

REPORTING FOR THE PRINT MEDIA

Fourth

Edition

FRED FEDLER

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FRED FEDLER

University of Central Florida



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To the Student

This book contains instructions, examples and exercises designed to help you learn how to write for the print media, particularly newspapers. However, the writing skills emphasized by this book—clarity, conciseness and accuracy—are also required in radio and television news and in the related fields of advertising and public relations.

Chapters 1 through 6 deal with the basic format and style used by newswriters. Chapters 7 through 10 discuss questions of good taste, ethics and responsibilities; the work of a typical reporter; and communication law. Because journalists are continually confronted by decisions concerning good taste, ethics and responsibilities, news-writing exercises throughout the book challenge your decision-making abilities. Chapters 11 through 21 discuss more advanced writing techniques and more specialized types of stories.

To make the exercises as realistic as possible, most resemble the assignments given to beginning reporters. Many present genuine documents: actual speeches, police reports and publicity releases, for example. In some of the exercises, you are given a few facts and asked to summarize them in acceptable newswriting style. In other exercises, the facts are more complex and require more sophisticated newswriting techniques. Still other exercises will send you out of your classroom to gather information firsthand.

To add to the realism, your instructor may impose deadlines that require you to finish your stories by a specified time. Your instructor may also require you to compose stories on a typewriter or computer terminal. Because composing a story in long-hand takes too much time, reporters must learn to think and write at a typewriter or computer.

Mistakenly, students who spend hours working on their first take-home assignments often worry about their slowness. As you begin to write, accuracy and clarity are more important than speed. Good writing requires a great deal of time and effort, writing and rewriting. Few first drafts are so well written that they cannot be improved. To write well, you will have to develop the habit of rewriting your first draft, perhaps two, three or even four times. Through practice, you will develop speed naturally, over a period of time.

Unless it mentions another location, assume that every story in this book occurred on your campus or in your community. Also assume that every story will be published by a newspaper in your community.

Develop the habit of assessing every word and every sentence before using them in a story. Some exercises are intentionally disorganized and poorly worded so that they will require extensive revisions. Also remember that newswriting is based on fact, not fiction. Use only facts that you are given or are able to obtain or verify from other sources. Never make any assumptions, and never make up or create any facts.

Verify the spelling of names that appear in the exercises by consulting the city directory in Appendix A. So that you get in the habit of checking the spelling of every name, some names used in the exercises are intentionally misspelled. Only the spellings in the city directory are correct.

To achieve a consistent style of abbreviations, capitalization, punctuation and so forth, follow the guidelines suggested by The Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual. This style is used throughout "Reporting for the Print Media," and a summary of the stylebook's most commonly used rules appears in Appendix B. United Press International, the nation's second major news agency, uses an almost identical book, and most newspapers in the United States—both dailies and weeklies—follow the guidelines the news agencies recommend.

Some students may want to buy copies of The Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual. If it is not available at your campus bookstore, write to: Stylebook, AP Newsfeatures, 50 Rockefeller Plaza, New York, N.Y., 10020. Or, any local bookstore can order it for you.

Students using this textbook should also read a daily newspaper. Newspaper editors expect their reporters to be well informed about their communities and especially about their local governments. Reporters should know the names of local and national officials. They should also be able to ask intelligent questions, and to write accurately and knowledgeably about topics in the news.

Students who read newspapers, books and magazines are also likely to be better writers. Good readers become familiar with different styles of writing and can use the best styles as models for their own work. They are also more likely to recognize mistakes, including mistakes in their own writing.

Most students realize that athletes and musicians must practice several hours a day. However, many fail to realize that writers, too, must practice regularly and systematically. To improve their writing skills, they should submit their writing to an instructor or editor and then study the corrections made in their work. As author Sheila Hailey has observed:

The one thing all professional writers have in common . . . is that they get down to it and write. They don't just talk about it, they don't wait for inspiration, they don't wish they had time to write. They make time and press on. Oh, there's often some pencil-sharpening and desk-tidying that goes on first. But sooner or later, they write, though never knowing with certainty if they are at work on a masterpiece or a disaster.*

This Fourth Edition of "Reporting for the Print Media" includes two new chapters: one on Alternative Leads and another on Ethics. The text has been edited, expanded and brought up to date, and many of the exercises are new.

