'a celebration of Australian English'. The shortlist of 21 words consisted of the 'good, the bad, and the sometimes baffling' winners of the previous ten Word of the Year competitions (which were selected by the dictionary committee and voted on by the public in each year).

burkini	First World problem	Karen	phantom vibration syndrome
cancel culture	fracking	mansplain	robodebt
captain's call	family	Me Too	rona
covidiot	halal snack pack	milkshake duck	share plate
doomscrolling	infovore	onesie	single-use

Find out more about the meaning of the words at [The Macquarie Dictionary Word of the Decade shortlist](#) blog post of 27 January 2021.

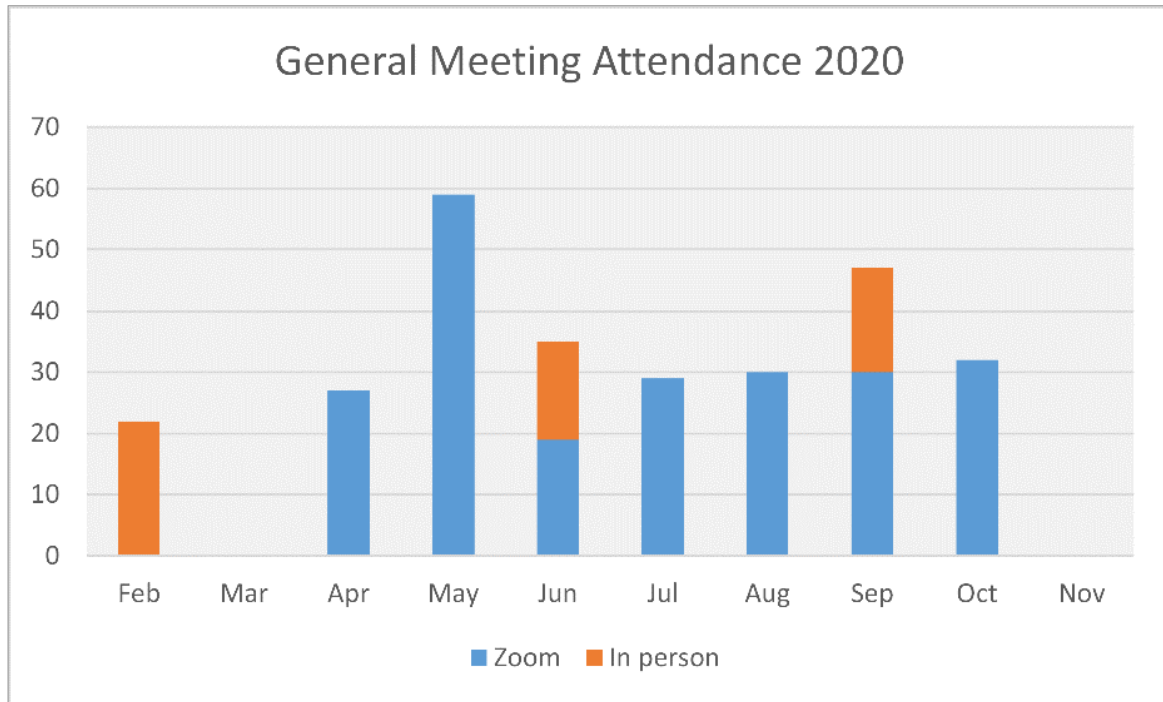
Let's hope 'fake news' and 'mansplain' both soon become obsolete. -Ed

Deb Fleming AE

CSE monthly meetings – the how, what and who

The graph below shows that in 2020, we maintained regular participation in our monthly meetings in spite of all the challenges the year threw at us (apart from the March meeting, which was disrupted by the lockdown in Canberra; the official numbers for November weren't available at time of printing, but we had good attendance for the end of the year celebration).

The committee was pleased to be able to bring you a variety of interesting speakers and topics – if you have an idea for something (or someone) you'd like to see, please let Eris Harrison know.



