How Long Should an Advertisement Be?

"SURELY not as long as this one!," you are probably saying. However, although appearing as an advertisement, this page contains a little "course" designed to be helpful to those interested in the subject of preparing advertisements. And that is why it can (and does, as you will discover) violate many of its own precepts.

The much-discussed question of "copy length" is one which, as you will see from this analysis, really broadens out into all phases of the writing of an advertisement. The suggestions given here are based upon long and successful experience in a field of advertising—*mail-order*—which, through recorded couponed results, sifts out advertisements which produce immediate, provable action and those which do not.

HOW LONG SHOULD AN ADVERTISEMENT BE? This is one of the most-discussed questions in the business of writing advertisements. Many answers cite Lincoln's reply to the man who inquired how long a man's legs should be: "Long enough to reach the ground!"

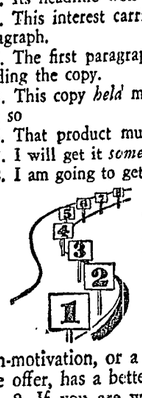
That answer doesn't get copy men very far. Now if someone asked how long a man's *arms* should be, and if Lincoln had replied, "Long enough to grasp whatever object he wants to reach"—then the story might give copy men a clue. An advertisement does, in effect, reach its arms out of a publication toward an objective: some degree of response, either in thought or action.

Therefore, first decide your objective. How far along the road to a completed sale do you want your advertisement to propel your reader?

Eight milestones to a sale

Review in your mind the milestones that stud this road. Let us list them in the order of a reader's reactions to a successful advertisement:

1. This advertisement got my attention.
2. Its headline won my interest.
3. This interest carried me into the first paragraph.
4. The first paragraph got me to go on reading the copy.
5. This copy *held* my interest, convinced me; so
6. That product must be good; and
7. I will get it *sometime*, or
8. I am going to get it *NOW*.



Which milestone do you want to reach? For a retailed product you will want to come as near the No. 8 goal as possible. Copy with good action-motivation, or a definite and attractive offer, has a better chance of hitting No. 8. If you are writing a mail-order advertisement your objective is to *reach* that No. 8 goal.

The trend toward greater length

How much does copy length have to do with reaching your objective? Before we go into that question we want to point out that, if you compare advertisements of commercial products of today with those of even 10 years ago, you will discover a pronounced trend toward longer copy.

The guidance given on this page does not seek to justify *long* copy on everything; but it analyzes the validity of the still all-too-common fear of *longer* copy on anything; and also attempts to help you decide WHEN to use longer or shorter copy—dependent upon circumstances. So first let us analyze what bearing copy length has upon this eight-milestone job of the conversion of reader-attention into reader-action.

The qualities of quantity

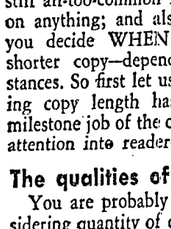
You are probably accusing us of considering quantity of copy only, regardless of quality. True; *at this point*, we shall consider copy quantitatively. For five reasons:

1. Criticism of an unsuccessful advertisement is based generally on headline, layout, artwork, theme, quality of copy, media used—but almost never on having *too little* copy.
2. Advertisers with prejudices against copy they arbitrarily say is "too long" are inclined, themselves, to judge it quantitatively only.
3. It simplifies our discussion at this point. Because quantity is absolute, quality is not. One hundred words are 100 words, whether they are good copy or poor.
4. Advertisers who sell through retailers must find the "quantitative" answer to How Long Should the Copy Be?—if they want their advertisements to come as near as possible to the before-mentioned No. 8 goal: turning more readers into customers, sending more to dealers as fully pre-sold as copy can make them.
5. Advertisers who pull for direct orders and check results have discovered an astonishing relationship between effectiveness and number of words used. They have found that — unless copy is exceptionally fine or exceptionally bad—these ratios of resultfulness to copy length are fairly constant.

All copy is more likely to be either fair or good than either bad or fine. Certain exceptionally fine copy may bring the desired results—even though it may not be as long as copy in other successful advertisements on the same proposition. BUT production of such exceptional copy does not occur often enough for ANY advertiser to risk limiting length of *all* copy solely to "make it shorter."

