How To Edit

by Beulah Wood

In most languages, one can edit for a clean, uncluttered style with these basic rules:

•Take out all unnecessary words. [Remove clutter.]
•Use active verbs. [This brings the writing closer to the reader, making it more relevant, and more applicable.]
•If there is an easier word, use it. [Do not make your writing harder than it need be.]
•Use specific rather than general words. [Help readers see what you mean.]
•Use verbs more than nouns. [They change the feel from sitting to acting.]

The example below came from a missionary camp bookmark. Before reading the edited version, consider how you might change the original. Then, compare your answers against the edited version below.

VERSION A: UNEDITED

So you want to get going for God? Is there anything you can do to prepare yourself?

HAVE A GENUINE SURRENDER TO CHRIST

Think through your relationship to Him and clear the decks so that He can have the right of way in every area of your life. Study the scriptures dealing with the will of God and think through their practical implications for you.

MAKE YOUR DEVOTIONAL LIFE WORTHWHILE

Get into the Bible till you know it. Read the Old Testament and gain such a grasp of biblical events and teaching that its principles become part of your life. To be useful to God you must be able to share what you have learned.

Prayer is the lifeline of the Christian worker. Care must be taken in cultivating good prayer habits. Make a list of prayer items and note when your prayer is answered.

COMMENCE WITNESSING

Many would-be missionaries have the idea that arrival in a foreign country will transform them into great soul-winners. They are in for a shock! Start sharing now. Make friends with non-Christians. Win their confidence by sympathetic involvement and talk to them about the things that are most important to you. Link up with Christians witnessing in coffee bars, open airs, school groups; etc. and learn all you can.

LOOK AT THE WORLD

Read about other countries, talk to travelers, watch travel films, listen to people from other cultures and learn of their history and aspirations. Write to missionaries and Christians in other countries. Read widely. Get all the information you can from missionary magazines. Join or start a missionary prayer group and get a vision of the world that is as wide as you can take.

BE PREPARED FOR BIBLE TRAINING

Why go to Bible College? Many ask this question. Because the discipline of a set programme of studies in a theological and missionary environment can equip a student for effective Christian service. Do all you can to prepare for going.

UTILIZE YOUR TIME

Keep physically fit. Learn a musical instrument, become a good photographer, read Christian biographies, learn to type. Try writing articles for magazines. Above all let nothing deflect you. Programme your life to what God is telling you to do, so that you get where you are going.

PRAY ABOUT YOUR CAREER

Many skills can be used in God's work. It is wise to plan your career and studies so that they may be useful in later missionary activity. Consult with mission personnel and they can advise you. Whatever you do, do it well.

VERSION B: EDITED

You want to get going for God? What can you do?

SURRENDER TO CHRIST

Give him everything. Allow him into every area of your life. Study the Scriptures about the will of God and consider their practical implications for you. *(Take out unnecessary words.)*

GROW YOUR DEVOTIONAL LIFE

Study the Bible. Read it to gain such a grasp of its events and teaching that its principles become part of your life. Then learn how to share what you learn. *(Take out unnecessary words.)*

Prayer is your lifeline. Build good prayer habits. Make a list of prayer requests and note when God answers.

("You," "your" and "requests" are more specific than "the Christian worker" and "items." Use active verbs.)

START TALKING *(Use easier words.)*

Many would-be missionaries think they will become great soul-winners when they reach a foreign country. They are in for a shock. Start sharing now. Make friends with non-Christians. Understand them. Talk about the things most important to you. Join Christians witnessing in coffee bars, open air or school groups and learn all you can.

(Change nouns for verbs—twice in the first sentence. Use easy words; take out unnecessary words.)

LOOK AT THE WORLD

Read about other countries, watch travel films, talk and write to travellers and people from other cultures, learn their history and aspirations. Learn and pray about missions. Get a global vision.

(Take out unnecessary words.)

PLAN FOR BIBLE TRAINING *(Use active, specific words.)*

The discipline and the content of the studies can equip you to serve God effectively. *(Remove clutter. Use verbs instead of nouns.)*

USE YOUR TIME *(Use easy words.)*

Keep physically fit. Learn photography, typing, music, writing for magazines. Read Christian biographies. Above all, set clear goals and do not let anything distract you. Plan to do what God tells you and go where God wants you.

(Take out unnecessary words. "Set" is more specific than "get." "Plan" is easier than "programme.")

PRAY ABOUT YOUR CAREER

God can use many skills. Take up a vocation you may use in later missionary work. Talk with missionaries for advice. Whatever you do, do it well.

(Use active verbs. Remove clutter. Use easy words—note the two changes in the third sentence.)

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