The book's primary emphasis has not changed. Like previous editions, it provides both the instructions and the exercises needed to help students learn to write for the print media. The first chapters emphasize fundamentals: basic, introductory exercises for people with no prior experience in the field of journalism. Later chapters contain more complex exercises to challenge your developing skills.

Students who want some additional practice while studying Chapters 1 and 2 can complete the exercises labeled "Answer Key Provided" and correct their own work. The answers to those exercises appear in Appendix D.

Students should not expect to complete all the exercises. The book contains enough exercises for a full year, and some students may use it in both introductory and advanced reporting classes. Your instructor will select the chapters and exercises most appropriate for your class. If the class needs more practice in a particular area, the instructor can assign some of the extra exercises in that area. Or, you may complete the exercises on your own, and then ask your instructor to correct them. Some instructors will also supplement the exercises with assignments involving your campus and community.

A Personal Note

When I meet students using this book, many ask, "Who are you, and why did you write the book?"

Writing is hard work. It requires hours—even years—of lonely research, writing, editing and rewriting. But writing is also a challenging and enjoyable (and sometimes profitable) pursuit. The rewards arise when you have finished a piece and it appears in print: when you see your byline, receive your payment and hear from people who like your work.

I grew up in Wisconsin and, as an undergraduate, studied journalism at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. After graduating, I worked as a reporter and copy editor for newspapers in Dubuque and Davenport, Iowa, and Sacramento, Calif. I began to teach news reporting while working for my M.A. at the University of Kentucky in

*Sheila Hailey, *I Married a Best Seller* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1978), p. 95.

Lexington and for my Ph.D. at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis. I now teach at the University of Central Florida in Orlando.

This was my first—and most successful—book. It seems to be the most popular reporting textbook in the country, used at 500 to 600 colleges and universities. I have also written an introductory textbook about the mass media and will soon publish a third book about media hoaxes. In a few years, I hope to start a fourth book about media humor.

Writing the first edition of this book took about nine months, but that edition contained only 256 pages. Each revision takes about a year. Many of the examples were written by students in the classes I teach. The exercises are based on actual news stories collected during the years between each new edition.

So that I can improve the next edition of this book, I would appreciate receiving your comments and suggestions. Please write to:

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A Note of Thanks

Journalists are wonderful people. Most are young, enthusiastic and interesting. While writing this book, I asked dozens for help. Reporters, editors and photographers from Los Angeles to St. Louis, Miami and New York answered my letters and provided advice and samples of their work.

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These newspapers and other news organizations also allowed me to quote their stories or republish their photographs: American Newspaper Publishers Association Foundation, The Arizona Daily Star, The Associated Press, Chicago Tribune, Dallas Times Herald, Deseret News, Salt Lake City, Doubleday & Company, Inc., KNT News Wire, McGraw-Hill Book Company, The Miami Herald, The Milwaukee Journal, The New York Times, Newsday, The Orlando Sentinel, Scripps Howard News Service, Society of Professional Journalists (Sigma Delta Chi), St. Petersburg Times, United Press International, Inc., USA Today, The Virginia-Pilot, Norfolk, The Wall Street Journal, Washington Journalism Review, and The Washington Post.

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Fred Fedler

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1 Format and Style

Until the 1970s, newspaper reporters typed their stories on sheets of paper, then used a pencil to correct their errors. Since then, newspapers have experienced a period of rapid technological change. Most reporters now type their stories on computers or word processors with video display terminals. As they are typed, the stories appear on screens above the terminals' keyboards. Any errors can be corrected directly on the keyboards. The stories are stored in a computer until an editor is ready to summon them up on another video display terminal. Finally, the edited stories are transmitted to other machines, which set them in type. Everything is done electronically, and the system saves millions of dollars by eliminating the need for typesetters.

Although most newsrooms no longer contain typewriters, students must still learn the traditional news story format and copy-editing symbols, for a number of reasons. First, newspapers that have not installed the electronic equipment continue to use the traditional format and copy-editing symbols and to employ some typesetters. Second, reporters and editors may have to handle some typewritten copy from free-lance writers, public relations agencies and a variety of other sources. Finally, the traditional format and copy-editing symbols are still used by some magazines, book publishers and advertising agencies.