You are an evangelist

We have used the word *conversion* to describe turning reader-attention into reader-action. It's an accurate word for this transition; and it will carry our reasoning along, relevantly, if we compare two examples of conversion: the effort of copy to convert a reader into a customer—and (without irreverence, but merely for clarity and verisimilitude) the effort of an evangelist on a public platform, trying to win converts. The two efforts are comparable in these ways:



1. Your copy is, in purpose, "commercially evangelistic," to apply the term without offense. You are trying to make people "hit the sawdust trail" toward your product.
2. Both advertisement and platform-speaker first get attention, or neither will be addressing anyone.
3. Both convey a message to an audience of human beings varied in backgrounds, intelligence, circumstances, and innumerable other respects.
4. Some in both audiences are fairly easy to convince; some, very hard; others, between these two extremes. Some are quicker to act than others.
5. Some in both audiences have ingrown prejudices, or established habits, which run counter to the appeal being made.
6. To some, in both audiences, the message is of great immediate interest; the interest of others, at the start, may be as casual as that of an onlooker whose attention has been caught or his curiosity aroused.
7. Similarly, any in *your* audience, too, can walk out any time.

That establishes enough factors of logical comparison. So let us carry this analogy a step further.

Hold them LONGER

What does the evangelist DO to make as many converts as possible? Does his experience indicate that a talk running the risk of being too short (even though intrinsically good) can safely be depended upon to produce the full degree of listener-action he wants?

No, he keeps his audience with him as LONG as he can. That is the only way to make sufficient progress with the varied audience which he and your advertisement face. Based on the law of averages, the longer he can hold interest, the more people will he convince—and the greater will be the number who will inevitably walk forward and "hit the sawdust trail." The less able he is to hold interest for a sufficient time, the greater will be the number who will inevitably walk out.

Yet the evangelist has one advantage. He can see how many are walking out; and he can use new elements of persuasion if the exodus looks too great. The advertisement you are writing can not.

A logical observation

Where does this analogy get us? It leads to this observation:

The LONGER your copy can hold the interest of the greatest number of readers, the likelier you are to induce MORE of them to act.

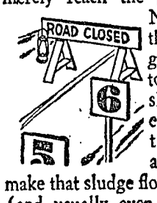
And now (as with the evangelist's audience) the law of averages plays a big part in what happens. For you must first realize fully the many implications of the fact that, although your advertisement is printed by the thousands, people read it one by one!

What you, as one individual, have irrevocably written must now meet the test of interest and appeal to thousands of individuals, each a heterogeneous mixture. The response, both in degree and total, will depend upon its interest to each reader as an individual.

Relatively few among those thousands will be "very easy" to sell: "in the market" for your product at that time; not primarily concerned with price; not "wedded to" a competitive product; quick to act. A greater number will be "very hard" to sell: only casually interested at that time; with price or "bargain value" a major consideration; competition-minded; slow to act.

How far will you carry the MAJORITY?

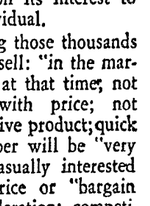
The *vast majority* of your readers will be between those two extremes. For these or other reasons, they will be easier or harder to sell than others. And this vast majority, in addition to those in the "very hard to sell" group, will at best (unless you can hold interest *longer*) merely reach the previously-mentioned No. 6 goal: agreeing that the product is good, but not moved to act. Because the sludge of human inertia is so stagnant that too small an amount of copy cannot make that sludge flow into action—unless (and usually even though) the *quality* of the copy, or the inherent appeal of the product, is tremendously far above average. And it's a rare copy idea that can be presented with great brevity and still get immediate action!



O. K. then—our last observation was: The *longer* your copy can hold people the more of them you will sell; and the more interesting your copy *is* the longer you will hold them. If you can keep your reader interested, you will have a better chance of propelling him to action. If you cannot do that, then a small amount of copy won't push him far enough along that road anyway.

