Copy editing and proofreading

What is copy editing?

- Copy Editing focuses on the text, rather than the content, of a piece of writing. Copy editing checks for formatting, style, spelling, consistency, grammar, or punctuation errors.
- In the case of academic writing, copy editing also checks for mistakes in documentation formatting.
- Copy Editing is done before proof editing/reading. Proof reading is the last step in editing and is done to catch small errors that were missed in earlier stages of editing. Proof reading is generally to catch typos or formatting errors.
- Copy editing is usually done after large revisions and restructuring of a paper.

The Five C's of Copy Editing

- Make the copy clear, correct, concise, comprehensible, and consistent.
- Copy editors should *make it say what it means, and mean what it says*.

What a copy editor addresses

- Grammar and syntax
- Repetition and wordiness
- Punctuation
- Spelling
- Capitalization
- Hyphenation
- Italicization
- Numbers versus numerals
- Abbreviations and acronyms
- Typography

- **CONSISTENCY**

A copy editor's tools

* Style guides/books
* Dictionary
* Grammar and usage books
* Computer/online searching
* A SHARP EYE AND A SHARP PENCIL

The Chicago Manual of Style is your friend

- Is available online through the library catalogue.
- Is the standard reference guide for copy editors.
- Is straightforward and easy to use!

Chicago Manual of Style: Part One

* The Publishing Process

Chicago Manual of Style: Part Two

* Style and Usage

Chicago Manual of Style: Part Three

* Documentation

Resources at the University

- University of Toronto writing has several useful fact sheets, including how to avoid passive voice, punctuation, thesis and grant proposals, etc. http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/home
- The School of Graduate Studies has a writing center, The Office of English Language and Writing Support, where they offer individual writing consultations. http://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/informationfor/students/english.htm

Resources: the well-thumbed dictionary

A copy editor must not rely on memory or personal preference when it comes to the spelling of words. Look these up in the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary* and see what you find. You'll notice for some that there are two options. If so, the copy editor must go with the one listed first in the dictionary (or if an exception has been noted in the style guide for the publisher in question, that spelling should be preferred).

- towards or toward?
- pizazz or pizzazz?
- Lucite or lucite?
- school bus/school board/school room or schoolbus/schoolboard/schoolroom?
- re-run or rerun?
- labeled or labelled? (the latter is Canadian spelling, so it is reflected in Canadian Oxford; however, that is not the case in Webster's, so a Canadian publication using Webster's would need to note preferred usage in its house style guide)
- focused or focussed?

Common Stylistic Errors

Passive Voice

- *What is passive voice? In English, all sentences are in either "active" or "passive" voice:*
- *ACTIVE: Werner Heisenberg formulated the uncertainty principle in 1927.*
- *PASSIVE: The uncertainty principle was formulated by Werner Heisenberg in 1927.*
- *In an active sentence, the person or thing responsible for the action in the sentence comes first. In a passive sentence, the person or thing acted on comes first, and the actor is added at the end, often introduced with the preposition "by." The passive form of the verb is signaled by a form of "to be": in the sentence above, "was formulated" is in passive voice while "formulated" is in active. In a passive sentence, we often omit the actor completely: Ex. The uncertainty principle was formulated in 1927.*

When to avoid Passive Voice

- *Passive sentences can get you into trouble in academic writing because they can be vague about who is responsible for the action:*
- *Both Othello and Iago desire Desdemona. She is courted. (Who courts Desdemona? Othello? Iago? Both of them?)*
- *Academic writing often focuses on differences between the ideas of different researchers, or between your own ideas and those of the researchers you are discussing. Too many passive sentences can create confusion:*
- *Research has been done to discredit this theory. (Who did the research? You? Your professor? Another author?)*
- *Some students use passive sentences to hide holes in their research: The telephone was invented in the nineteenth century. (I couldn't find out who invented the telephone!)*
- *Finally, passive sentences often sound wordy and indirect. They can make the reader work unnecessarily hard. And since they are usually longer than active sentences, passive sentences take up precious room in your paper: Since the car was being driven by Michael at the time of the accident, the damages should be paid for by him.*

