



Tips for making rough drafts not so rough

By Denyce Sanders

LET'S TALK BASICS. For every job, I set up a basic dictionary before I start the depo. That means I put in the witness name, the style names, and the attorney names. I add John Smith, Mr. Smith, Coastline Properties, Coastline, etc.

I always mark spellings. I use the “oops” feature with Case CATalyst, which creates an invisible and searchable mark in the transcript known as “hot spots.” However, there is nothing stopping you from creating a stroke that puts a mark next to the offending word or name in the transcript. This strategy will help catch errors that you noticed while writing, names that you need to global, and so on.

If you do this as a matter of habit on every job, the next time an attorney asks you for a rough, you will be able to easily identify trou-

ble spots and fix them. A rough is no good if it's not readable — plus it makes you look bad. Write yourself notes! Make a stroke with a scan stop to easily find them.

Another thing to do is always run spell check. I know spell check is not perfect, and it doesn't find everything, but it's a good start and a lot of times catches things that you missed. Everything you find before you send that rough is a bonus.

Another thing to do is scan for steno and do a search for phonetic words, if your spell-

checker doesn't catch those automatically. I try to clean up as many of them up as I can before I hit print, even for a rough draft.

Rough drafts are not supposed to be perfect, but they shouldn't be riddled with non-sense words, mistroked includes, and easily corrected names either. If the job is really bad, tell the client you need a day. Clean the job up. Don't give them something they can't use. Put in the names and pull out your untranslates and phonetics. If you are unsure of a name and it didn't translate, put a * next to it. That way you know it needs to be researched and fixed in the final version. I do that a lot when I realtime. I don't know how to spell it but the attorneys can't read it. I put what I think it is with an asterisk. That also tells my scopist it was a guess.

If you can't write numbers well, take the time to go through the transcript. If you know the job has terminology that won't make sense, take a few minutes and fix it.

My 260-page job recently had three pages of spellings, and they kept asking me to read back, and I was having to read through my steno. During the breaks I would ask the witness to help me. I did this three times and when I came home last night, I just had to put the final names in, check my trouble spots, and run spell check. Did I want to do that at 10 o'clock at night? No. But sometimes that is what it takes to provide good service.

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