The vital key-word

Therefore, INTEREST is our keyword—bringing us to these three points:



1. What *subject* interests readers most?
2. How can you write about that subject so that you hold him *longer*, in spite of the number of words necessary to get the degree of response you want?
3. How can you make this longer copy more inviting, *physically*—less formidable in appearance?

We'll tackle No. 1—What *subject* interests your reader most? Himself, and his family. So *your* copy subject is—What your product will DO for him, or for his family.

It's amazing how much copy people will read willingly if it continues to point out these consumer benefits; if you keep making your product win advantages for them.

Continuously interesting presentation of strong consumer-benefit sales angles justifies and rewards the use of longer copy. That does not mean just adding adjectives. Apropos is the story of the old man suing his wife for divorce. The judge asked what grounds he had. "Judge," he answered, "she just talk and talk—all day." The judge inquired, "What does she talk about?" The reply was, "She don't say."

The quantity of quality

Now we'll leave this quantitative part of the story and come to our *qualitative* second point—How to make your copy hold interest in your subject LONGER.

Unreadable copy goes unread. Readability makes longer copy seem shorter. The copy man's, or the advertiser's conception of readability is not necessarily the reader's. What isn't worth reading *from the standpoint of the prospect* isn't worth telling in expensive advertising space. A great deal of advertising has no vital interest, except to the man who pays for it; and if he were not paying for it, even *he* would not trouble to read the copy, short or long.

Therefore, since holding interest longer with readable copy has so much bearing on its final cash-register results, we are now going to review ways to do it. Let's itemize some of those ideas which (because of their specific effectiveness in sustaining interest) deserve listing:

22 ways to hold interest LONGER

1. Start copy with a pertinent question, to help get people into it. Commence certain paragraphs with such questions. Throughout the copy work in questions that stimulate interest in answers to follow. They also provide an interesting change of pace and style.
2. Or begin with a consumer-benefit fact awakening curiosity.
3. Give copy News Value. Put News (and most newsworthy item of it) into first paragraph. What is stale news to the advertiser may be fresh news to the reader—and vice versa.
4. Avoid vague generalities. Be concrete. Tell who, what, when, where, why, how.
5. *Speedily* identify copy with needs and desires of reader.
6. Stick to *buying* points, concerning reader; not *selling* points, concerning advertiser. Sell people advantages, not things.

7. Select sales angles with *greatest* general appeal. Concentrate on them. Don't clutter up copy with minor claims.
8. Get in plenty of emotional appeal. *Long* novels often become best sellers; but even *short* books of logic rarely do.
9. Touch people on points of common human contact. Make them say, "Yes, that is just like me!"
10. Avoid flat claims. Use vivid portrayal of dramatic situations, humanized facts, word pictures to inspire reader to *want*, as soon as possible, what the product will do for, and get for, him.
11. Put as much personality, human interest, showmanship into it as you can, with naturalness.
12. Try to make it entertaining to read. More people go to movies than to schools of instruction.
13. Make copy relevant to product, not filled with distractive influences.
14. Use subheads having news (or *relevant* curiosity) appeal—to get readers into following body-matter. Consider using subheads in question form, for same reason. Or make them tell a quick, sequential sales story *of their own*—for the glancer.
15. Use vigorous, non-static style to help copy suggest action and march toward action.
16. Use short, simple sentence construction, crystal-clear in meaning. Punctuate adequately, carefully; for clarity, simplicity. Rebuild sentences that contain wordy circumlocutions.
17. Use vivid present tense, singular instead of plural. Make it already happen to him as he reads.
18. Use active verbs, pictorial nouns.
19. Avoid too many adjectives, adverbs, pronouns, demonstrative articles, dependent clauses and phrases, subjunctive mood.
20. Use vocabulary of least erudite of your prospects; then everyone will follow you. But avoid suggestion of condescension.
21. Grammatically, lead carefully from one point of interest to next; link them clearly.
22. Finally: longer copy does not mean looser copy; mere verbiage. Keep it compact, well integrated. Its job is not to fill up white space, but to propel people (through holding their interest longer) to the point of purchase—or as near to it as possible.

