



Maintaining and promoting editorial proficiency in the life sciences



From the President

As fall approaches, the new season brings an emphasis on transition. We certainly are undergoing a period of change at BELS, but with a purpose couched in the thoughtful intention that we trust will benefit our members and our profession.

Last month, we introduced our certification maintenance program after the board voted in support of this effort. This program enables BELS to match industry standards for credentialing programs and to continue to uphold the rigor and value of the ELS certification.

We are planning many opportunities to answer questions you may have, and we

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The BELS Letter

Bryan Tutt, ELS(D)
Managing Editor

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From the President

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would like to thank those of you who have already emailed us. As a reminder, important resources are available online at BELS.org, including [frequently asked questions](#). We are also planning a series of online sessions over the next several months that will provide additional opportunities for clarification and discussion.

If your schedule permits, and you plan to attend the American Medical Writers Association annual conference in Baltimore this October, I encourage you to stop by the BELS booth. This will be a valuable opportunity to chat with your BELS colleagues, share insights, and discuss our ongoing initiatives. (More details on this meeting and other opportunities to connect with your BELS colleagues will be featured in next month's newsletter.)

Change is always an opportunity for growth and improvement. Together, we can embrace it with optimism and a commitment to elevating our profession. Your dedication and engagement with BELS are the driving forces behind our success, and I am confident that our collective efforts will benefit our members and strengthen our organization.

Thank you for your continued support and for your dedication to BELS. As we navigate this period of transition and renewal, I look forward to working alongside each of you to ensure a prosperous future.

*Melanie Fridl Ross, MSJ, ELS
BELS President*

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.



BELS Member Profile

Kathleen Loudon, BA, ELS
Freelance



How did you first hear about BELS?

I heard about BELS through the American Medical Writers Association early after BELS was formed. I received my ELS certification in 1994 and have been a continuous member of BELS.

How has BELS certification or membership benefited you personally and/or professionally?

My certification has served as proof of my skills. As awareness of ELS certification increased, I received freelance and permanent jobs that required ELS certification.

What gives you job satisfaction?

I love learning more about medicine and working with healthcare providers and researchers to help them communicate their research better.

What is your grammar pet peeve?

Sometimes, my occupation spills over into my personal life. Once on vacation, I corrected a misspelling on a restaurant chalkboard.

Which style guide or reference book do you use most in your work?

The AMA Manual of Style.



