

Copyediting

Ashan R. Hampton



Grammar, Style
& Practice

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101

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Introduction

Publishing a book about copyediting seemed to be a natural progression from the success of the *Proofreading Power Skills & Drills* workbook and the slim first volume of *Start Your Proofreading Side-Hustle: Maximize Your Writing Skills*. Due to recent world events that shifted careers and work-life in sudden and unexpected ways, people got interested in generating income from new and unconventional opportunities. Although every industry has suffered downsizing, proofreading is still a marketable and flexible skill that can benefit any field that produces written content. Self-starters with a strong teaching, writing, media or communications background can easily parlay their knowledge into a profitable proofreading business. However, copyediting requires a great deal more education, training and experience than proofreading.

Therefore, the first intention of *Copyediting 101: Grammar, Style & Practice*, is to distinguish between proofreading and copyediting, because the two are not the same. Proofreading lays the foundation for copyediting by presenting the basics of the act of editing, but proofing does not require revising or rewriting as does copyediting. Copyeditors not only correct simple grammar errors or typos, but shape otherwise mediocre writing into compelling error-free copy—sentence by sentence. In fact, as companies continue to downsize, a copyeditor might also function as an all-in-one writer and proofreader. So, expectations are fairly high for copyeditors, particularly for companies with limited budgets.

The second primary intention of this book is to provide a succinct introduction to copyediting for a general audience. Most copyediting books on the market cater to professionals who already work in the field, not to curious learners who want to generate multiple streams of income. For such readers, this book answers three fundamental questions: *What is copyediting? What do copyeditors do? Can this become a new mid-life career pivot opportunity?* Because this workbook is informational and introductory, anyone with an interest in copyediting can easily engage with the content regardless of education, experience or professional background. After working through the exercises, readers can determine whether or not this skill and profession is a good fit before spending additional financial resources pursuing copyediting for employment or side-hustling. By the end of this book, readers will gain a complete understanding of the duties, workflow and skill requirements for copyediting, and whether or not this is a viable career option.

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What is Copyediting?



What is Copyediting?

Copyediting occurs after a writer has completed the first draft of a document. It is the stage of the writing process where words and sentences are inserted or deleted and paragraphs are organized and arranged to form a cohesive longer document. Therefore, copyediting involves more than finding typos. This process ensures that a piece of writing is clear, correct and accurately reflects the style guidelines of the publication in which it appears. Basically, copyediting is the process of rewriting, revising and rearranging text to correct grammar, style, format and proofreading errors from sentence to sentence. Furthermore, copyediting is a technical skill that requires advanced training and practice in writing, editing, research and proofreading techniques.

Although copyediting spans a wide variety of industries, it is most beneficial for:

- College journalism students
- Creative writers/authors
- Teachers/professors
- Business owners/workplace professionals

- Graduate/doctoral students
- Newspaper/magazine staff
- Public relations/advertising
- Web designers/copywriters

What is a Copyeditor?

In a nutshell, copyeditors work with writers to correct and clean written content before it goes to print. Additionally, *copyeditor* is an employment title for a person who serves as quality control for written content by checking for errors, style, format, accuracy and consistency. Practically speaking, the job of the copyeditor is much more detailed and specialized than a proofreader. However, it helps to have a basic knowledge of proofreading, because all of those skills transfer to copyediting. Even if this position title is simply referred to as editor, the primary function of a copyeditor remains the same:

- Ensure that organization and word usage remain logical.
- Produce clean, clear, and concise content.
- Research and vet sources by fact-checking.