How to make it LOOK more inviting

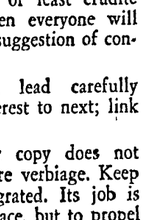
We arrive at our third point—How to make this longer copy LOOK more inviting *physically*—less formidable in appearance.

Let us say that you have decided longer copy will better accomplish the job you have set for your advertisement. You work against your own purpose if you don't make it look as inviting as its length and the amount of your space permit. These are just a few ideas on how it may be done.

1. PARAGRAPHS—Short. Indented, not flush. Double-lead between each. Occasionally centered. Judicious use of italics, caps, bold face, or over-size initials.
2. COPY BLOCKS — Not too wide for proper eye range in relation to type size. Vary widths. Graduation of type size; starting with larger, dropping to smaller.
3. SUBHEADS — Frequent and bold enough to break up any too formidable appearance of body matter; but not enough to distract reader from sequential flow of copy story.

Consider use of a two-or-three sentence, introductory display subhead, between headline and opening body matter—to get reader into latter.

4. TYPE SIZE—As large as is consistent with copy length you have decided will best accomplish your ultimate purpose. Remember that, if you hold interest, people will read much smaller type (thus enabling you to use more of your most telling sales angles) than you may have ever imagined.
5. WHITE SPACE—As much as is consistent with objective mentioned above. Although some amount of white space will help you get attention, every *unnecessary* line of it deletes copy which is more likely to gain your objective than will the white space it has replaced.



6. ART WORK—Not for mere decoration, but to advance, or substantiate, copy-story pictorially. Remember that amount of space which it occupies *unnecessarily and without furtherance of that purpose* eats up space for selling copy that would be more resultful.
7. SPECIFICATION MATTER—Product specifications, or similar technical details, are sometimes set in smaller type, boxed. They are there for those who want to know them; but they do not interfere with more attractive display of the more highly motivated copy.

The form-vs.-substance mistake

Your object in using these and other devices is to make body matter LOOK more inviting — but without allowing these devices to interfere with, or detract from, the well-thought-out sequence of your copy story. Some things to remember concerning that fact:

1. Avoid the common error of relying on form instead of on substance—but make that selling substance as interesting, both in content and appearance, as you can.
2. Physically irrelevant devices detract from the interest in, and readability of, that substance.
3. High Readership Ratings are indicators of readership and, *as such*, are significant. But one personal salesman can make twice as many calls as another—and still get fewer orders. Similarly, advertising campaigns have been run on the same product in which one series of advertisements with a relatively high readership rating showed a modest increase in sales; whereas another series with a very low rating showed a great sales increase.

One series had greater Readership, but the other had better Salesmanship. One had more readers, yet got less sales action from this greater total than the other got from its smaller total.

Summary of this first section

Now, before going into the second section of this discussion, let's take time out for a condensed recapitulation.

1. Decide how far along the road to immediate action you want to make your advertisement propel your reader.
2. Copy length has a bearing on how well your advertisement accomplishes this purpose.
3. Because, the longer you can make it hold the interest of the greatest number of readers, the more likely it is to do what you want it to do.
4. Therefore—since people are more interested in themselves and families than in anything else—your *general* subject will be, What This Product Will DO For My Reader.
5. But, *specifically*, there are certain more readable, and more interesting, ways to tell this copy-story of consumer-benefits. These will hold the interest of more readers longer and better than other ways. So—to propel people (through holding interest) to the point of purchase, or as near to it as possible—consider the 22 ways reviewed here.
6. Also, there are certain ways to make the body-matter of copy LOOK more inviting physically—without interfering with the flow of the copy story, and with recognition of the fact that "Readership" and "Salesmanship" are not synonymous.

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THIS SECOND SECTION will help you decide and adjust your copy length in accordance with limitations and circumstances you face on a *specific* job. But first let's make some *general* observations—and a few concerning certain fetishes and misconceptions.

First, many advertisers do not realize the tremendous potential power of copy. They don't demand enough from it; don't make it work hard enough. They say, "Well, that's as far as copy can go." Yet that is often the point where it is just beginning to sell.