When to use Passive Voice

- The actor is unknown: The cave paintings of Lascaux were made in the Upper Old Stone Age (We don't know who made them).
- The actor is irrelevant: An experimental solar power plant will be built in the Australian desert. (We are not interested in who is building it)
- You want to be vague about who is responsible (mistakes were made).
- You are talking about a general truth
- You want to emphasize the person or thing acted on: Insulin was first discovered in 1921 by researchers at the University of Toronto. It is still the only treatment available for diabetes.

Fix the Passive Voice

* Poland was invaded in 1939, thus initiating the Second World War.
* Genetic information is encoded by DNA.
* The possibility of cold fusion has been examined for many years.

Wordiness & How to Avoid it

- If you have time, leave your draft alone for awhile and revisit it with some distance. Try reading your document out loud.
- Check for doubling of words. Common examples are: mutual agreement*, future prospects, consensus of opinion, reconsider again, whether or not, inadvertent error*.
- *Check for intensifiers or qualifiers. Omit them or be more specific*. (*ex.* very, really, extremely, definitely, a considerable amount of, to a certain extent)

Wordiness and How to Avoid it Cont.

- Watch for Formulaic Phrases and instead use *a one-word form or omit. Some common examples are: for the purpose of (to), due to the fact that (because), at this point in time (now), in the near future (soon), with regard to (about), in view of the fact that (because), as the case may be (---) Basically, . . . (---).*

Watch for Catch-all Terms and *omit wherever possible.*

- *Some common examples are: aspect, field, quality, case, kind, situation, fact, matter, sort, factor, nature, thing, feature, problem, type.*
- *These sentences are weak, make them strong by eliminating catch-all terms.*
- *A surprising aspect of most labor negotiations is their friendly quality.*
- *The fact of the war had the effect of causing many changes.*

Wordiness and How to Avoid it Cont.

- Look for unnecessary "to be" and "being".
- These sentences are weak, make them strong:
- The program is considered to be effective.
- The journey was long because of the terrain being rough.
- Look for Overuse of Relative Structures ("Who," "Which," "That").
- These sentences are weak, make them strong: The novel, which is entitled Ulysses, takes place . . .
- I think that X is the case. . .
- There is a tendency among many writers who may be seen to display certain signs of lack of confidence that their sentences will be overloaded with relative clauses and other words which are generally useless in function.

Common Grammatical Errors

Misplaced or Dangling Modifiers

- You have some freedom in where you choose to place your modifiers in a sentence.
- We rowed the boat **vigorously**.
- We **vigorously** rowed the boat.
- **Vigorously** we rowed the boat.
- Put it **gently** in the drawer.
- However, you must be careful to avoid misplaced modifiers -- modifiers that are positioned so that they appear to modify the wrong thing.

Fix the Misplaced Modifiers

- By manipulating the lower back, the pain was greatly eased. (--*implies the pain was doing the manipulating)*
- *When not going to school, my hobbies range from athletics to automobiles. (--implies the hobbies go to school)*

Squinting Modifiers

* A squinting modifier is an ambiguously placed modifier that can modify either the word before it or the word after it. In other words, it is "squinting" in both directions at the same time.

Fix the Squinting Modifier

- Defining your terms clearly strengthens your argument. (does defining "clearly strengthen" or does "defining clearly")
- The director said Friday we would have a dress rehearsal. (Did the director say the dress rehearsal would take place on Friday, or did the director give this information on Friday)

Notes on punctuation issues and common errors

When the period or comma is used with quotation marks, place it inside the quotation marks. (Note that British style is the opposite. British style also reverses the use of single and double quotation marks.)

"The other song I heard him hum was 'Danny Boy,'" she said.