The journalism departments of many colleges have purchased video display terminals or other types of electronic equipment, but few use that equipment for every assignment in every reporting and editing class. Instead, journalism students continue to learn the basics—typing their stories on sheets of paper and using the traditional format and copy-editing symbols—because it is simpler and cheaper to do so, especially in introductory classes that attract large numbers of students whose work does not have to be set in type.

News Story Format

Reporters have developed a unique format for their stories, and each story you write should follow the guidelines suggested here. Although minor variations exist between one newspaper and another, most publications are remarkably consistent in their adherence to these rules.

Type each news story on separate 8½- by 11-inch sheets of paper. Avoid onionskin and other types of glossy or erasable bond paper because it is more difficult to write corrections on such paper.

Type your name, the date and a slugline in the upper left-hand corner of the first page. For example:

Fred Fedler
Jan. 12, 1992
Proxmire Speech

Editors use sluglines to help them identify and keep track of stories that are being prepared for publication. The sluglines also provide a quick summary of each story's topic. A story that reports a speech by your city's mayor might be slugged "Mayor's Speech"; a story about a fire at an elementary school might be slugged "School Fire." Sluglines should not exceed two or three words and should be as specific as possible. Vague sluglines, such as "Speech" or "Fire," might be used on more than one story, and the stories might then be confused with each other.

Also avoid jokes, sarcasm and statements of opinion that would cause embarrassment if the slugline were accidentally published, as sometimes happens. A reporter in California became irritated when asked to write about a party given by several prominent women. The reporter thought the story was unimportant and uninteresting. Angrily, he slugged it "Old Biddies." He was almost fired when, accidentally, the slugline appeared in print. Similarly, a writer at the Boston Globe wrote an editorial that criticized a speech given by President Carter. Another employee thought the writer's slugline was the headline—and an accurate one. It was set in type, so the lead editorial published the next morning bore the headline, "Mush from the Wimp."

Begin each story one-third to one-half of the way down the first page. When you write for a newspaper, the space at the top of the first page provides room for your byline, a headline and special instructions to your paper's typesetters. In class, the space provides room for your instructor to evaluate your work. Leave a one-inch margin on each side and at the bottom of every page.

Newspapers place a dateline at the beginning of the first line of each news story to indicate the story's geographical source. Datelines normally include the name of the city, printed entirely in capital letters and followed by a comma, the abbreviation for the state in upper/lower case and a dash (for example: LEXINGTON, Ky.— or PORTLAND, Ore.—). The names of major cities that most readers will immediately recognize (such as Boston, Chicago, Miami and Los Angeles) are used alone, without their state. Newspapers do not use datelines for any stories that originate within their own communities, and most newspapers use only the names of other cities within their own state, without adding the name of the state.

To save time, you will have to learn to type even the first draft of all news stories you write: you will not have enough time to write the stories in longhand first. Type and double-space each assignment so that it is neat, uniform and easy to read. Type on only one side of each page, and do not leave any extra space between paragraphs.

Do not divide a word at the end of a line. A typesetter might mistakenly assume that the hyphen was part of the word and incorrectly set it in type. Also avoid starting a sentence or paragraph at the bottom of one page and finishing it at the top of the next

page. Each page should end with a complete paragraph so that typesetters can set the page in type immediately, without waiting for the rest of your story, and so that each page can be given to a different typesetter without loss of continuity.

If a story is continued on a second page, write the word "more" at the bottom of the first page and circle it to indicate that the word is not part of the story and should not be set in type. Begin the second page and all later pages about one inch from the top of the page. Type your last name, the page number and the slugline in the upper left-hand corner. For example:

Fedler
Proxmire Speech
Page 2


Instead of using the word "paragraph" while communicating with one another, the journalists at some newspapers shorten it to "graf." Similarly, instead of using the word "page," some journalists use "add" or "take." Also, some newspapers ask their reporters to triple-space rather than double-space their stories.