Put more of the selling burden upon the shoulders of your copy, even though it does make it longer. "Delay is the enemy of a sale." A postponed sale may be lost forever. The more fully your copy sells the reader, the nearer and quicker it will get him to the sales counter—and (when it gets him there) the less you will rely upon notoriously incapable "salesmanship" at the counter, or worry about brand-switching.

Not that it is wise or necessary for all advertisers to do as mail-order ones do—"Tell people you are going to tell them, then tell them, then tell them you've told them." A mail-order advertisement's job is extra-tough; that is why some highly successful examples contain 1500 to 2000 words, or even more.

Yet remember that, strictly speaking, NON-mail-order copy has the same basic sequence of motivation; actually, the only principles peculiar to mail-order advertising are those connected, directly or indirectly, with the effort to induce the reader to *write* to the advertiser.

It's easier to get attention and interest than to hold it

Copy writers have, through various devices, attained more skill in getting attention and interest than in holding it. This may consciously or subconsciously stem from the influence of that maxim, "It is harder to write short copy than long" or Madame de Sevigné's remark, "Had I more time I would have written you a shorter letter."

These statements are not untrue. But they are sometimes used as excuses by the copy writer who is neither energetic and resourceful enough to write good copy of a greater length than he is accustomed to handle, nor capable enough to write exceptionally effective shorter copy.

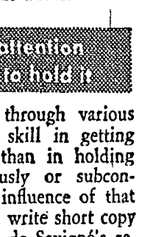
Nevertheless, any copy on any product can be made interesting. It is up to the copy writer. As Gilbert K. Chesterton said: "There is no such thing on earth as an uninteresting subject; the only thing that can exist is an uninterested person."

The everlasting yea and nay

We have already discussed many reasons for longer copy. But worth emphasis here is that it can combine both positive AND negative appeals. Chauncey Depew, millionaire railroad official, said: "I would not stay up all of one night to make a hundred dollars; but I would stay up all of seven nights to keep from losing it!" That attitude represents a certain type of person. Your copy must influence many types.

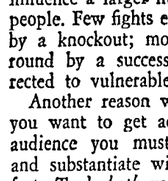
By taking enough length to use both positive and negative sales angles, you influence a larger number of minds and people. Few fights end in the first round by a knockout; more often in a later round by a succession of punches directed to vulnerable parts.

Another reason worth elaboration: if you want to get action from a varied audience you must stimulate emotion and substantiate with facts. To do *both*, your copy must often necessarily be longer. The Colonel's Lady and Judy O'Grady are sisters under the skin. Both of them (and their brothers) can be sold—if you can hold their interest long enough to get *under* this epidermis of position or circumstance. What with? That greatest common denominator of all humans: What Will It DO for Me?



A salesman does not say, "How do you do," speak a few words about his product, then ask you to sign the order. No; he uses enough words to get your emotions AND reasoning power flowing toward a sale. If he sees his talk clicking strongly with you, he can *then* try a "quick close;" but your advertisement can not.

So, if you are a logical prospect and he fails to sell you, it is because he has not told you interestingly, convincingly, and completely enough why what his product will do for you is more important to you than its price. If he succeeds, it is because his sales angles have held your interest, through the right "spoken" copy—and enough of it. Yet many advertisements virtually say little more than "Hello—Our product is wonderful—Goodbye."



Likewise, it is obvious (but often overlooked) that no reader can be influenced by good sales angles which don't appear in the advertisement at all! Consequently, even "grasshopper readers" (who will not read the copy consecutively but simply hop around in it and sample what interests them most) can't be sold enough unless they are told enough.

In other words, if these sales angles aren't *in* the copy, then even your grasshopper-readers can't be influenced by them. But if they *are* there, they at least have a chance of influencing ALL your readers. And you can not shorten copy too much, merely for the greater attraction of some people, without running the risk of leaving too little of it to do a good job of selling the others.

Attempting to compromise with this fact, many advertisers try, in effect, to make a deal with the reader. They make dull advertisements short. Yet brevity does not make an otherwise dull advertisement interesting—any more than length makes an otherwise interesting advertisement dull. Real interest will induce a reader to read longer copy, word by word; whereas the lack of it will not induce him to read even shorter copy.