Tool Tips: Using Microsoft Word's Read Aloud Feature to Proof a Document



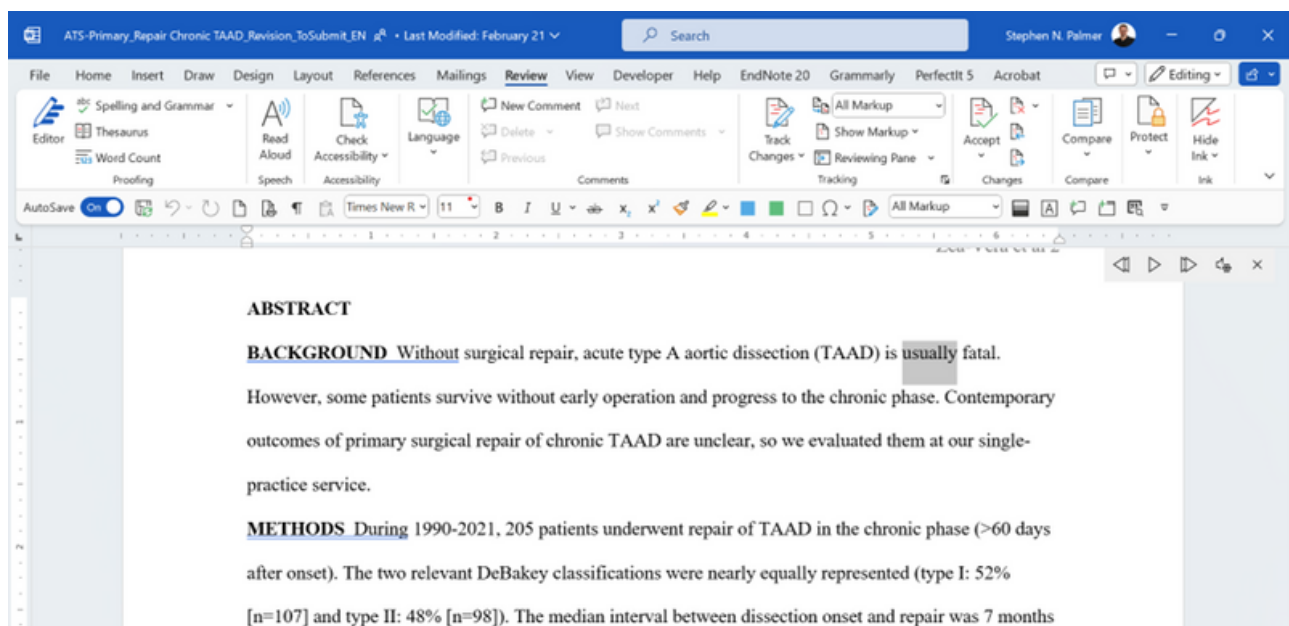
By: Stephen N. Palmer, PhD, ELS

As the final step in editing a manuscript, many of us do one last read-through to look for any minor errors that weren't caught during editing or that we ourselves might have introduced when making substantial changes to the text. I used to do this final review by simply printing the document out and reading through it. But recently, I've found a more effective method, which uses Microsoft Word's Read Aloud feature.

The Read Aloud control is found in the Review tab. To use it, just put the cursor wherever you want Word to start reading, and then click the Read Aloud button. A set of controls will appear in the top right corner of the document window, just below the ribbon; these controls allow you to play, pause, start the paragraph over, or go to the next paragraph. There is also a settings icon you can click to adjust the reading speed and to make the reader's voice male or female.

So I use Read Aloud, and as it reads—highlighting each word as it goes, as long as the document is the selected window on my computer—I follow along with my eyes as well as my ears.

I find this technique valuable because, while my own brain may compensate for my mistakes as I read, Word will read the text exactly as it is, errors and all. And following along visually helps me spot little punctuation and spacing errors that I might otherwise miss.



Call For Volunteers – BELS Professional Development Committee



Have you ever been bored to tears during a professional development session and thought, “For goodness’ sake, I could do this better”? Do you have a passion for inspiring young editors to grow into mature, highly skilled editors? Have you ever wanted to lead a webinar, a discussion group, or be a mentor? BELS offers an opportunity you can’t miss.

BELS plans to launch a new committee focused on creating professional development opportunities for members. We are currently gathering ideas and asking members to share their vision for the type of professional development – webinars, short courses, panel discussions, and so on – that they would want for themselves (or would like to deliver). If you are interested in helping the committee get off the ground, please [submit a volunteer form](#).

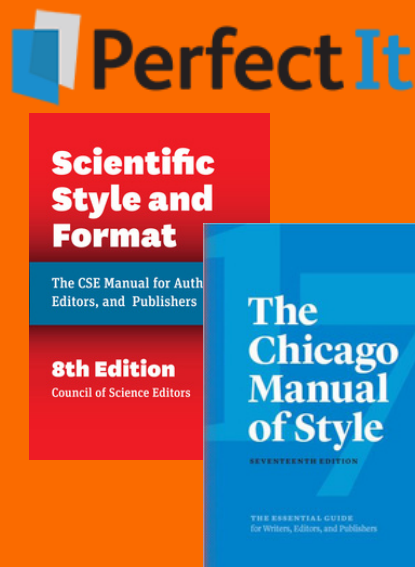
Don’t have time to volunteer, but want to help brainstorm ideas for activities and webinars? [Add your ideas here](#).

If you would like to learn more about this exciting new committee, please contact Stephen Bublitz (sbublitz@gmail.com).

BELS Member Discounts

BELS has partnered with resource providers to offer valuable members-only discounts on products and services that help make your job easier. These offers are exclusive to BELS members and should not be shared with any non-member.

