

## Seven Tips for Typo-Free Text

Ah, January ... the month we spend retraining ourselves to write "2007" on our checks instead of "2006."

Speaking of mistakes, have you ever written something, sent it out to hundreds of people, and found out that it had a typo? Even though I'm a writer, I still struggle with getting my copy typo-free before it goes to a client (and before they – eek! – spend thousands of dollars getting it professionally printed).

Although it's traditional for me to have Before/After samples in each issue, I'm going to deviate from that with Before/After scenarios:

### **Scenario #1: Before Receiving Mary's Tips for Typo-Free Text**

- |                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| <i>Day Before Delivery, 11 p.m.</i> | Write the document after a long and exhausting day.   |
| <i>Delivery Day, 8 a.m.</i>         | Read the document over one time, spell-check it, and distribute it.                             |
| <i>Delivery Day, 12 p.m.</i>        | Receive phone call from boss, who says, "Do you know you've got typos on pages 2, 6, 7, and 9?" |

### **Scenario #2: After Receiving Mary's Tips for Typo-Free Text**

- |                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| <i>Three Days Before Delivery</i> | Write the document when your mind is most active. For many of us, that's the morning, but night owls are the exception. Read the document through once before giving it to one or two trusted people to read. |
| <i>Two Days Before Delivery</i>   | Read your document through again and fine-tune it. Make any changes that your proofreaders have suggested.  |
| <i>Day Before Delivery</i>        | Proofread using "Mary's Tips for Typo-Free Text" (below).   |
| <i>Delivery Day</i>               | Distribute, relax, and accept accolades.  |

### **Mary's Tips for Typo-Free Text**

It's not always possible to do all of these tips every time you send a document out into the world, but for each one you do, the chances of a mistake or typos slipping through are reduced:

#### **Tip #1**

Give the document to a friend, co-worker, or spouse to proofread. In fact, the more the merrier; you'll be surprised how different people catch different things.

**Tip #2**

Let the draft sit for at least 24 hours before you proofread it yourself.

**Tip #3**

Instead of reading from the first sentence to the last, read the document backwards from the last sentence to the first.

**Tip #4**

As you proofread, touch the tip of the pen to each word. This slows down your eyes and prevents you from skipping over mistakes.

**Tip #5**

If you use Microsoft® Word, turn on the "Check spelling as you type" and "Check grammar as you type" options (Tools | Options | Spelling & Grammar tab). When these options are on, Word underlines spelling errors in red and grammatical problems in green.

**Tip #6**

Maintain a checklist of problematic words (for example: to/too, they're/their, it's/its). Use the Search feature to find each item on your list and verify you've used the correct word.

**Tip #7**

Read the document aloud to yourself.

I hope you'll find this helpful the next time you need to write and distribute something, whether it's a marketing plan or your 2007 family Christmas letter.

Regards,

Mary

P.S. If you have a favorite tip for avoiding typos and mistakes, please let me know. I'd love to develop this issue into an article and include more tips!

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