You are "The Uninvited Guest"

This indispensability of copy interest makes it imperative for you to realize that you, the advertiser, are "The Uninvited Guest." Nobody asked you to the party your reader is having with his publication. Nobody paid you to join the show. You paid to get in. The reader paid for news, instruction, or entertainment. That's what *you* have to give him, if you want to compete for his interest and hold it. And to make him pay YOU for your product, you must make it pay HIM to read about it.

And finally, the last of these general observations, before we get down to the specifics, WHEN and HOW MUCH: Don't harbor an all-pervading fear of writing longer copy. Some advertising men continue to berate copy which, to them, seems "too long." But the trend, based upon successful experience, belies them.

Start from the premise, "They don't want to read" and "They don't want to buy." Then try to make the copy so interesting they will want to read it all; so convincing they will want to buy at once.

What specific factors will help you decide which length copy will do the best job? When longer? When shorter? How much longer or shorter? There can be no scientifically "absolute" answers to these questions. But certain factors, when carefully weighed against each other, will guide you to the wisest decision humanly possible. Some of these factors are:

1. Type of product.
2. Size of space.
3. Your objective for that advertisement.
4. Price of product.
5. Where advertisement is appearing.
6. Inherent power of appeal of product or idea behind it.
7. Type of advertiser.
8. Competition.
9. Type of readership you want.
10. Appearance of advertisement.

What type of product?

Concerning No. 1: TYPE OF PRODUCT advertised has a close relationship to length of copy most effective in selling it. As Dr. L. D. H. Weld said, "Advertising is a part of the selling process. When advertising is used, less personal salesmanship is necessary. Advertising supplants personal salesmanship — partially for some commodities; substantially in the case of others, such as certain drug and grocery items; completely in the case of mail-order selling."

Therefore, decide first how much of your dependence upon at-the-counter salesmanship you want your advertising to supplant. Then ask: Is the product an impulse-item? Is it in the daily-necessity class? Is it a leader in its field? Has it wide general acceptance, distribution, sale? If your answer to any of these questions is Yes, then the copy may be shorter than if the answer is No. In the latter case longer selling copy is indicated. In either case, your conclusion must also be predicated upon other perhaps counterbalancing factors—such as competition, price comparison, and others now to be discussed.

How much space?

No. 2, SIZE OF SPACE: Many full pages are filled with messages that belong in half pages, quarter pages, or single columns—and vice versa. To guard against excessive space units it is, when possible, not a bad idea to do as mail-order people do—decide what space you need to do the desired job; then buy it—rather than buy the space and then decide what to put into it. If the decision as to space size is up to you, ask yourself: How *little* space can I use to do the same or a better job?—and remember that a small space unit is a challenge, not an insult.

To determine the copy length *in* your space, the safe procedure (for reasons previously outlined) is to use as much copy as you can, without sacrificing attention-getting and attention-holding power. In full pages the copy blocks can be sizable, without risking this sacrifice.

What's your objective?

No. 3, YOUR OBJECTIVE FOR THAT ADVERTISEMENT: The farther you want to propel your reader along the road to a completed sale, the more copy you will need.

If the advertiser insists that "We advertise to create an impression; not to make the reader do something," then the copy job is easier—and shorter. Also, if you can tell your copy story in a few words and still get the degree of action you want, do it. Or if writing "reminder advertising," your copy can be shorter; but bear in mind that adding a little more copy can often make such advertising get action from some of your readers, besides conveying a reminder to the others.

How much does the product cost?

No. 4, PRICE OF PRODUCT: The higher the price the more copy you are likely to need in order to get immediate action—unless a follow-up method makes up the deficit. There is a quantitative "arithmetic of words" that is independent of the selling quality of the words themselves. A salesman will require fewer words to sell an inexpensive suit than to sell a more expensive suit of the same make. Advertisers who check results find a close relationship between the amount they are trying to get and the number of words necessary to get it.