Graph: Howard Silcock

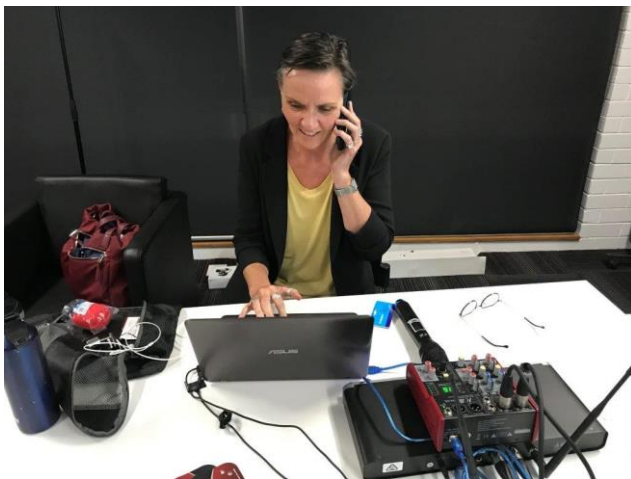


Photo of Ngaire courtesy of Leanne Pattison

Our tech whizz, CSE Secretary Ngaire Kinnear (shown here at the February meeting), taught herself how to run the monthly Zoom meetings.

She also figured out how to support hybrid events such as the highly successful November performance of *Comma Sutra* from Louisa Fitzhardinge.

If you'd like to add to your repertoire of skills in this area, as we increasingly move to online delivery of workshops and meetings, we can always use more volunteers to learn. Have a chat to one of the committee members about how you could get involved.

Our wonderful catering coordinator Mary Webb has come up with some great ways to provide snacks for those who can now attend in person.

These include individual containers of fruit, dip and crudites, prepacked cheese and cracker boxes – not pictured are the scrummy cupcakes at the February meeting (they probably ran out before anyone could take a snap).

Elizabeth Ganter, our VP, is currently our regular writer-upper of the meetings, which gives those of us unable to attend an excellent overview of the content.

We hope to see more of you in person as COVID restrictions ease and vaccinations occur.



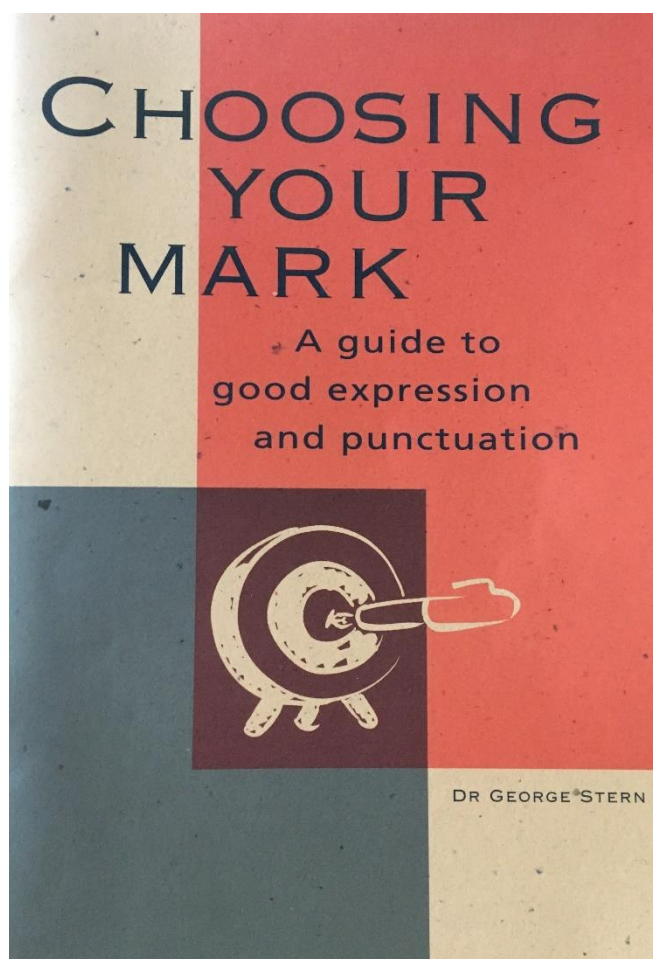
Photo courtesy of Leanne Pattison

Deb Fleming AE

Show us your shelves

Here is one of my most treasured editing resources; a slim volume I collected and kept almost by accident. The 46-page A4 book, *Choosing your mark: A guide to good expression and punctuation* by the esteemed Dr George Stern, was printed by the Australian Government Publishing Service (AGPS) in 1995. The AGPS was closed in 1997 and I had been working there since about 1994, but not in the editorial or publishing area. I worked in the human resources and payroll section (in fact, I calculated a lot of the redundancy packages). I was studying part time for a BA in English Language and Literature, but I had no inkling then that my professional and personal interests would lead me to a career in editing.