Compound sentences

The coordinate clauses of a compound sentence are separated by a comma.

Susan was elected committee president, and Allen was elected vice-president.

Serial comma

In a series of the form *a, b, and c* or *red, white, and blue* most publishers prefer a comma (…called the serial comma) before the conjunction, whether the items of the series are words, phrases, or clauses. (*Words into Type,* page 187)

Coordinate adjectives

Two or more adjectives modifying the same noun are separated by commas if they are coordinate – that is, if *and* could be used between them without changing the meaning; otherwise, there should be no comma. (*Words into Type,* page 188)

a rotund, jolly little man / hot, humid climate / in the big white plantation house

Punctuation: some rules and and common errors

Non-restrictive versus restrictive (or non-essential versus essential)

Non-restrictive phrase or clause: could be omitted without changing the meaning of the principal clause; should be set off by commas.

Restrictive phrase or clause: qualifies or limits what it modifies, so it cannot be omitted without affecting the meaning of the sentence; must not be set off by commas. (*Words into Type,* page 189)

Many animals, ***such as rabbits and horses,*** *grow heavy winter fur at the approach of cold weather. [non-restrictive]*

Animals ***such as the beaver, fox, rabbit, and cat*** *are protected from the cold by a silky covering called fur. [restrictive]*

That **versus** ***which*** **preceding clauses**

As a relative pronoun, *that* is always restrictive, whereas *which* is usually non-restrictive (so *which* requires the insertion of a comma)

The painting that was hanging in the hallway was stolen.

The painting, which was hanging in the hallway, was stolen.

Punctuation: some rules and and common errors

How would you punctuate the following?

RIGHT: The Queen was accompanied by her son Prince Edward.

WRONG: The Queen was accompanied by her son, Prince Edward.

(She has more than one son; this comma would mean Edward is her only son.)

RIGHT: The Queen was accompanied by her youngest son, Prince Edward.

THE FOLLOWING WOULD MEAN SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT THINGS:

The girl who was wearing a red scarf got into the cab.

The girl, who was wearing a red scarf, got into the cab.

Margaret Atwood's novel *Lady Oracle* won the award.

(She has many novels; therefore no comma around the novel name.)

When I entered the room, Mary was talking to her husband, George.

(Mary has only one husband; therefore a comma is needed.)

Comma Splices

- *Joins two independent clauses without a coordinating conjunction.*
- Example: We started to unpack our things, pretty soon clothes were strewn all over the place.
  Correct: We started to unpack our things; pretty soon clothes were strewn all over the place.
  Correct: We started to unpack our things, and pretty soon clothes were strewn all over the place.

Comma Splices Cont.

- *Use a semicolon as well as a conjunctive adverb to join two independent clauses.*
- *These are the most common conjunctive adverbs: however, therefore, then, nevertheless, accordingly, as a result, moreover, even so, rather, indeed, for example.*
- *Wrong: Much of the literature advocates stretching preparatory to exercise, however, the mechanisms are not well understood. Correct: Much of the literature advocates stretching preparatory to exercise; however, the mechanisms are not well understood.*

Fix the Comma Splices

- Sara liked Anne, Anne was indifferent.
- Anne agreed to go out on a date with Sara, they went to a drive in movie.

A Few Rules of Punctuation

Capitalization

- Capitalize religious terms. Examples: the Bible, Holy Communion, the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Koran.
- Capitalize cultural and historical terms. Examples: the Great Depression, Confederation, Colonization.
- Capitalize dates and time designations. Examples: days of the week, month, holidays.
- Capitalize the names of courses, ex. Sex, Race, Nation and the Body. Do not capitalize school terms, ex. history, political science, bachelor's degree.

Hyphenation

- Use a dictionary to hyphenate compounds (two or more words). They may be hyphenated (cross-examine), written as separate words (cross street), or written as one word (crossword). Check the dictionary for correct forms.
- Hyphenate compound adjectives before a noun but not following the noun. Example: I've written a first-rate essay. Vs. My essay is first rate.
- You can hyphenate to prevent misreading. Example: pre-embryonic.