Also significant is the remark, "There must be something to it, to be able to talk that much about it." This remark, regardless of the price of your product, does not justify mere prolixity, for tons of words can never take the place of good sales ideas. Yet (aside from that necessity) the words in an advertisement do, cumulatively, have an effect upon people.

Where will the advertisement appear?

No. 5, WHERE THE ADVERTISEMENT IS APPEARING: Obviously, it is logical for copy appearing in newspapers to be shorter than copy for the same product in magazines. Newspapers get a quicker reading and have a shorter life than magazines. But good weekly magazine sections of newspapers are comparable to good weekly magazines.

Nevertheless, copy in newspapers, even in small space, need not be made so short that it is unable to do a good selling job. Before us is a meatpacker's advertisement about the deliciousness of smoked tongue. It measures 146 lines, 73 lines by 2 columns. 102 lines are devoted to an excellent headline with adequate white space, a luscious picture of a platter of tongue, a clear reproduction of the trade-mark. Yet in the remaining space of only 44 lines are set 166 words of persuasive, action-getting copy.

The most powerful factor of all

No. 6, INHERENT POWER OF THE APPEAL OF THE PRODUCT OR THE IDEA BEHIND IT: This is the most powerful of all factors governing your decision as to the most effective copy length. If the product and its appeal are absolute "naturals" in themselves, then shorter (or short) copy is all you need; and many of the other factors suggested here are either modified or nullified. But be very sure it really *is* a "push-over product"; it doesn't occur often.

On the other hand, the weaker this inherent appeal, the more copy (filled with best possible angles) you will need.

What's the advertiser's attitude?

No. 7, TYPE OF ADVERTISER: His attitude also has a bearing on your decision as to the best copy length—*and how!* If his wall-motto, regardless of consequences, is "Make It Short!" you may want to send him this page, (anonymously, of course). If it holds his interest, despite its length, then you have a perfect case.

How stiff is your competition?

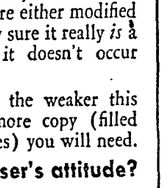
No. 8, COMPETITION: Weigh the effects of "greater copy length and more fully sold readers" as an antidote to brand-switching; unfavorable price-comparison; apathetic cooperation from retailers, on display material and other promotional activities; or your product's trailing position behind the leaders.

In a competitive market the leaders sometimes rely upon "reminder advertising," giving the smaller operator a chance to come through with advertising that really sells. With this action-producing copy he may cash in on the public acceptance already created for that *type* of product but not yet activated to its fullest possible extent. Leaders get to be followers by not keeping the pressure on: followers become leaders by "pulling out all the stops."

The penalty of readership?

No. 9, TYPE OF READERSHIP YOU WANT: Don't imagine that the higher the quality of readership you want, the less you need copy with plenty of selling in it.

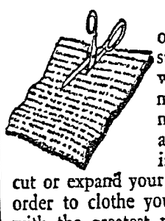
The quality of the readership you want does not impose a penalty upon copy length. If *it* is interesting copy and *they* are human beings, your longer copy will be read. And it IS needed, even to sell quality prospects. (Ever notice that richer people are usually more careful buyers, need even more facts and persuasion, than poorer ones?)



What about appearance?

No. 10, APPEARANCE OF ADVERTISEMENT: Requirements as to this may, in some measure, limit copy length to less than you decide is really advisable. If the advertiser prefers, and is satisfied with, aesthetic beauty—rather than greater results—that is his right. However, the suggestions already made can help you use copy of the length you deem necessary and still keep the appearance of the advertisement attractive.

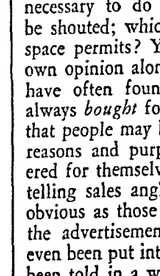
And now you're going to cut—or to expand



Your consideration of these ten circumstances and limitations will aid you in determining the copy length most practicable for any particular job; and in ascertaining how to cut or expand your garment of words in order to clothe your assigned copy job with the greatest possible resultfulness. It will help you choose what sales appeals must without fail be pieced into this garment; which rate major emphasis; which may safely be relegated to minor position in the copy story; which may with least risk be left out entirely.

