

Notes on Editing Apps

Ask to be included in meetings about tablet app planning, production and workflow.

Keep asking.

Talk to people and ask questions. Listen a lot. Communication is the main help; keep talking to people as much as you can about process, ideas and problems.

All departments will be overloaded with work, especially art. Keep this in mind.

Don't underestimate the work involved at every point.

Know what your workload is and be sure that management knows what you do and what resources will be needed, or what cuts in the process could be made, to accomplish the work.

Keep track of your hours. Track the time spent on print and tablet editing. Track roughly how long it takes to do stories in each pass.

Keep a list of problems and ideas. Track errors and corrections and trace each down.

Keep an e-reader style guide and update it as you go.

Write out the main points of the procedure for freelancers and update it too.

Keep a good roster of freelance help and train all to edit tablets.

E-mail all copy and freelancers (and whomever else) about style decisions.

Meet regularly to review problems and revise the process.

If possible, keep a tablet on the floor that has back issues of the tablet versions. Ideally, copy should have a tablet of its own.

Set styles for text in navigation elements such as "tap here," "swipe for more photos," and so on.

Set styles for elements such as credits, bylines, end slugs.

Be aware that publishing an app requires other text to be written, which should be copy edited, such as the sentence that accompanies the shell, the App Store text for each issue, and similar.

Keep a list of logical-editing queries that you may not be able to address fully under time pressure but will want to study and decide about later. For example, should the end slug

go at the end of the mainbar if the sidebar is actually the last screen? Should numbered elements in text that refer to a photo stay on the same page as the photo?

If you are working in K4 and InDesign, ask the designers to keep the text layer on top so that you can edit it in layout view. It is difficult and time-consuming to look for small bits of text in a 30-page story in galley view, but sometimes the designers don't put the text layer on top.

Know whether design is typing in heds or not.

Decide how to style text elements that will need coding in HTML, such as italics, sub- and superscript, fractions.

Be aware that style decisions for tablets may soon apply to multiple layouts for several devices.

Have a process for correcting print errors that are caught while reading tablet text, and try to fix them.

Have a process for correcting things on tablets (you can send updates to correct errors but it is probably best to correct only things that are factually wrong).

Know what the corrections you are asking for involve.

Talk to the digital assets editor and your manager when the workload is overwhelming and work out priorities.

Be alert to guarding the copy domain. Don't be insecure but be smart politically.

Think about how your work fits with the work of the publication overall, and stay useful.

Watch out for directionals, they will need to be removed or changed. Remove page references. Get photo, illo and video/animation credits in. Has new material been fact-checked? Okayed by top edit? Cover credits will likely be different from print. The masthead will likely have more people. Do you need to include copyright or indicia on the app (check with legal)?

Table of Contents: This will often be different from and will contain additional material to the print version. Discuss with the digital editor thoroughly all the things that need to be checked and who's checking them. For instance, the QA guys may check that each story when tapped on goes to the right story. Copy may need to check that the order of the TOC and the page scroller follow the order of the pages. Does copy need to check ad placement? Are both print and tablet issues in the same order?

Be patient and aware. As our work goes through such changes, it is unnerving for everyone. People can be unsure of where their job will fit or whether it will still be

needed. Change is renewing and can wind up being a lot of fun and learning, but it's scary too, for everyone. Be considerate.

Learn as much as you can. If you hear that your company may be switching to CS5, for instance, look into learning it. Your company may offer training.

Make sure that programmers are picking up live files when they copy text. In K4/InDesign, you can select "show K4 article assignments," which shows the live text.

Programmers need to open up live files, as mentioned above. But they should also either revoke the article or undo the checkout of story. Be aware of who is opening contract proofs (files okayed for the printer) and make sure the person knows procedure.

Programmers usually are not magazine or newspaper people. They really enjoy being part of the edit side though.

Communicate with the programmers. Be available to discuss problems, this one step will solve a lot of problems.

Give the programmers copies of your e-reader style guide and a list of standard editor's marks.

The programmers have a fresh eye and can see things you don't. They have good ideas about process too.

If possible, take out the repeating, dead text. In tablets, there are repeating pages with changing text frames for interactive elements. The repeating text can be taken out of the layout once the layout is done. This helps editors a lot because editors may not understand which text is live or whether to mark the same error, on, for instance, 30 pages.

If time for checking changes is limited, highlight the changes as you go. And let everyone, edit, design, the programmers, know that a highlighted query or correction means that it has been addressed.

Make a list of stories that will need running slugs and get top edit to write them and send them to the programmers before the first build.

Make sure that tablet extras have a process for going through top edit and research.

Determine what is needed for material such as detailed charts. Does it need to be read against an original?

Establish a process for getting credits. Make a credit file for each story, whether needed or not, so that copy has a way to write credits in.

Keep track of each thing that is costing too much time and find a way to make it more efficient.

Copy should get a last look at the last build, just to page through. QA should be checking interactivity.

Try to follow print procedures for tablet publishing. The print process works. Stick to it for tablets too.

Copy should be responsible to check at the end of each pass that every query was answered (except the interactive queries, which are settled by the digital folks and checked by copy in the next pass). Work out who should have the last look in each pass and make clear who is responsible for what.

Thanks to advice from many editors who have been working on apps too.
--Robin Tribble, senior copy editor, Popular Mechanics