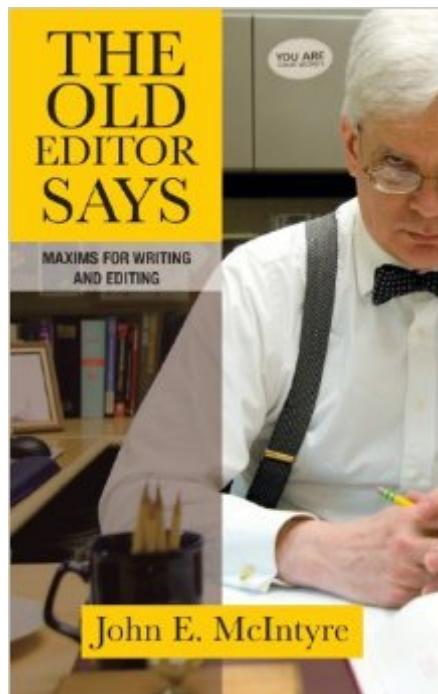


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# The Old Editor Says: Maxims For Writing And Editing



## Synopsis

Many beginning writers and editors benefited from a crusty old editor's brisk maxims about the craft. If you want to be reminded of those days, look inside. If you want to learn those brisk maxims, many of them are collected here. And if you aspire to become a crusty old editor, this is the handbook. About the Author: John McIntyre is the night content production manager at The Baltimore Sun and author of the blog You Don't Say at Baltimoresun.com. A former president of the American Copy Editors Society, he teaches editing at Loyola University Maryland.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

John McIntyre is doing editors a favor by publishing "An Old Editor Says." With decades of experience running the Baltimore Sun's copy desk, he has far more than 70 pages of editorial wisdom to share. Having had the privilege of being a writer back in the early '90s who was repeatedly saved from embarrassment by McIntyre's iron delete key, I was delighted to have the chance to get my hands on this book (but dismayed that it was temporarily out-of-stock). At that time, I must confess, I felt slightly oppressed by McIntyre's imperious persona, accentuated by that bow tie. Now that I must edit for food, I have come to realize the value of McIntyre's work. One can also get a flavor of this by reading his blog, "You Don't Say." [...] There, wordsmiths can discover that he's not, as some writers think, inflexible and prone to using stylebooks as a cudgel. This "old editor" understands the language is changing and newspaper copy and other forms of writing have to change with it. I believe that reading McIntyre almost daily musings on the craft have made me a

better writer and editor. If that belief is in vain, it's because I'm too pig-headed to follow his advice.

As more and more newspaper copy editors are forced to walk the plank, John E. McIntyre, in "The Old Editor Says," makes it clear that he, for one, is not about to give up the ship -- especially when there are so many verbal barnacles to be dealt with. (And he will defend to the death your right to end a sentence with "with.") You might say that "The Old Editor Says" is McIntyre's magnum opus -- if you can say that about a book that is only 67 pages long. But the description fits, for within these pages he has distilled more than 30 years' of editorial experience into a collection of pithy maxims (his own and others'), each followed by a commentary delivered in the endearingly crusty tone that is familiar to anyone who has attended one of his presentations. (Or, as he prefers to call them, "seances.") "If you can't tell me in one sentence what your story says, you don't know what your story says." "If you are not possessed of a perpetually filthy mind, you are ill-equipped to edit." "Edit to live; don't live to edit." If you're a writer or editor, there's a good chance you'll learn at least a little something from this book. And if some of the lessons are familiar to you, it never hurts to be reminded, especially in such an entertaining way. All I know is that as I navigate the often troubled waters of contemporary prose, it heartens me to know that John E. McIntyre, battered but unbowed, remains standing at the ship's bridge.

I anticipated some sharply sarcastic witticisms when I started this book, What I found instead was a wealth of "Truths" that would be equally applicable to high school or college students tasked with writing papers, not just budding journalists. If I taught only a writing course I'd put this on the booklist for my students, it's that good. As it is, I'll be quoting it repeatedly in my lit classes in hopes of getting quality papers from my students.

For veteran journalists, The Old Editors Says offers lots of advice you probably have heard - or spoken - before. You'll find yourself pumping your fist and saying, "yeah!" in agreement again and again. For less experienced journalists, you won't find a wiser set of maxims to guide your writing and editing. Even veteran journalists - between fist pumps - will find some valuable advice that will help you survive and continue to grow.

As someone in journalism for 27 years, I have to say that I picked up some helpful tips from this book as well as got a healthy reminder of ones I'd neglected or forgotten entirely. But this is a sound, practical book for ALL writers and editors not just newshounds. A zippy read and fun to

share!

if you don't know what that means, you are missing out on one of the greatest editing tools I have ever heard.!!!If you like editing, but aren't pretentious, you'll love this. It's an easy read, and has some memorable sections that are also very funny!

Brisk, lively, good-humored. Helpful reminders for careful writers and editors, if not quite as many as one might wish for. A surprising number of slip-ups, at least in the digital version, chief among them being the inexact quotation of a sentence from Trollope's *Framley Parsonage*. Other distractions include "Chicago New Bureau," a semicolon where a colon ought to be (after T.S. Eliot's name), inconsistent treatment of book titles like *AP Stylebook* and *Chicago Manual of Style* (sometimes in italics, sometimes in roman), inconsistent capitalization (*War On Editing*, *War on Editing*), the shortening of some titles on first reference (the *Baltimore Sun* is merely the *Sun* the first time it appears). But the book is a pleasure nevertheless.

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