The success of your copy requires that you know as much as possible about the true worth of these sales angles and the relative order of their persuasiveness in advertising that product. Every sales angle of strong or wide appeal that copy-cutting or lack of knowledge causes you to omit (or to stress inadequately) involves a consequent loss of its specific effect upon all your readers in general... and, in particular, upon those readers who might have been more influenced by *that* sales angle than by any others. The stronger the sales point so treated the greater the resultant loss of its potential effectiveness.

The adequate presentation of a sales angle of perhaps hitherto unrealized potency may require only a few extra sentences or a short paragraph. Often such an angle can give the final sales push to thousands of people whom the rest of the copy has left "on the fence." In some cases it alone has meant the difference beween the greatest possible success and a lesser degree of success or the total failure of an advertisement; yes, of even a complete campaign.



Here is what happened when a sales angle was left out of three department store advertisements, and out of a proprietary:

1. One advertisement for rubber sheeting said, "Do as hospitals do; protect your bed." It produced $8,300 in sales. An advertisement without this phrase produced $5,000 in sales.
2. An advertisement for men's shorts did twice as well when this single phrase was included, "The grip-fasteners won't pop off."
3. One advertisement for Christmas tree lights mentioned that if one bulb burned out the others on the string would stay lit. It sold 28,000 units. Another advertisement not mentioning this fact sold 7,500 units.
4. Eighteen unsuccessful advertisements of a well-known tonic were transformed into highly profitable ones by the addition of one short paragraph containing 36 words.

So you need this ADDITIONAL guidance

Now, specifically, how can you learn more about the relative values of different sales angles; which must be covered fully, regardless of the copy space necessary to do it well; which should be shouted; which can be whispered, if space permits? You cannot follow your own opinion alone, because copy writers have often found that products aren't always *bought* for what they're *sold* for; that people may be buying a product for reasons and purposes they have discovered for themselves; and that these most telling sales angles (some as seemingly obvious as those which were left out of the advertisements just cited) had not even been put into the copy at all, or had been told in a whisper when they really rated a shout.

Therefore—your own judgment, experience, imagination, and selling instinct should be augmented by:

1. Personal contact, review of correspondence with consumers; consumer-research reports; dealer surveys; retail sales-clerk check-ups. (Such studies not only uncover strong sales angles and their relative values but also reveal, for your own copy purposes, the actual words and expressions customers use when referring to the product and to the appeal it has *for them.*)
2. Whatever figures and data you have, or can get, as to the true stature of effectiveness of sales angles featured in *previous* advertisements or campaigns.

The home stretch

Well, here's the home stretch. Have you been asking: "How long should *any* discussion be about how long should copy be?" You can see now that the subject has ramifications much broader than you may at first have imagined.

Platitudes and generalities on so specific a question can be used only to excuse or to rationalize a course of action. Therefore step-by-step analysis has been necessary in attempting to get somewhere near the core of the subject. Analysis on your own part will help to guide you toward an intelligent decision in each particular case.

This Is About Us . . . But May Interest You

THIS is the age of specialization . . . and for 26 years we have been specialists. We are an advertising agency specializing in the preparation of mail-order advertising appearing in magazines and newspapers, over the radio, and on television.

The purpose of mail-order advertising is to produce direct action—an immediate response from those who see or hear it. This response must be in the form of either inquiries or orders *going direct to the mail-order advertiser himself.*

An agency specializing in mail-order advertising must prove, day after day, that the advertisements it has prepared are bringing profitable results. Its clients key each advertisement and keep daily records of the response which each produces. If these record cards prove that the agency is doing a good job its clients may retain it for years. If not, the relationship is obviously likely to be short-lived.

It is significant, therefore, that many of our clients (among whom are some of the largest and best known advertisers in the mail-order business) have been with us ever since the foundation of this agency twenty-six years ago.

SCHWAB AND BEATTY, INC., Advertising

488 Madison Avenue • New York City 22

RADIO and TELEVISION DEPARTMENT • 38 East 57th Street

MEMBER OF AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF ADVERTISING AGENCIES

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