



This article is written by [Sridhar Machani](#), a technical communicator at Siemens PLM Software, Pune, India. He is part of the editorial team of INDUS, STC India Chapter's newsletter. Sridhar is also an active blogger. He maintains a popular blog on technical communication. You can read his blog posts [here](#).

DIRECTIONS

A Bug's Life: How to Make Your Editor's Life—and Yours—Simpler

What the heck are you talking about?

Yes, this article is inspired by the animation movie with the same title.

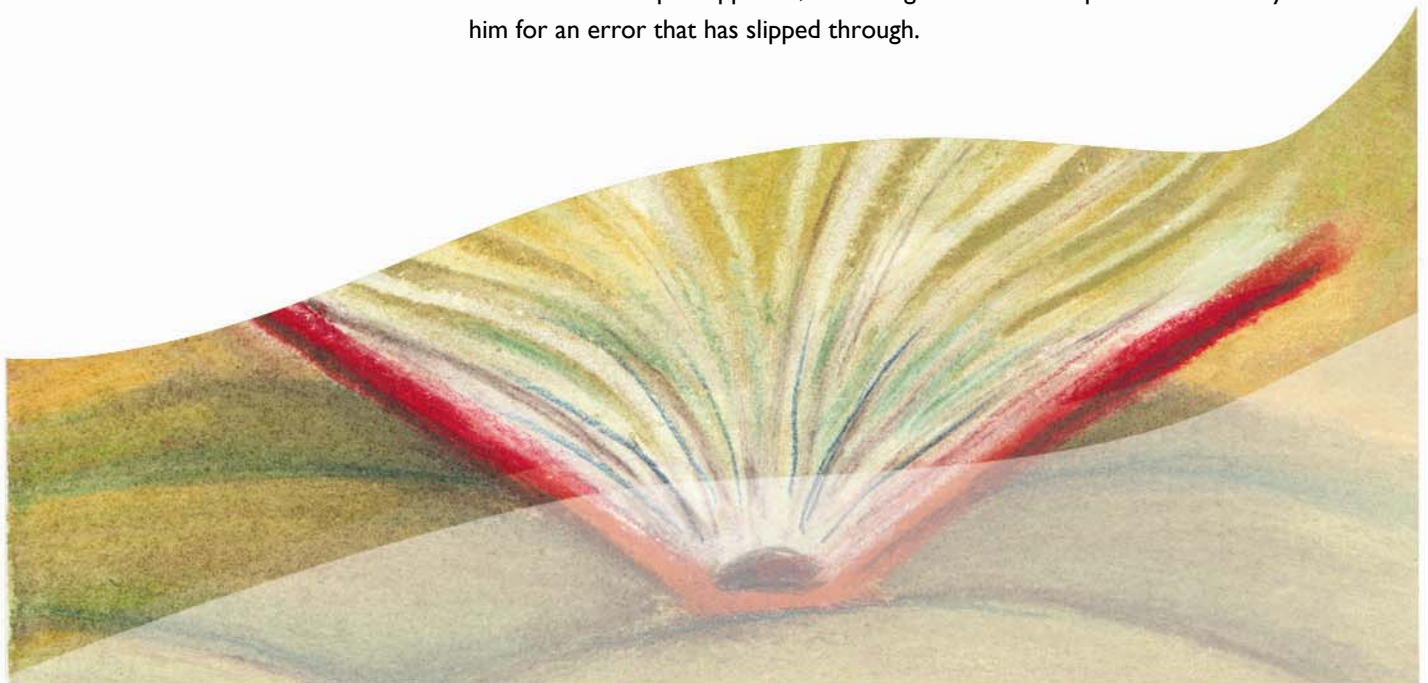
In many ways, a technical communicator works like a bug (or an ant). For instance, there's a line (style and authoring guidelines) that you must stick to. As soon as you deviate, a supervisor (editor) beats you back to the line (conform to standards).

Thankless Job

For most people, an editor's is a thankless job. You get credit for good writing, but an editor gets brickbats if something goes wrong. He/ she is doing his/ her job, that is, to identify and point out your (writer's) errors. He uses editorial markups, and to make matters worse, the markups are in red. Would you like someone hovering around you all the time—ready to paint your work in red? Did you say, "Aye?" I didn't think so.