Copy-Editing Symbols

Reporters are expected to edit their stories and to correct all their errors before giving the stories to an editor (or instructor). Stories do not have to be typed perfectly, but they should be neat and easy to read. If you make a mistake while typing a story, or if you want to edit a story after typing it, use the copy-editing symbols shown here. Using the copy-editing symbols is faster and easier than using an eraser or retyping a story.


If several major errors appear in a paragraph or section of a story, you can retype that section and paste it over the original. If your corrections become too numerous and messy, retype the entire story.


Indent every paragraph in a news story, and mark the beginning of each paragraph with the proper copy-editing symbol: If you want to mark a paragraph to be divided into two shorter paragraphs, you can use either the same copy-editing symbol or this one: ¶


If you indent a line and then decide that you do not want to start a new paragraph, link the lines together with a pencil, as shown here. 

 The same symbol is used to link the remaining parts of a sentence or paragraph after a major deletion ~~involving the elimination of a great many words and more than one line of type, or even a complete sentence or two,~~ as shown here.

Always use a pencil, not a pen, to correct any errors that appear in your stories. If you make a mistake in correcting your story with a pen, the mistake will be difficult to correct.

Write "OK" or "cq" above facts or spellings that are so unusual that your editors are likely to question their accuracy, and circle the letters (for example: Neil Schneider became a millionaire at the age of 13).  The notations "OK" and "cq" indicate that the information is correct, regardless of how unlikely or bizarre it may appear to be.

If you accidentally type an extra word or letter, cross out the word or ~~or~~ letter, then  draw an arc above it to link the remaining portions of the sentence. An arc drawn above a deletion indicates that the remaining segments of the sentence or paragraph should be moved closer together, but a space should be left between them. To eliminate a space within a word, draw an arc both above and below it. To eliminate an unnecessary letter, draw an arc both above and below it, plus a vertical line through it.

When two words or letters are inverted, use  to indicate that they should be transposed. If you want to move an entire paragraph, retype that portion of the

story. Particularly if the transposed paragraphs are on different pages, several errors are likely to occur if you fail to retype them.

draw three lines under a letter to indicate that it should be capitalized. If a letter is capitalized but should not be, draw a *slanted* line through it. If two words are incorrectly run together, draw a *straight*, vertical line between them to indicate that a space should be added.

If you make a correction and then decide that the correction is unnecessary or mistaken, write the word "stet" alongside the correction to indicate that you want to retain the original version. If you want to add or change a letter, word or phrase, write

or type it above the line, then use a caret to indicate where it fits into the sentence. Many punctuation marks, including colons, semicolons, exclamation points and question marks, are added in the same manner (for example: When will she arrive?).

To add a comma, draw a comma in the proper place and put a caret over it (for example: He is tall, intelligent and wealthy). If you add an apostrophe or quotation mark, place a caret under it (for example: He said, "Don't ignore these rules"). To add a period, draw either a dot or a small "x" and circle it. A hyphen is indicated by the symbol =, and a dash by the symbol —.

Never type over a letter. Also, place all corrections above (never below) the typed line and error.

Newspapers never underline because typesetters do not have a key to underline. However, you can use the symbol shown here to set type in *italics*, and you can use the symbol shown here to set type in **boldface**. You can use this symbol to center a line on the page:

□ This symbol means flush left.

□ By Marcia Sirota. □

This symbol means flush right. □

Spell out most numbers below 10 and use numerals for the number 10 and most larger numbers. Consult The Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual for more exact guidelines. If you type a numeral but want it spelled out, circle it (for example: He has 8 sisters). If you spell out a number but want to use the numeral, circle it (for example: He has thirteen sisters). Similarly, circle words that are spelled out but should be abbreviated (for example: He is from Madison, Wisconsin), and words that are abbreviated but should be spelled out (for example: He is from Minn.). Do not use a circle to indicate that a letter should or should not be capitalized.

Below the last line of each news story, in the center of the page, place one of these "end marks":

-30-

-0-

As a reporter, you will not normally be expected to write headlines for any of the stories you write, nor to put your own byline on the stories. Newspaper editors write the headlines after they determine the headlines' size and decide where to place the stories in their papers. Editors also control the use of bylines and generally add them only to stories they consider exceptionally good.

