

The BELS Letter

Board of Editors in the Life Sciences

Maintaining and promoting editorial proficiency in the life sciences



2023

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From the President

We're a month into the new year, and 2023 is full of promise. We are singularly focused on furthering our mission as an organization, this year and beyond. For more than three decades now, BELS has upheld the highest standards in our profession and helped our members demonstrate their editorial proficiency. We are well-positioned to continue advancing our efforts in this space in the next three decades and beyond.

We accomplished a lot in 2022. I shared an update at our holiday party and annual business meeting in December. It was terrific to see so many of you there! [Here is a recap](#) of a few of the highlights for those of you who weren't able to join:

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The BELS Letter

Bryan Tutt, ELS(D)
Managing Editor

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From the President

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The Certification Exam Development Committee (EDC) brought on 2 new members: an international member (in Australia) and another based in the US but originally from Scotland. The EDC reviewed feedback on the exam, including comments associated with specific questions. The committee also wrote and reviewed new questions for inclusion on the next exam form and updated our needs assessment to reflect the addition of these new questions.

This year, committee leadership has transitioned from Naomi Ruff to Ginger Peschke. Naomi remains the EDC's liaison to the Board of Directors. Our goals are to keep writing and approving new questions, review the content outline and make any needed changes, and begin (if not finish) work on a new exam form. Many thanks to Naomi for her tireless service to our profession and to Ginger for taking on this new responsibility.

We would like to encourage more board-certified (ELS) editors to apply for the ELS(D) credential, working with other BELS committees to publicize the Diplomate Program and improve access to it. We'll take a closer look this year at the pass rate for the Diplomate credential and ensure alignment with standards established by other credentialing organizations.

Many of you participated in the educational sessions scheduled by the Professional Development Committee last year, which launched and held webinars on various topics, including freelance rates, editing tools, and preprints. The Membership and Marketing Committee coordinated a series of social events. In the months ahead, committee members will continue to assess the needs and interests of BELS members. Have a suggested topic for a future webinar or social gathering? Don't hesitate to let us know!

Remember to check out the members-only section of the BELS website for access to job postings, recordings of member events, past issues of our newsletter, and our Directory and Freelance Directory listings. You also might want to join an email discussion or take advantage of some of our software discounts.

Elsewhere in this issue you'll find our latest member profile and, of course, our monthly poll results. Be sure to check out these features.

Again, wishing you the best in all your personal and professional pursuits as the new year gets underway.

*Melanie Fridl Ross, MSJ, ELS
BELS President*

Member Spotlight

Ellen F. Lazarus, MD, ELS
Freelance medical and technical editor
Lazarus Editing and Consulting, LLC



How did you first hear about BELS?

I first heard about BELS at a Council of Science Editors annual meeting, which several BELS representatives were attending as exhibitors. I had recently changed careers after retiring from uniformed service and was seeking ways to develop a new professional network and participate in continuing education activities in my new field. I was delighted to meet them and learn about the BELS mission and certification process.

How has BELS certification and membership benefited you?

Many of my clients have little experience working directly with a developmental or copy editor. I've found that including the BELS credential in my résumé quickly and clearly communicates my professional expertise and focus. Also, the BELS member events help me continually hone my editing and business management skills.

What is your grammar pet peeve?

Anything that makes a reader struggle to understand data in a report, such as unclear associations between percentages and their associated numerators and denominators when they are used in sentences.

