

FREEPRESS 101:

What do copy editors do?

Copy editors check a story to make sure there are no errors and that the language is clear.

Corrections a copy editor might make include:

- ☐ changing spellings of words to match accepted style (the Winnipeg Free Press follows The Canadian Press, or CP, style; Canadian spelling as shown in the Oxford Canadian Dictionary; and our own in-house style guide).
- ☐ following conventions of CP style for names, dates, titles, etc.
- ☐ making sure an article has consistent time references especially as it relates to publication date in print or online (eg. use of “today,” or a particular day of the week, or a date).
- ☐ clarifying with reporters any apparent discrepancies in information in the article with what has previously been reported, and other matters of fact.

Copy editors also write headlines and photo cutlines.

- ☐ print headlines are written to a) encapsulate the content of the article and b) fit the available space.
- ☐ print headlines often have two components: a hed (the main, larger headline) and a dek (the smaller-type text). Often the dek will elaborate or clarify the hed, which may not provide enough detail on its own. Some short heds are meant to be attention-grabbers, with the dek providing context.



Jill Wilson (& David Fuller)
Arts & Life editor.

Jill Wilson started working at the Free Press in 2003 as a copy editor for the entertainment section.

She came to the paper in a roundabout way: after graduating from the University of Winnipeg with a bachelor's degree in psychology — as all good journalists should — she worked as an editor at the university's music magazine, Stylus, before being hired at the Winnipeg Sun as a music reporter.

Her stint at the Sun was followed by a year as a medical receptionist — the highlight of which was seeing a live roundworm in a Zip-loc bag — and three years as a copy editor at Winnipeg's weekly street paper, Uptown.

What do copy editors do? Cont'd...

- ☐ web headlines must a) encapsulate the content of the article and b) be short enough that they display well online on a variety of platforms (our website, our app, social media sites, etc.)
- ☐ web headlines and print headlines for a given article generally do not have the same wording.
- ☐ a good headline should encompass the information/news/thrust of the article, without merely repeating the information in the lead (also referred to as the lede) paragraph.
- ☐ matters of opinion should be identified as such in the hed, so as not to seem like they are matters of fact (eg. “Wage increase unacceptable, union says”).
- ☐ reporters do not write their own headlines.

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After 15 years at the Free Press, during which time she has edited the Tab, Detour and Uptown sections of the paper, she joined the Arts & Life section as a reporter covering everything from food to films. In 2023, she became the editor for the section.

As a lifelong lover of Winnipeg’s arts and cultural scene, it’s a natural fit, and she enjoys talking to people who are passionate about what they do, whether it’s growing microgreens or cooking the perfect ramen.

Jill was a member of the inaugural jury for the Polaris Prize, Canada’s national music award. She is the winner of a Silver Medal and two Awards of Merit from the North American Travel Journalists Association and received an Award of Excellence in the American Copy Editors Society’s National Headline Contest.