Copyeditor Responsibilities

What do copyeditors do? What do they check for in a piece of writing? The scope of duties for a copyeditor varies by industry. For example, a copyeditor for fiction writing at a publishing company might check for consistency in third person versus first person point of view, whereas a news editor concentrates on fact-checking and spelling. Regardless of the specialization, most copyeditors perform the following general duties:

• Check facts: names, dates, times, places, statistics, historical events, etc.	• Ensure that all maps, charts, graphics, captions and headings are correct.
• Check for libel and ethics violations. Consult with lawyers as necessary.	• Make corrections to grammar, spelling and punctuation.
• Check numbers and math equations: percents, totals, tax rates, flight numbers, street addresses, telephone numbers, etc.	• Reduce word count to fit text into a layout while preserving its main points. Revise passive voice verbs for active voice.
• Eliminate jargon, industry-speak and unfamiliar terms.	• Streamline the text to make it flow logically from one point to the next.
• Eliminate offensive language, racist imagery or off-color jokes to mitigate public backlash and to avoid lawsuits.	• Trim unnecessary words and phrases to make the writing more concise. Delete redundant and repetitive wording.
• Ensure conformity to style guide and publication standards (e.g., AP, Chicago).	• Write effective display type like headlines, summaries, photo captions or teasers.

Qualifications of a Copyeditor

Browsing through job position announcements is the fastest way to get a sense of the range of duties, qualifications and dispositions that companies look for when hiring copyeditors. Notice that most positions require a college degree and specialized writing skills, in contrast to proofreading. In fact, the text from two recent job posts demonstrates how copyeditor duties vary across industries.

Copyeditor Job #1

Responsibilities to include, but not limited to:

- Review and comment on course scripts and proofread material
- Create eBooks, white pages and email content
- Create various marketing material
- Edit content

Requirements/Qualifications:

- Hold a degree in either one of the following: English, Writing, Journalism, Literature, Communications or related courses such as: News Writing and Design, Creative Writing, Grammar
- 3+ years' experience in proofreading/editing/ reading
- Attention to detail in both written and visual materials
- Must be proficient in MS Office (Outlook, Word, Excel, PowerPoint)
- Must be proficient in Google Docs
- Strong time management skills
- Have the ability to manage multiple projects at once
- Strong written and verbal communication skills
- Be able to prioritize tasks and meet deadlines



Qualified applicants, please email your resume and cover letter to be considered for this position.

This job is ideal for someone who is:

- Dependable—more reliable than spontaneous
- Adaptable/flexible—enjoys doing work that requires frequent shifts in direction
- Detail-oriented—would rather focus on the details of work than the bigger picture
- Achievement-oriented—enjoys taking on challenges, even if they might fail
- Autonomous/independent—enjoys working with little direction

Copyeditor Job #2

Description of Responsibilities:

- Edits academic manuscripts for grammar, proper acronym usage and adherence to Chicago Manual of Style.
- Initiates and tracks the progress of publications through the JSOU Press production process in an efficient and expeditious manner.
- Edits professional scholarly works and other academic publications (i.e. Symposium Summaries or Compendiums, etc.) for JSOU contracted research and the JSOU Annual Research Plan.
- Supports publication and distribution of research monographs, books, and occasional papers.
- Supports the peer review process by coordinating subject matter expert reviews to maintain quality publications.
- Coordinate and facilitate JSOU's editorial board processes, directs revision/editing adjudication, and confirms that data and sources used within publications are valid and accurate.
- Update weekly department status report of assigned project(s), event(s), activity(s), and task(s) (e.g., status, accomplishments, issues/risks/concerns, changes, and notes).
- Maintains electronic archives and data characteristics, and shall understand all industry standards for publications, such as Adobe InDesign and Creative Suite, as well as JSOU systems such as SharePoint and Blackboard.
- Augment and assist JSOU's strategic engagement, research and analysis, and library directors in planning and conducting events, activities, and products as assigned.
- Inventory, support, and maintain department office common area and equipment, and personal space per department requirements.
- Understands image resolution and print production standards for high resolution graphics.

Requirements:

- BA/BS required in a relevant field (e.g., English, Journalism, Public Affairs) and/or 5 years' direct experience
- 2 years professional research and professional publication experience, knowledge of industry standards for academic publications
- Adobe Certified Associate: Print & Digital Media Publications using Adobe InDesign
- 4 years' experience in content and copy editing
- Ability to lift up to 25lbs