When it came time for us to move out of the AGPS building, a few recent publications had excess copies in stock, so I nabbed this one! I'm so glad I did — I find Dr Stern's explanation of plain English and reader-friendly language really useful. It also includes a short and easy to follow introduction to the process of writing effectively. Another of my favourite sections is about using 'which' and 'that' in relative clauses. It's one aspect of grammar that just doesn't seem to stick in my mind (the increasing use of 'that' instead of 'who' when referring to people is a related bugbear of mine, but that's another topic...).



Do you have an unusual editing resource tucked away on your shelves, or an interesting tale about how you acquired it? Send a photo with a short description to the newsletter editor through the [contact form](#) under 'About' on the website.

Deb Fleming AE

Back Page Bloopers

↑
3
↓

Posted by u/StarAxe 11 months ago

The writer probably intended "regimen" (meaning "plan") rather than a unit of the army. Source:
<https://www.rte.ie/news/coronavirus/2020/0412/1130113-philip-nolan-coronavirus/>

He said they need to have a top class testing regiment in place if restrictions are to be lifted.

0 Comments Share Save ...

From The Guardian (UK)'s regular corrections and clarifications column.

- In an article about Covid vaccines, the answer to a question about efficacy claimed that if a vaccine had 93% efficacy in clinical trials, that meant 7% of people who received the jab still got the disease. This was an incorrect interpretation of the figures. It actually means that the risk of contracting the disease is reduced by 93% in people who get the vaccine ("[I've had my vaccine – how well will it protect me, and for how long?](#)", 28 February, page 8). <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2021/mar/07/for-the-record-observer-corrections>
- Near homophone corner: "Climate change is an issue the Murdoch press has disassembled on for years" ("[Q&A: Michael E Mann](#)", 28 February, page 22, the New Review). <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2021/mar/07/for-the-record-observer-corrections>
- Near homophone corner: "If you want to revel in the dappled shade of the most beautiful canapé of plane trees in Europe, go now." ([French to say au revoir to canalside trees](#), 28 July, page 3, G2) <https://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2011/jul/29/corrections-clarifications>

Your Committee for 2021

President Eris Jane Harrison
Vice-President Elizabeth Ganter
Secretary Ngaire Kinnear
Treasurer Geoff Dawson
Assistant Treasurer vacant
Online Communications Vicki Taylor
Membership Secretary Christine Belcher
Public Officer Gina Dow
Professional Development Coordinator
Nigel Brew
Meetings Coordinator vacant
Website Manager Howard Silcock
Newsletter Editor Deb Fleming
Immediate Past President Kate Potter
General Committee
Elizabeth Manning Murphy
Louise Maher
Gil Garcon
Non-Committee positions
ACT Mentoring Coordinator Kaaren Sutcliffe
Catering Coordinator Mary Webb

ACTIVE VOICE

(Formerly 'The Canberra editor')
Volume 30, Number 1, February-March 2021
© Canberra Society of Editors 2021
ISSN 2200-6344 (online)
PO Box 3222, Manuka ACT 2603

ACTIVE VOICE is available from www.editorscanberra.org.

Regular content includes news and reports of Society meetings, professional development, mentoring, membership, committee business, and features on diverse topics relevant to editing, including guest presentations, workshops, conferences, editor profiles, and more.

Advertising

Relevant advertising is welcome.

Rates (subject to review) and specifications

\$40	1 column	w 54mm x h 273mm
\$60	½ page	w 180mm x h 140mm
\$120	1 page	w 178mm x h 273mm

Artwork should be supplied as <.jpg>, <.png> or <.tiff>, and be RGB, 72ppi.