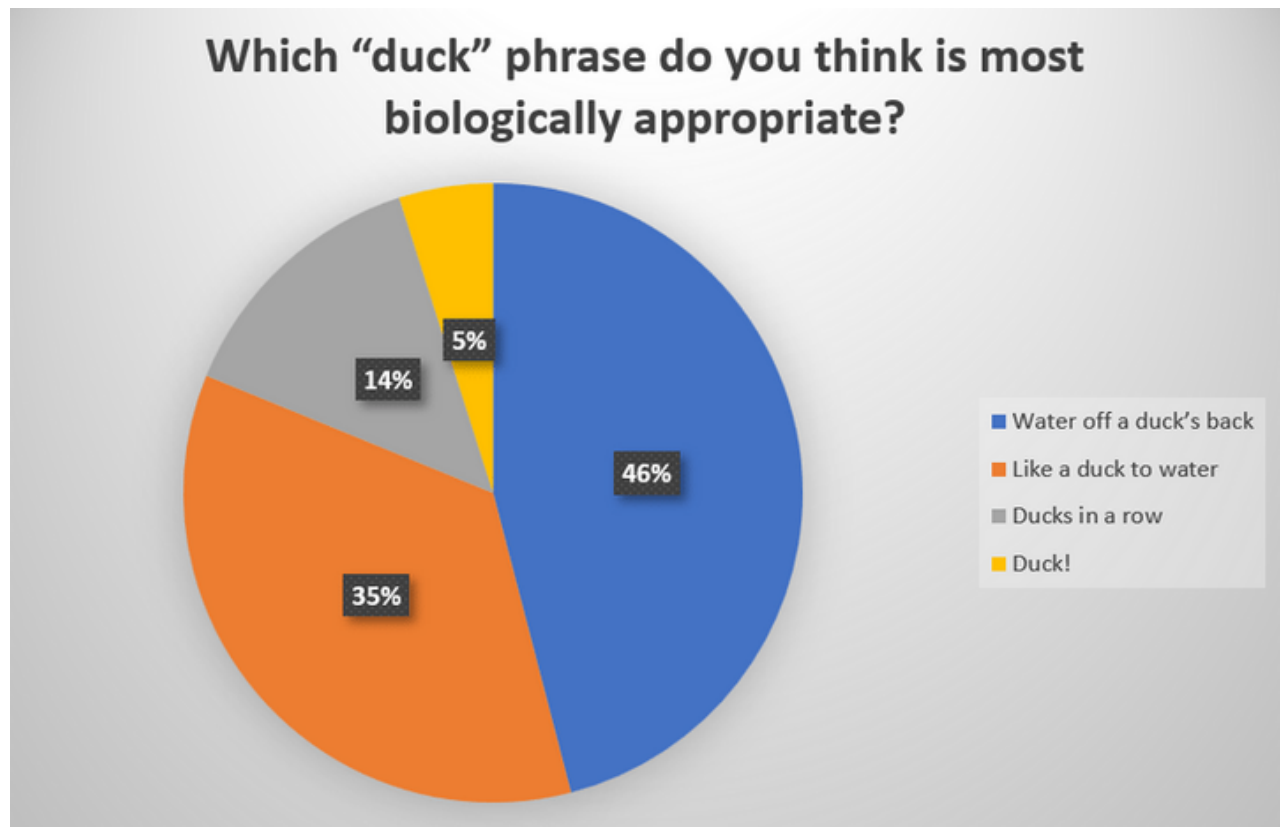
Be There With BELS On!

BELS branded merchandise is now available! Now you can proudly display the BELS logo on your tote bag, mug, travel tumbler, sweatshirt, laptop case, or mouse pad. They make great gifts for colleagues, employees, friends, family, and yourself! Please visit www.bels.org/store to order.



