From the President

So, how are you doing?

I don’t want to be Captain Obvious (I’d prefer to rank no higher than Lieutenant Commander Obvious), but we editors have some specific concerns when it comes to maintaining our health. We are dedicated desk jockeys, so when we set up our offices, we need to be thinking about the best position for our bodies to be in for several hours a day. This includes using the right sitting posture for our backs—which, in turn, means thinking about the setup of our chairs and desks. Editors come in every body type, so the solutions aren’t the same for everyone. I am six feet tall, but much of my height is in my legs (I’m shorter than...
From the President

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my five-foot-nine wife when we’re sitting down); thus, I need a desk chair that I can raise up high enough so that I can rest my feet on the floor without pushing myself over backward.

Your height while seated also affects the ideal height for your keyboard—because you want your wrists to be straight and not bent as you type—and for your screens. It’s generally recommended that your screen be directly in front of your face, because spending eight hours a day with your head tilted down or up isn’t great for your neck. (Just ask my friend who is six-foot-eight and has neck pain because he has to look down at virtually everything.) You also need to adjust your screen’s zoom, brightness, and contrast to make sure that you’re not squinting or straining your eyes all day long.

Of course, there’s a lot of evidence that sitting still for prolonged periods isn’t good for you, regardless of your perfect posture. I have alarms set on my phone to remind me to get up and walk once an hour, and many other devices (e.g., Fitbits, Apple Watches) can be set to prompt you, too.

Finally, there’s your mental health. Editing is a solitary occupation—it’s just you and the manuscript, for hours on end. It can make you feel isolated and lonely. So don’t forget to reach out to your fellow human beings periodically.

Have a healthy month.

Steve Palmer, PhD, ELS
BELS President

BELS Virtual Members-Only Social Event

Get Your Creative Juices Flowing!

Thursday, August 15
5 pm CDT via Zoom

Register
Unveiling The CSE Manual, Ninth Edition
Thursday, June 27, 2024
11:00 am – 12:00 pm EDT

Register here!

In this webinar (moderated by Peter J. Olson), speakers Dana Compton, Leonard Jack Jr., Kelly Newton, Tom Lang, and Mary Laur will unveil the more noteworthy updates to the ninth edition of The CSE Manual.

Members, check your email for a discount code to get $25 off the non-member $75 registration fee!
Member Spotlight

Carrie Thurber, PhD, ELS
Chair, BELS Membership Committee
eLearning Project Manager, American Kennel Club

How did you first hear about BELS?
I was working as an editor at Research Square/American Journal Experts, and some of my peers had their ELS or ELS(D). The company also hosted an in-person exam every other year during our summer all-company meetings.

Why did you pursue BELS certification?
I was looking for some professional development in the editing realm, so I followed my peers’ advice and looked into earning my ELS. I was looking for membership and certification that was affordable and relevant to the work I was doing.

How has BELS certification and membership benefited you?
Personally, certification helped me get past a bit of imposter syndrome I was having a couple of years into my new role. Even now, when I feel lost, I know that I can ask other members questions and get help.

What is your grammar pet peeve?
People not using ‘respectively’ correctly!

What is the coolest item in your office?
My friend gifted me a cool box that has the periodic table on the lid.

What career did you want to have as a child?
Olympic Equestrian Athlete.

Where would you most like to live and why?
Anywhere with an awesome food scene, maybe Nashville, because I am a sucker for new cuisine.
Monthly Poll Results

In last month’s poll, we asked which of the following was most likely to repel readers.

- Long title
- Long paragraphs
- Long sentences
- Complex illustrations

A total of 81 responses were recorded. The most popular (51.9%) answer was “long sentences”; “long title” and “long paragraphs” were chosen by approximately 20% of the respondents each, and “complex illustrations” was the least popular.

Respondents could have considered several factors when deciding which choice was the “most likely to repel readers.” Presumably, copyeditors have had a chance to improve long sentences before readers of a publication have seen them. However, as most BELS members are or have been copyeditors, most of them have probably seen such sentences and themselves been repelled. Most respondents probably think that the subject of a paper is what interests readers, who may not care much about the length of the title, or that a long title may even be necessary to convey the identity of the specific subject. Surprisingly, very few respondents thought “long paragraphs” were the most off-putting, although long paragraphs are probably less common than long sentences. Complex illustrations are probably the least common or are considered least likely to be scrutinized by readers.

Head over to bels.org for this month’s poll, where we have asked readers to select the option that they would decree as a “Ruler of English.”

Stay cool this summer with BELS merchandise!

Proudly display the BELS logo on your tote bag, mug, travel tumbler, sweatshirt, laptop case, or mouse pad. BELS merchandise items make great gifts for colleagues, employees, friends, family, and yourself! You can also ship directly to the recipient. Visit www.bels.org/store to order.
Monthly Poll Results

Which of the following is most likely to repel readers?

May 2024 BELS Poll Results

- Complex illustrations (7.4%)
- Long paragraphs (19.8%)
- Long title (21.0%)
- Long sentences (51.9%)

Credit Tracker Now Available

We are pleased to inform you that the Credit Tracker for the Certification Maintenance program is now available on the BELS website. Remember to visit the website for an overview of how the tracker works. As always, reach out to us using the “Contact Us” feature if you have any questions.
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.