



# Crosstalk

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## The Key to Effective Writing and Coding: Quality Assurance

Today we are going to talk about the software development industry's number one problem: to many errors. Careless mistakes damage credibility more than you'd imagine. Because I'm constantly reviewing articles written by software people, I have found that, unfortunately, a certain segment of the developer species needs to focus more on the quality ethic.

Don't get me wrong: Most of the article submissions we receive have well-developed, well-presented ideas. But even some of the better ones sometimes have easily avoidable quality problems. Being the perfectionist that I am, I'd like to share some common problems I encounter in some articles, plus corresponding areas that might need improvement in software, such as.

- **They got poor grammar and spelling.** I'd die of embarrassment if someone read my writing before they had been through a spellchecker and grammar checker. (*Don't trust a compiler or a testor to catch every coding and design problem, have someone do peer reviews.*)
- **Sentences are padded.** One of the things that is a good idea to look at is the tendency for some people who are writing articles to use more words than they would need to express a thought that only needs a few words to be properly expressed before it's understood. (*Your code?*)
- **Obfuscation through multifarious convolutions.** Please, eschew any overtly labyrinthine scrutinizations and prolongations. (*Nobody doesn't care for that artsy-fartsy talk.*)
- **There are articles filled with unnecessary and unwanted redundancy.** Redundancy can be a huge, gigantic problem, so don't do it—avoid it wherever possible. Just state your point and move on. If you don't simply state your point and move on, your guilty of being redundant. So I advise against redundancy. (*How tight, condensed, and unrepitive is your design and coding? Or is it redundant, overwrought, and not-to-the-point?*)
- **Sentence fragments.** A big problem. No verb, no sentence. Clear? (*code comments, too.*)
- **Incomplete or poorly defined ideas.** A concept is introduced or given as an example without clearly explaining (*e.g., bandwidth limitations*). And even worse is when you're in the middle of a sentence but it never
- **Unacceptable syntax AND word choices!!** This *REALLY* bugs me! The thing that, really bugs me most about it, is shouldn't these people have taken English in HIGH SCHOOL????!! (*This syntax stuff is NOT C++ complexitiy, guys!!!*) :-)
- **Acronym soup.** An NISS (National Institute of Studying Stuff) study of NATKBBOC (Not All That Knowledgeable But Bordering On Competent) TWRPS (managers) showed SLUD-oriented confusion when TAD (total acronym density) of a document is higher than \$15,977 MSRP (miles per gallon). So just avoid it (IT). (*Bottom line: It is a good idea to KO unnecessary TAD @ any cost ASAP, OK? Actual mileage may vary.*)
- **Being married to your words.** I subscribe to the old saying, "There's more than one way to skin a cat by the horns." Be humble enough to realize there might be a better way to present your work, i.e., mine. Rest assured, if you submit something to the journal, I won't change anything unless there's a really, *really* good reason, e.g., I'm bored. (*Hint: If you really can't stand the idea of having others "improve" your work, it's not hard to weasel your untouched work past the "gatekeepers" until it's too late to change it back. BESIDES, whose going to notice the difference??!*)

— Lorin May

Got an idea for *BACKTALK*? Send an E-mail to [backtalk@stsc1.hill.af.mil](mailto:backtalk@stsc1.hill.af.mil)