



Copy edit checklist

The copy edit is a review of a document when its content is substantially final. The copy editor identifies possible errors and, within the scope of the checklist below, suggests changes to improve the document. The goal is to ensure that the document is consistent, accurate and complete.

Copy editing isn't the same as proofreading, which is the final editing stage and happens when the document has been formatted for publication. Both stages are necessary to produce a professional publication. For more information, see our [Proofread checklist](#).

The list below is not exhaustive. For more information, see the *Commonwealth Style manual for authors, editors and printers* (Snooks & Co, 6th ed).

What does the copy editor check?

Grammar and syntax

- Usage follows commonly accepted standards.
- Usage follows the organisation's preferred grammar guide, if applicable.

Punctuation

- Usage follows commonly accepted standards.

Spelling

- Spelling follows commonly accepted authority – for example, Macquarie Dictionary.
- Spelling follows the organisation's stated preferences, if applicable.
- Word use is accurate in context.

Style

- Usage consistently follows the organisation's style guide, if applicable, or commonly accepted authority.
- Italics, capitalisation and hyphenation are correct and follow the style guide.
- Shortened forms and preferred terms are used appropriately and are defined where required.

Structure, format and layout

- Heading hierarchy is logical and applied correctly.
- Lists are structured and punctuated correctly.
- Running heads and footers are correct.
- Page numbering is correct.

Language

- Technical and specialised terms are defined where necessary. Industry jargon is used judiciously.
- Meaning is clear, comprehensible and not ambiguous.
- Jarring inconsistencies of voice and tone are identified and, where reasonably possible, reduced – particularly important in multi-author works.

Content

- Potential and obvious errors are identified and, where reasonably possible, checked. (Note that all content, including any error of fact, remains the responsibility of the author.)
- Internal cross-references are checked.
- Cross-references are inserted where appropriate.
- Any obvious missing material is flagged (for example, the text mentions a section that isn't there; 'this is explained further below' when it isn't).
- Any summary section accurately reflects the main text (this is flagged if not).
- All links work.
- Symbols, terms and shortened forms are all explained and used correctly.

Sequences

- Alphabetical and numerical sequences are correct (for example, glossaries, chapter and paragraph numbering, table numbering, page numbering).
- Chronologies, descriptions, names and terms are consistent.

Acronyms and abbreviations

- Shortened forms are used in the preferred manner.
- All acronyms, abbreviations and initialisms are explained if required.

User aids (tables, figures, maps and illustrations)

- Simple arithmetical calculations (for example, totals in tables) are spot checked. (Note that the accuracy of complex calculations is the responsibility of the author.)
- User aids are positioned appropriately within the text.
- Captions are correct and consistent.
- Figure types and their elements follow accepted conventions.
- Images and illustrations are of appropriate quality.
- User aids are clear, logical and effective.

Footnotes/endnotes

- Citations are expressed in the organisation's preferred style.
- Citations follow the organisation's preference for footnotes or endnotes (flag if not).
- All material that needs citation has been footnoted/endnoted (flag if not).