Accuracy of Facts and Spelling

Double check the accuracy of every fact reported in all the news stories you write. Errors will damage a newspaper's reputation and may seriously harm people mentioned in the stories. Because of the serious consequences, your instructor may lower your grade whenever you make a factual error. You will also be penalized for errors in diction, grammar and style. If your instructor accepts late assignments (many do not),

your grades on them may also be lowered. Like all the other media, newspapers must meet rigid production schedules, and editors expect work to be turned in on time.

Be especially careful to check the spelling of people's names. Most misspellings are the result of carelessness, and they anger the victims. Most editors require their reporters to consult a second source, usually a telephone book or a city directory, to verify the way names are spelled.

Use the city directory that appears in Appendix A to verify the spelling of names used in this book, and place a box around the names to show that you have checked their spelling and that they are accurate (for example: Mayor Paula Novarro has resigned). To avoid inconsistent spellings, check and box names every time they appear in a news story, not just the first time they are used. Some names in later exercises have deliberately been altered, and you will misspell them if you fail to use the city directory.

Like other city directories, the directory in this book does not list people who live in other parts of the country. Thus, if a story mentions that someone lives in another city, you can assume that the person's name is spelled correctly; because the name will not be listed in the city directory, it will be impossible to check.

Finally, make and save a carbon or photocopy of each story you write. This copy will be invaluable if a story is lost, if questions arise about its content, or if you want to compare your original story with the edited version published by a newspaper or returned by your instructor.

Avoid Sexual and Other Stereotypes

In the past, news stories seemed to emphasize women's domestic and sexual role as wives, mothers, cooks, seamstresses, housekeepers and sex objects. During the 1960s and 1970s, women began to complain that such stereotypes are false and demeaning—that women are human beings, not primarily housewives and sex objects.

Partly in response to their criticisms, journalists are trying to avoid sexist titles and comments. Journalists no longer use occupational terms that exclude women: "fireman," "policeman" and "workman," for example. They substitute "firefighter," "police officer" and "worker." Similarly, they use "reporter" or "journalist" instead of "newsman."

Although some groups favor their use, The Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual recommends that journalists avoid coined words, such as "chairperson" and "spokesperson." Instead, journalists use "chairman" or "spokesman" when referring to a man or to the office in general. They use "chairwoman" or "spokeswoman" when referring to a woman. Or, if applicable, they use a neutral word such as "leader" or "representative."

As you begin to write, avoid using the words "female" and "woman" in places where you would not use the words "male" or "man" (for example: "woman doctor" or "female general"). Also avoid words such as "authoress," "aviatrix" and "coed." Use unisex substitutes, such as "author," "aviator" and "student." Women object to being called "girls" and being referred to by only their first names. News stories do not call men "boys," and use their last names—rarely their first.

As a newswriter, also avoid:

- Suggesting that homemaking is not work.
- Identifying a woman solely by her relationship with a man: for example, as a man's wife, daughter or secretary.
- Describing a woman's physical characteristics—her hair, dress, voice or figure—when her appearance is irrelevant to your story.
- Mentioning the fact that a woman has been divorced unless a similar story about a man would mention his marital status. When a woman's marital status is relevant, it seldom belongs in the lead. Avoid stories that begin: "A 35-year-old divorcee . . ."

Never assume that everyone involved in a story is male, that all people holding prestigious jobs are male, or that most women are housewives. Be especially careful to avoid using the pronouns "he," "his" and "him" while referring to a typical American or average person. Mistakenly, some readers will assume that you are referring exclusively to men—not to both men and women. However, you should not use the cumbersome and repetitive "he/she" or "he and she." The effort to rid the language of male bias should never become so strained that it distracts readers.

Although most journalists are becoming more sensitive to the problem, a recent headline announced, "Woman Exec Slain in Waldorf-Astoria." Critics said that the slain person's sex was irrelevant, and that few journalists would have written "Male Exec Slain." Similarly, a headline in *The Washington Post* read, "School Job May Go to Woman Educator." Critics asked editors at the *Post* why they used the term "woman educator," since they would never use "man educator." Moreover, the headline's wording suggested that it was unusual for a woman to achieve a position of importance.

A recent story published by *The New York Times* noted that a secretary "wore a full-length blue-tweed coat, leather boots and gold bangle bracelets." Yet the secretary's clothing was not unusual, nor relevant to her involvement in the news. Moreover, reporters would not have described the attire of a man in the same position.

