



TRANSCRIPT: SEASON 2, EPISODE 5
10 KILLER EDITING MACROS

Denise Cowle: Hello and welcome to this episode of The Editing Podcast.

Louise Harnby: Hello!

DC: So this week we're talking about how to improve your quality control and to edit more efficiently with macros. The more time you save, the more time you have to do other interesting things.

LH: That reminds me of what Daniel Heuman said when we were talking to him about PerfectIt, which we'll talk a little about in a minute. Remember how he asked us why we got into professional editing? And we told him and he said how that's the thing – no writer writes and no editor edits because they want to spend hours on the nitty-gritty. There's usually some bigger aim – like telling a story, or educating people who want the knowledge you have, or helping writers get published.

DC: That's it – the drive behind editing has a bigger end goal. And it's not just more time for writing that you'll get. It's time for your social life, or for your day job if that's not writing, or just relaxing ... whatever floats your boat really.

LH: Exactly. So we're going to give you an overview of our favourite editing macros. We'll put links in the show notes so you can find out how to get the scripts or software, and how to install them. The first thing we need to say about these is that they were developed for Microsoft Word users. I really do think that's one of the best reasons to edit in Word, because of that functionality.

DC: I completely agree. I know we've said this before but for all Word's niggles, it's still the best word-processing software. So, we've tried to focus on macros that don't require a big learning curve. There's no point in us promising to save you time if you end up devoting it all to tech learning that gets in the way of all the stuff you really want to do. So everything we've picked is stuff Louise and I are using ourselves.

LH: That's right – and while neither of us is afraid of technology, we're not experts in programming or techie stuff. So if we can install and use these tools, you can too.

DC: So, Louise, why don't you kick off. What are we starting with?

LH: I want to start with a free macro called **MultiSwitch** because it's so versatile. It was developed by our editing colleague, the wonderful Paul Beverley, and it allows you to swap a word or group of words to an alternative with a single keyboard shortcut of your choosing. Now, there is a little bit of prep work to do – you have to create a custom list of your switches so that the macro has a reference point for the changes, but all the information about that's in show notes links, so let's not worry about that here. So when I'm editing commercial fiction, I often need to smooth the flow by introducing contractions, especially in dialogue. It would take an age for me to change every *I am, you are, could not, will not* and what have you to their contracted forms – *I'm, you're, couldn't, won't* etc. But I can do it quickly thanks to this macro. It saves me so much time.

DC: I love MultiSwitch too. I use it to swap around things like *that* and *which*, or to undo contractions in more formal educational, business and academic editing. And the thing is, you can just keep adding or removing items from the custom switch list you've created, so the macro's always working for you.

Now, my turn! **PerfectIt** is the pro editor's best friend, wouldn't you say? The macro of all macros. And writers can use it too. Now we have an episode in this season dedicated to PerfectIt, in which we talk to the developer that Louise mentioned earlier – Daniel Heuman – so I'll keep it brief. So essentially it's a consistency checker and style enforcer. So instead of poring over a file to check that your hyphenation, capitalization, prefixes, suffixes, compass points, number rendering, and regional spelling choices are consistent, you can get PerfectIt to do it for you really fast. And if you're writing and editing in Word regularly, getting this is a no-brainer.

LH: It really is. Now PerfectIt's not free but it's so cheap and so good and so fast that it earns its keep. Plus there's a stupidly good free trial that allows you to run a whole book through it so you can see how it works before you decide to buy it.

My next top pick is **CompareWordList**, created by Allen Wyatt. This is another freebie and it's gold dust. Now, most editors and writers have blind spots – maybe you have a tendency to get certain homophones mixed up, like the various spellings of *their* or *peak* or *loath*, or *reign*. Or perhaps your type

fast and always spell a particular word wrong – Denise, you often mistype your name, don't you?

DC: Yes, as Denise! And yours too, Lousy.

LH: Well, cheers, pal! And then sometimes there are words that writers mix up the meanings with, like *imply* and *infer*, or *reactionary* and *reactive*. With this macro you can highlight all these blind confusables in your Word document before you start editing. And when you come to a highlighted word, it nudges you to stop and double check it. It really is brilliant – just takes away the worry and allows you to focus on flow and sense.

DC: Our next recommendation is **VisibleTrack**. If you're a writer or editor who needs to keep track of what you've changed in a file – particularly if you're working in a team and there are multiple people who'll be making changes, you'll be using Word's Track Changes function. I've lost count of the number of people I've heard about who've turned it off in the middle of an edit and then forgotten to toggle it back on again.

LH: Done that. Wept copiously.

DC: But you don't do it anymore do you?

LH: Nope – not now I have this macro installed!

DC: So what VisibleTrack does is change the background colour of the page when Track Changes has been toggled off. That's your trigger to remind you that something different's going on. It's an absolute gem.

LH: Certainly is. Another little bit of macro fairy dust is **ProperNounAlyse**. This is another freebie from Paul Beverley. When you run this macro it creates a report of all the proper nouns in your document and sorts them alphabetically. It even works for double names. So if there was a document with *Louise Harnby* and *Louise Hornby*, it would list that so you can check whether the discrepancy is an error or not. It's brilliant for fiction because you can spot inconsistencies in character and place names really easily.

DC: And it's great for academics who want to be sure the names of the authors they've cited multiple times are spelled consistently. Getting that wrong is a big no-no in academic, educational and business writing and looks really sloppy, so this macro is well worth running.

Another thing worth checking out is **FileCleaner**. The developer is Jack Lyon. and this macro sorts out common issues in Word files like multiple spaces, unnecessary tabs, hyphens that should be en dashes, ells that should be 1's and oh's that should be zeroes, underlining that should be italic, incorrectly rendered

ellipses, and lots of other messy stuff that needs tidying up. Now, when we were talking about this, you had a word of caution about this, didn't you Louise?

