

Stages of editing

Editing is about much more than eliminating errors. It is about making sure that your content is well structured and well written, so your audiences can easily find and understand the information. There are 3 main stages of editing.

Substantive edit

Substantive editing (sometimes called structural editing) is about information design – the structure and flow of the 'story'; the tone and voice of the writing; and the navigation tools and visual elements to help readers navigate and understand the content.

The main tasks are to ensure that:

- the information is
 - accurate
 - presented and structured in a logical way
 - appropriately divided into sections
 - easy to read and understand
- the tone is appropriate for the audience
- repetition and irrelevant material are deleted
- headings reflect the content accurately
- technical terms are explained and used consistently
- abbreviations are defined
- the referencing system is appropriate and references are accurately cited
- tables, figures and other illustrative materials are clear and appropriate for the text.

Copyedit

Copyediting focuses on the details of grammar, style and consistency. The main tasks are to:

- check grammar, syntax, spelling, punctuation and clarity of expression
- establish a consistent approach to terms, spelling, capitalisation, hyphenation, abbreviations, expression of numbers and quantitative data, and references
- check accuracy of cross-references within the text, and for the table of contents
- check accuracy and completeness in references and quotations
- check that sources have been acknowledged (e.g. in figures and tables)
- check that figures and tables are complete and consistent.

Proofread

Proofreading can be done before or after design, or both.

Tasks before design include:

- checking to ensure that the final text of the publication is free from any typographical errors, and from inconsistencies in style and presentation
- correcting the electronic copy
- ensuring that the documents to be sent to the designer include all supplied material (including preliminary pages, end matter, tables, figures and other illustrations), headings and other elements are appropriately styled for the designer, and all editorial instructions have been correctly applied
- marking up the text with instructions for the designer, as required.

Tasks after design include:

- ensuring that the page proofs from the designer include all supplied material (including preliminary pages, end matter, tables, figures and other illustrations), the publication is appropriately laid out and all editorial instructions have been applied
- printing the files and proofreading to ensure that the final text of the publication is free from any typographical errors, and from inconsistencies in style and presentation
- returning marked-up page proofs to the designer for correction
- checking revised page proofs to ensure that proofreading changes have been entered correctly, title pages and other preliminary pages have been included, pagination is correct (e.g. there are no widows or orphans), page numbers match the table of contents and all design features have been applied consistently.