

# Proofreading Checklist for Authors

41 checks for the final version of your book. Use groups 1 to 5 on the Word file and the formatted proof, and group 6 on the ebook. Tick each box as you go.

| Stage                        | What you check                      | Groups                  | Tool                         |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| Word file, before formatting | Words, punctuation, consistency     | 1, 2, 3, 5              | Word, printed pages          |
| PDF proof, after formatting  | Everything, especially layout       | 1 to 5                  | PDF viewer, printed pages    |
| Printed proof copy           | Pages, cover, how it reads on paper | 4, 5, plus a final read | The proof copy and a pen     |
| Ebook preview                | Conversion and links                | 6                       | Kindle Previewer or a device |

## 1 Words and spelling

- ☐ Run spell check, then read anyway: it misses real words in the wrong place, such as "form" for "from."
- ☐ Look for doubled words ("the the"), especially across line breaks.
- ☐ Look for missing small words: a, the, to, of.
- ☐ Check names of people and places against your style sheet or character list.
- ☐ Check commonly confused words: its and it's, your and you're, affect and effect, lie and lay.
- ☐ Check compound words are spelled the same way every time (email or e-mail).
- ☐ Remove leftover comments, highlights, notes to yourself and placeholders such as "TK."

## 2 Punctuation and dialogue

- ☐ Quotation marks are curly and face the right way.
- ☐ Apostrophes face the right way, including at the start of a word ('90s, 'em).
- ☐ In US style, commas and periods go inside closing quotation marks.
- ☐ Each new speaker starts a new paragraph.
- ☐ Dashes and ellipses are styled the same way throughout.
- ☐ No double spaces between sentences or stray spaces before punctuation.
- ☐ Every opening quotation mark and bracket has a closing one.

## 3 Consistency

- ☐ Numbers are styled the same way (words or numerals) throughout.
- ☐ Capitalization of terms is consistent ("Mom said" but "my mom").
- ☐ Italics are used the same way for thoughts, foreign words and titles.
- ☐ Character details match: eye color, ages, the timeline.
- ☐ US or UK spelling, not a mix.
- ☐ Chapter numbers and titles match the table of contents.

**Six habits that catch more errors:** wait a few days first · change the font or read a PDF · read aloud · print it · check one thing per pass · recheck every fix.

#### 4 Pages and layout (print)

- ☐ Every chapter opens on the same side (right-hand or either) and in the same style.
- ☐ Page numbers run in order, with none missing.
- ☐ Running heads show the right text, and none appear on chapter-opening or blank pages.
- ☐ No short last line of a paragraph stranded at the top of a page.
- ☐ No bad word breaks at line ends, and no more than three hyphenated lines in a row.
- ☐ No big gaps between words in justified lines.
- ☐ Scene breaks are visible, even at the top or bottom of a page.
- ☐ Images and captions sit in the right place and aren't cut off.

#### 5 Front and back matter

- ☐ Title, subtitle and author name match on the title page, cover and spine.
- ☐ The copyright page shows the right year and the ISBN for this edition (paperback and hardcover each need their own).
- ☐ The table of contents matches the chapter titles and page numbers.
- ☐ Names in the dedication and acknowledgments are spelled correctly.
- ☐ The author bio is current and any website or links are correct.
- ☐ An "Also by" list or series order is correct.
- ☐ The back cover copy and spine text have been proofread too.

#### 6 Ebook

- ☐ Table of contents links go to the right chapters.
- ☐ Italics, bold and scene breaks survived conversion.
- ☐ No print page numbers or running heads are left in the text.
- ☐ Each chapter starts on a new screen.
- ☐ Every link works.
- ☐ You've checked the file in Kindle Previewer or on a device, on more than one screen size.

**After the proof:** send your formatter a list of corrections (page, line, now reads, change to) rather than a new Word file. A blank corrections log is free at [authorwings.com/guides/proofreading-checklist/](https://authorwings.com/guides/proofreading-checklist/).

#### Notes and errors to fix

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**Want a fresh pair of eyes?** AuthorWings proofreading is done by a human proofreader who checks your final file or proof pages against your style sheet. See [authorwings.com/book-editing/](https://authorwings.com/book-editing/).