Advertisements contain other stereotypes. Radio advertisements have urged women to ask their husbands for money so they could shop at the sponsor's stores. Other advertisements have urged mothers (but not fathers) to bring their children to an amusement park. A television advertisement urged women to buy the right brand of soap so their husbands would never be embarrassed by ring-around-the-collar. No one suggested that men should wash their own shirts—or their dirty necks.

Journalists are also trying to eliminate other stereotypes. They mention a person's race, religion, marital status or ethnic background only when that fact is clearly relevant. Employees at *The New York Times* are told: ". . . the writer—or the characters quoted in the story—must demonstrate the relevance of ethnic background or religion. It isn't enough to assume that readers will find the fact interesting or evocative; experience shows that many will find it offensive and suspect us of relying on stereotypes."

Veterans organizations have accused the media of creating another stereotype: of portraying the men and women who served in Vietnam as dangerous criminals—as violent and unstable. Why? Because the media often report that the person charged with a serious crime is "a Vietnam veteran," regardless of the fact's relevance. Also avoid such words as "wampum," "warpath," "powwow," "tepee," "brave" and "squaw" in stories about American Indians. The words are disparaging and offensive.

To avoid the stereotypes—especially sexist stereotypes—consider these guidelines:

1. Avoid sexist titles.

Most newsmen are college graduates.

REVISED: Most reporters are college graduates.

The Catholic church is delegating more work to laymen.

REVISED: The Catholic church is delegating more work to its congregations.

2. Substitute an article for the male pronoun.

To succeed, a gardener must fertilize his crop.

REVISED: To succeed, a gardener must fertilize a crop.

A college teacher is expected to serve his community.

REVISED: A college teacher is expected to serve the local community.

3. Substitute plural nouns and pronouns for male nouns and pronouns.

A reporter must cultivate his sources.

REVISED: Reporters must cultivate their sources.

A cautious investor will diversify his portfolio.
REVISED: Cautious investors will diversify their portfolios.

4. Alternate male and female pronouns or substitute descriptions or job titles for male nouns and pronouns.

He said that few men are satisfied with their salaries.

REVISED: Accountants say that few Americans are satisfied with their salaries.

A spokesman for the doctors said that most of their patients expect miracles: fast, painless cures.

REVISED: Doctors said that most of their patients expect miracles: fast, painless cures.

Copy Preparation Checklist

During this course, as you finish writing each of your news stories, consult the following checklist. If you answer "no" to any of these questions, your stories may have to be edited or retyped.

1. Have you started typing one-third to one-half of the way down the first page and one inch from the top of all following pages?
2. Do you have a slugline (no more than two or three words) that specifically describes your story's content?
3. Is the story typed and double-spaced, with only one story on a page?
4. Is each paragraph indented and marked?
5. Have you used a pencil and the proper copy-editing symbols to correct all your errors?
6. Have you made certain that no words are divided and hyphenated at the end of a line, and that no sentences or paragraphs are continued on another page?
7. If the story continues on a second page, have you: typed and circled "more" at the bottom of the first page; typed your name, page number and slugline at the top of the second page; and typed "-30-," "###" or "-0-" at the end of the story?
8. If the story originated outside your community, have you added the proper dateline?
9. Have you used the city directory to verify the spelling of all names used in the story and checked and drawn a box around those names every time they are used?
10. Have you been careful to avoid sexual and other stereotypes?

Reference Chart for Copy-Editing Symbols

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| 1. Abbreviate | He was born on <u>(August)</u> 4 in Urbana,
<u>(Illinois)</u> . |
| 2. Boldface | <u>This line should be set in boldface type.</u> |
| 3. Capitalize | An <u>american</u> won the <u>nobel</u> prize. |
| 4. Center | □Continued on Page 10□ |
| 5. Change letter | Their ^h oxe is expen ^s ive. |
| 6. Change word | She received ^{four} three gifts. |
| 7. Close up space between words | Their car was ^{totally} totally destroyed. |
| 8. Close up space within a word | Their children r ^{an} ^{de} an outsi ^{de} . |
| 9. Continues on next page | <u>(More)</u> |