Italics

- Written works. Example: *Bastard out of Carolina.*
- Visual or performing arts. Example: *Star Trek.*
- Do not italicize sacred writings. Example, the Talmud, the Torah.

Typography

- No double spaces after periods, colons, question marks, exclamation marks (this was a typewriter convention that is obsolete; now that we have proportionally spaced fonts, it's no longer necessary, and can actually introduce gaps in justified typed).
- No widows (one word or half a word sitting alone on a line at the end of a paragraph) in typeset documents that will be printed (not a big deal in word-processed documents).
- In desktop-published documents, allow some "air" between the text and the frame of a box or photo.
- Flush left after a heading or subheading (that is, no indent).
- Avoid bad breaks (incorrect syllable division or breaking something like 1.5 L over two lines).
- Proper use of italics (review Chicago style).
- Heading style: Be consistent with sentence case versus u/lc (review Chicago style).
  For example, in upper/lower case heading style, a verb is always capped:
  - WRONG: This is Our Story
  - RIGHT: This Is Our Story

Proofreading

What a proofreader does and doesn't do:

- refers to the style sheet, so as not to introduce inconsistencies
- looks for spelling errors, inconsistencies, typographical errors
- flags questions for the copy editor or author or handling editor
- does **not** rewrite

Your eye will never catch everything in one read.

* Don't just proof on-screen; print out your paper and proof a hard copy.
* Isolate tasks: e.g., punctuation, paragraphing, italics, quotation marks.
* Read out loud, read mechanically (so your eye doesn't fill in what's not there or gloss over omissions).
* Use a ruler or sheet of paper to guide the eye line by line.
* Read the document backwards.
* Ask another person to be a "fresh eye."
* Follow a checklist for each document to double check things like page numbering, double spaces, consistent capitalization of headings, consistent indentation, etc.
* Use online searching as one step in the proofreading process (see page 20).

Online searches checklist

While a proper proofread of your papers and documents is always essential, you can help eliminate errors by using the find/replace function of your word processing software in a strategic way. Make yourself a checklist like the following and, for each paper, use the find function to search for:

- double spaces (should always be single, even after punctuation)
- opening quotation mark, then scan across the page to make sure you did indeed type a closing quotation mark
- *that/which* - if you are often foiled by these, search each, one at a time, and ask yourself if the usage is correction
- straight quotation marks versus curly - always use proper "curly" marks, not straight foot and inch marks; automatic "smart quotes" in word processing software eliminates this problem most of the time but not always
- *it's* versus *its* OR *their* versus *they're* versus *there* - if these are problems for you, search them one at a time and ask if you've used them correctly
- spaces before commas - search space/comma and replace with just comma
- opening bracket, then scan across the page to make sure you typed the closing bracket
- all instances of names are correct (e.g., Mac versus Mc)
- number usage
- focused/focussed and other spellings you have trouble remembering

Also, do a spell check, but don't rely on it to replace a proper proofread.

Using the Chicago Manual of Style, look up answers to the following questions.

* 1. When should United States be abbreviated?
* 2. How are other punctuation marks ordered with regard to closing quotation marks?
* 3. How do you decide whether to use which or that to introduce a relative clause?
* 4. Where are commas placed in addresses and dates?
* 5. When should numbers be spelled out?
* 6. When do you use the sign for percent and when do you spell it out?
* 7. How do you punctuate a sentence with a URL or email address?

Other resources

- -Canadian Oxford Dictionary
- -The Chicago Manual of Style (University of Chicago Press
- The Copyeditor's Handbook: A Guide for Book Publishing and Corporate Communications
- -Editing Canadian English
- -The Canadian Press Stylebook
- -Words into Type
- -Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association
- -MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers
- -The Canadian Style: A Guide to Writing and Editing