LH: Yes. I think it's great and I've know that it saves a lot of editors and writers huge amounts of time, I'd recommend you test it on a dummy file because you unlike most of the macros we've featured here, you can't make a choice with every potential error it finds. You click on the menu, choose the task you want it to do, and it makes the changes. That means it's a bit of a blunt instrument. So just play with it first so you can see what it's doing. I do think it's fab though.

DC: It's not free but it's just under \$30 for a single-user licence for life. And there's a free 45-day trial so you can play before you pay. So what's next?

LH: Another favourite is a macro called **CatchPhrase**. This searches your novel for over-used phrases and tells you how many times each phrase occurs. I find this useful because some of my authors are prone to overusing certain phrases – they're almost writer tics – and this helps me to identify them, especially when I'm working with an author for the first time. But you can use this for non-fic too, can't you, Denise?

DC: Absolutely. I tend to see this in business writing, especially when authors have a somewhat informal style. This macro helps me pick up their tics too and suggest alternative phrasing. I had a recent author who loved the 'not only... but also' construction so much! I really had to cut back on how often it appeared, not because it was being used incorrectly, simply because it was overused.

LH: I have another macro – well, two forms of it – that are more useful for fiction writers editing their dialogue, though it can be useful for non-fic quoted material too. **FullPointInDialogue** and **CommaInDialogue** are both from Paul – again! – and they enable you to quickly fix dialogue punctuation before a closing quotation mark and any erroneous capitalization of the speech tag that follows. Really speeds my editing time up.

DC: Now one thing we really need to include is a spellcheck because there's nothing handier than having a list of all possible spelling errors in one place.

LH: Agreed. Plus, it's acts as an additional consistency check.

DC: That's right. So there are various versions of this available via a quick search on Google but, perhaps unsurprisingly, Louise and I both use Paul Beverley's **SpellingErrorLister**. It does what it says on the tin – creates a separate list of all the words that Word *thinks* are errors. You can then use Find/Replace to hunt them down and correct them if necessary. It's a really efficient way of catching any errors you've introduced during revision stage.

LH: Yeah, I like to run this right at the end of an edit for that very reason. And our final macro is actually a pair: **CitationLister** and **CitationListChecker** – So this is great for academic and business editing when you want to make sure that your reference list matches the in-text citations. It's a little more fiddly to use but worth the effort, I think.

DC: Yup, good one. Now one thing we should all be doing is backing up our macros! Because that's something that's easy to forget to do because it's not always data that's cloud-based.

LH: Especially if you've customized them. Most of your macro scripts can be accessed by heading for Word's ribbon, selecting VIEW, then MACROS, then VIEW MACROS, then STEP INTO. Click on one of your macros and a window will open. Place the cursor somewhere in the script and press CONTROL A (or COMMAND A on a Mac). That'll select all the scripts. Then do CONTROL C (or COMMAND C) to copy and paste the script into a Word file and store it somewhere safe on your computer.

DC: Great. So now it's time for Editing Bites! This is the regular part of the show where we each offer you a recommended tool or resource.

Mine is the free '20-Minute Macro Course' courtesy of Tech Tools for Writers. It teaches you how to add and run a macro and is brilliant if you've never used macros before and find them a little scary.

LH: Good one. And mine is not specifically macro-related but it is about Microsoft Word. It's called 'Advanced Find and Replace for Microsoft Word' and it's a little gift from Jack Lyon. It takes you through everything you need to know about using wildcards and character codes in Microsoft Word's Find/Replace tool.

DC: That's all for this week. Thank you so much for listening to The Editing Podcast. You can rate, review and subscribe via your podcatcher.

And please tell your writer, editor and business friends ... basically anyone who writes! You can get in touch with us via The Editing Podcast Facebook page. Drop your questions in there too and we'll get back to you.

LH: And don't forget – all the links we've mentioned are in the show notes. Thanks for listening.

Editing bites

- 'Advanced Find and Replace for Microsoft Word': Available from Jack Lyon at <http://www.editorium.com/freebies.htm>

- ‘20-Minute Macro Course’: Available from Tech Tools for Writers at <http://www.techtoolsforwriters.com/macro-course/>

Other resources

- CatchPhrase: Available from Paul Beverley at <http://www.archivepub.co.uk/book.html>
- CitationLister and CitationListChecker: Available from Paul Beverley at <http://www.archivepub.co.uk/book.html>
- CompareWordList: Available from Allen Wyatt at https://wordribbon.tips.net/T001173_Highlight_Words_from_a_Word_List.html
Blog article: <http://bit.ly/31pH42L>
- File Cleaner: Available from Jack Lyon at <http://www.editorium.com/14845.htm>
- FullPointInDialogue and CommaInDialogue: Available from Paul Beverley at <http://www.archivepub.co.uk/book.html>
- MultiSwitch: Available from Paul Beverley at <http://www.archivepub.co.uk/book.html>
Blog article: <http://bit.ly/2GB8V4O>
- PerfectIt: Available from Intelligent Editing at <https://intelligentediting.com/>
- ProperNounAlyse: Available from Paul Beverley at <http://www.archivepub.co.uk/book.html>
Blog article: <http://bit.ly/2NCnMiO>
- SpellingErrorLister: Available from Paul Beverley at <http://www.archivepub.co.uk/book.html>
- VisibleTrack: Available from Paul Beverley at <http://www.archivepub.co.uk/book.html>
Blog article: <http://bit.ly/31mSrID>