AUTHORWINGS GUIDES · FREE CHECKLIST

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.

Free to use for your own books

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/.

Notes and errors to fix

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/.