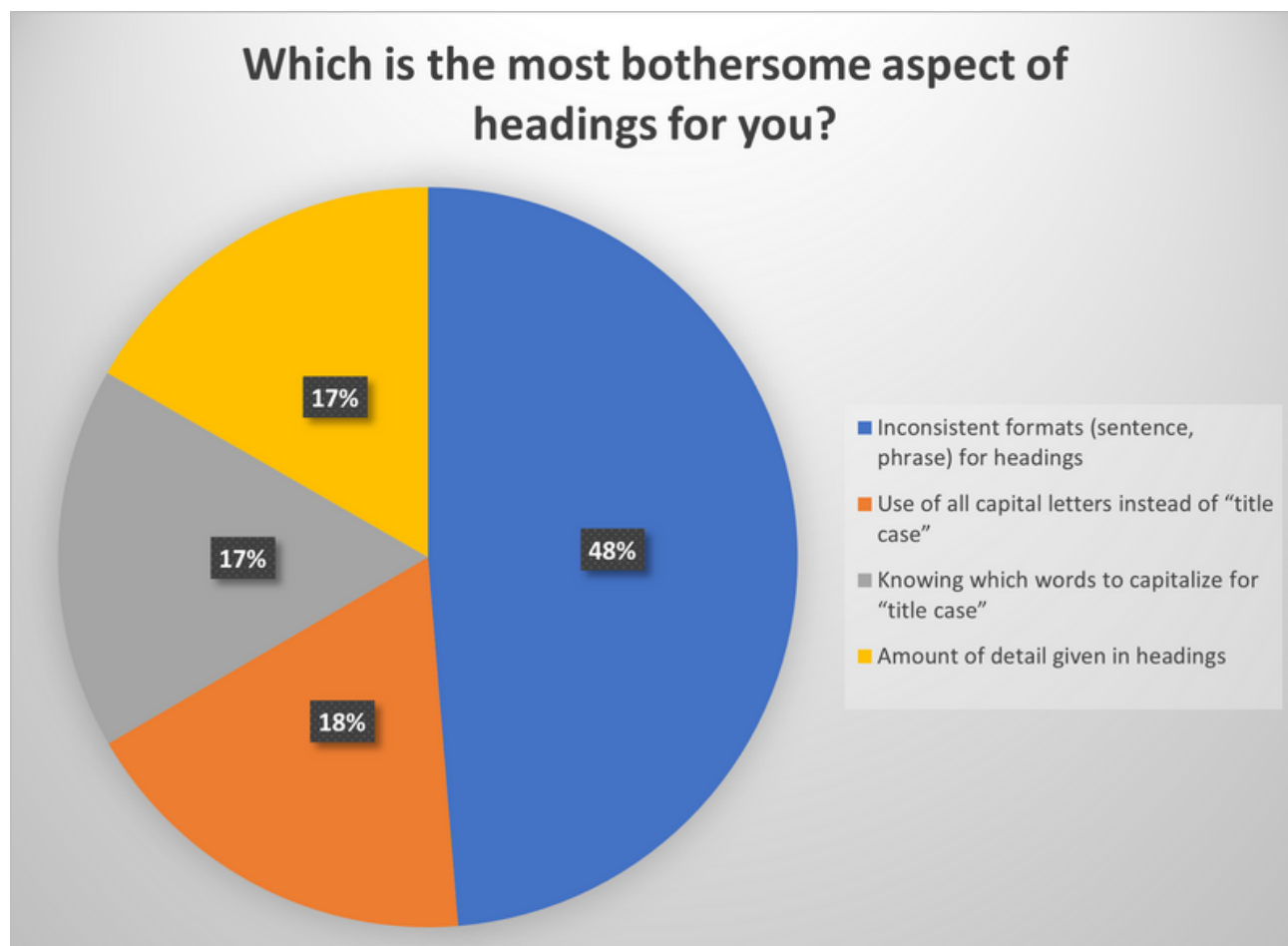
BELS member discounts include a **30% discount** on a single license of PerfectIt software. PerfectIt improves consistency, ensures quality, and saves time. BELS members also receive a **20% discount** on reference books such as *Scientific Style and Format: The CSE Manual for Authors, Editors, and Publishers* and *The Chicago Manual of Style*. The discount can be applied to both online and print versions of these books. Visit bels.org and click on Member Resources to claim your discounts today!



Monthly Poll Results

Our online poll for August asked about aspects of headings that cause headaches. Your responses are summarized below. With about half the votes, inconsistent formatting was the most popular answer. Personally, I was hoping for an “all of the above” option.

Visit bels.org to participate in this month’s poll, which asks you to select the sentence that you think is least distracting to an editor.



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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.