Be Professional

An editor is a shared resource. He often works at a hectic pace around tight deadlines. Without his stamp of approval, not a single word can be published. It's easy to blame him for an error that has slipped through.



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In hindsight, between you and your editor, there's a common goal to conform to the documentation standards. He's helping you fine-tune your work. In short, he tries to ensure your writing helps customers better in their hour of need.

You need to realize this common goal and be professional in your approach. You may not agree with him, but that doesn't mean you and your team treat him like an outcast. Contest and argue with the markups, not the person. Be humble and accept your mistakes. He's your guru.

Set Expectations

Often, editors are taken for granted. You write and push your stuff across to the editor and then consider your job as done. Guess what? You can do more. For starters, provide sufficient heads-up to your editor about the product release milestones and documentation deadlines. It helps him allocate time (when and how much) to review your work.

Every time you send something for review, let him know the priority—can you wait for a day, a week, or do you need the review/ comments in an hour? Don't assume that your editor is waiting to get started on your work as soon as you send it in. That's hardly the case.

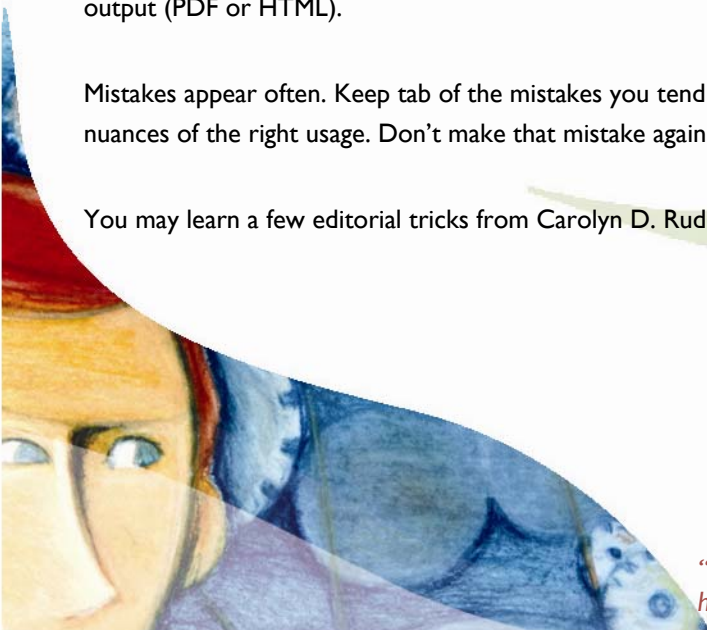
Self-review

All writers edit their writing to some extent. While you're at it, ensure you keep an eye on standards and procedures: they're there for a reason.

Before sending out stuff to the editor, review your work at least twice—both in the source files and in the generated output (PDF or HTML).

Mistakes appear often. Keep tab of the mistakes you tend to commit. Do a quick Google search; understand the nuances of the right usage. Don't make that mistake again (at least, try not to).

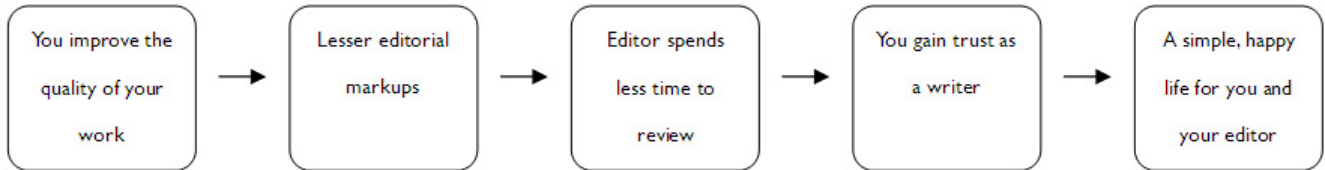
You may learn a few editorial tricks from Carolyn D. Rude's *Technical Editing (Fourth Edition)*.



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A Simple, Happy Life



~ Sridhar Machani



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