

FOUR STEPS OF AN EDITOR

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I would like to share with you some of my experiences over the last 12 years working as a professional scientific editor at Editione. After having been employed for three decades in the university environment as a lecturer, researcher and group leader, I started my new career with the impression that the translation, editing and writing of scientific papers for fellow researchers would be relatively simple. After all, I was used to correcting students' reports, dissertations and theses, and to writing my own papers in Portuguese and English. However, I was not quite prepared for the challenges that I would encounter at the start of my new career. I believe that editing or writing a scientific paper is a skill that requires years to perfect, mainly because it demands changes within one's own thoughts and behavior. In my opinion, such inner development is indispensable considering the complex requirements of scientific papers, i.e. the observance of the 3 Cs rule - CLARITY, CONCISENESS and CORRECTNESS.

I have dealt with hundreds of manuscripts during my career as editor and have observed that, although many articles were reasonably well presented, a considerable number lacked clarity and coherence. Maybe we Brazilians construct complicated and convoluted narratives as a result of our culture and the intrinsic nature of the Portuguese language. In any case, my first task in tackling a new manuscript is to clarify the hypothesis, which is, of course, the starting point of any project. Subsequently, it is necessary to define precisely the objectives of the study in order to ensure that the emphasis given in the "Results and Discussion" fully matches the stated aims of the investigation.

With respect to conciseness, many source manuscripts tend to be repetitive. Hence, my job is to disentangle the sentences and paragraphs in order to confer a logical flow to the narrative and to reveal the complexities of the science accurately whilst maintaining the

authors' original ideas presented in a comprehensible manner. Regarding correctness, a surprising number of authors not only repeat their results in the figures, tables and text, a practice that is forbidden by reputable journals, but also forget to check for consistency between the data presented in these different locations. For this reason, I check all numerical values meticulously and verify that the results, comparisons and explanations are reported in a proper manner and order. Problems of inaccuracy can often extend to the reference section as well. Those who think that this portion of the manuscript is of lesser importance could not be more mistaken. Attention to detail is crucial in identifying the original publication and facilitating its access for consultation. It is well worth remembering that once an error in a citation occurs in the literature, it will likely propagate in databases forever.

Thus, in order to perform my job well and to contribute to the excellence of the services offered by Editione, I have had to mature step by step. I summarize below the major points in my development as an editor that brought me to the point where I am today.

I have discovered how to compartmentalize ideas and subsequently harmonize them: this ability is important for clarity and helps me to conceive a more appropriate structure for an ambiguous and incomprehensible article, and to identify and insert missing elements in the logical flow of thought.

I have moderated what I say and how I behave: such adaptation has taught me to be economical with words, allowing me to synthesize the ideas of others easily and to confer brevity to wordy and convoluted manuscripts.

I have developed self-criticism: this was one of my greatest achievements and has enabled me to be stringent with the data presented and scrupulous with accuracy.

I have learnt to avoid prejudice: this attitude helps me to see the best in each work and to expose the ideas in order of relevance, aspects that are often hidden in a poorly written article.

In conclusion, the job of a professional scientific editor is difficult but challenging; much of the time it is tedious, but it is certainly very rewarding. In order to perform this job well, it is necessary to distinguish the separate parts while seeing the whole picture. Although perfection is a relative concept, and I am far from accomplishing it, I believe that I am on the right path.