Monthly Poll Results: December

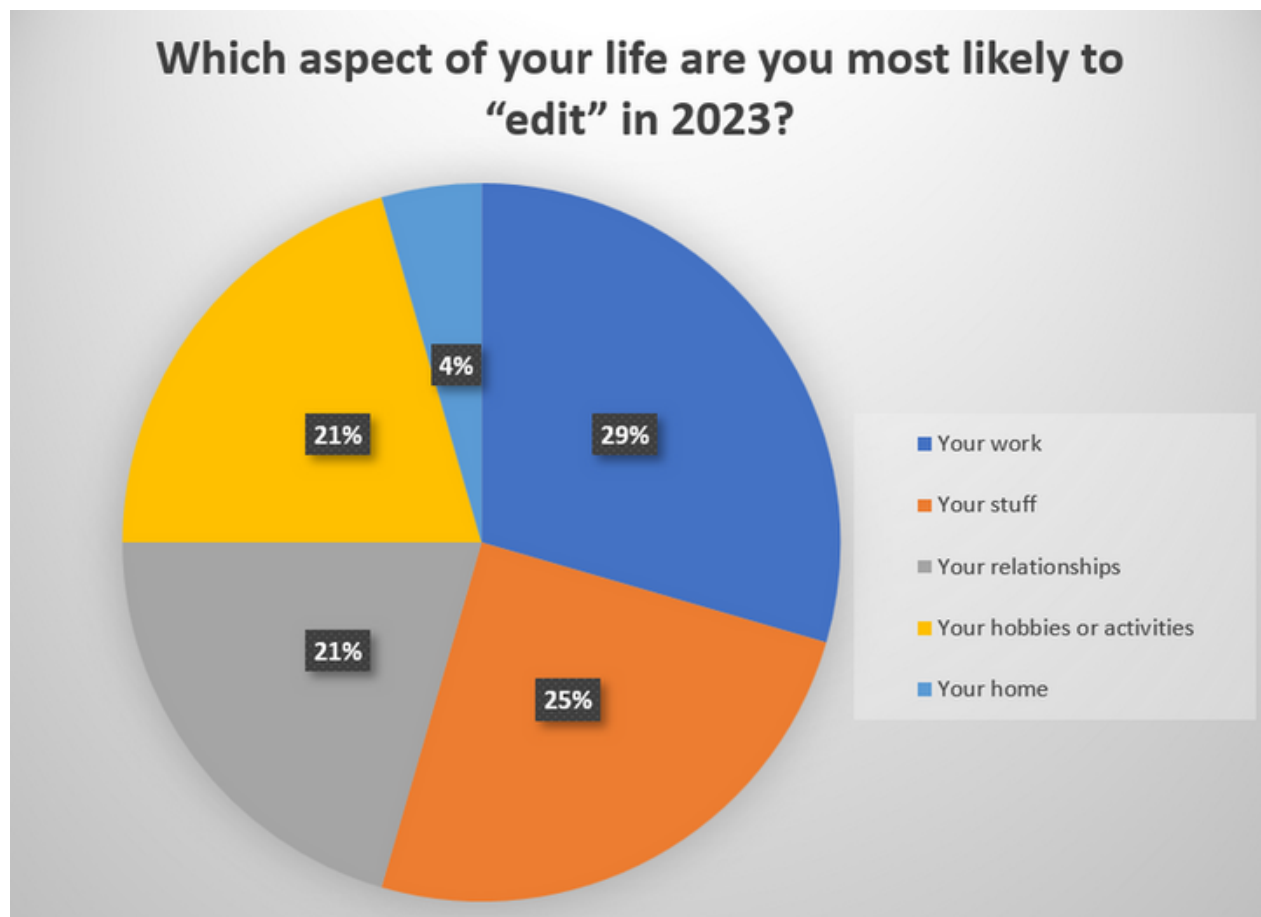
For the final poll of 2022, we decided to have some fun. We listed four phrases using the word “duck” and asked our community of editors of the life sciences which was most biologically appropriate. Most respondents chose either “water off a duck’s back” or “like a duck to water,” both of which allude to ducks’ being well adapted to wetlands environments. It seems that most editors agreed that “ducks in a row” and “Duck!” were more descriptive of behavior than biology.



Monthly Poll Results: January

For the first poll of 2023, we wanted to know about your new year’s resolution. Given the level of professionalism that is typical among BELS editors, it’s no surprise that the most common answer was to focus on work. A quarter of you plan to organize or de-clutter your stuff this year. (Good luck with that!) A good portion of you are trying to improve your work-life balance by focusing on relationships or hobbies.

Please visit bels.org to participate in this month’s poll, in which we share four ambiguous sentences and ask, “Which of the following, taken literally, brings the most interesting scene to your mind?”



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The Board of Editors in the Life Sciences (BELS) was founded in 1991 to evaluate the proficiency of manuscript editors in the life sciences and to award credentials similar to those obtainable in other professions.

Potential employers and clients of manuscript editors usually have no objective way to assess the proficiency of editors. For their part, editors are frustrated by the difficulty of demonstrating their ability. That is why both employers and editors so often resort to personal references or ad hoc tests, not always with satisfactory results. The need for an objective test of editorial skill has long been recognized.

To meet that need, BELS developed a process for testing and evaluating proficiency in editing in the life sciences. The Board administers two examinations—one for certification and one for diplomate status. The examinations, written by senior life-science editors assisted by testing experts, focus on the principles and practices of scientific editing in English.