

# The Difference Between a Copyeditor and a Proofreader

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## Copyeditor:

A copyeditor is your partner in publication. He or she will make sure the piece of writing you've created is the best story it can possibly be. He or she will look not only at the big picture, but also at the small details, and make suggestions for changes as needed. This will lead to dreaded rewrites, but don't fret. It's all for the good of the piece, and ultimately, that is your goal: to put your best work out there.

Here are some examples of what a copyeditor does to help you improve your story:

- Corrects spelling, grammar, punctuation, and syntax
- Picks up on opportunities to use a better word or a better phrase
- Checks for unnecessary repetition and redundancy
- May or may not do a certain degree of fact-checking, such as dates, names, and events (depending on the project and what is agreed upon)
- Points out obvious statements that may have legal implications
- Checks for consistency in:
  - Spelling
  - Grammar
  - Description of a person, place, or thing throughout the story
- If applicable, also checks for consistency compared with other works from the same company or publication
- If applicable, makes sure the writing adheres to the publisher's preferred style guide
- Checks for continuity in the story
- May suggest minor revisions of text to improve the flow and structure of the story
- Is focused on the message of the text that is coming through to the reader and checks for readability to ensure that the reader can grasp the concepts of what has been written and understands it
- Points out or corrects confusing phrases
- Makes suggestions, such as with:
  - Transition issues
  - Wordiness
  - Jargon that may not be understood by all readers
  - Anomalies in the writing
  - Ambiguity
- Makes sure that what has been written is concise, clear, correct, comprehensible and consistent

- Checks to see if all parts of the story are cohesive and complete, and that all loose ends are tied up
- Develops style sheets to be used by the proofreader. These style sheets can also be useful to you, as the author, for any rewrites that arise for the copyediting process.

Your copyeditor may also check for placement of headers and footers and make sure they are standardized. He or she may also check for esthetics, such as white space, placements of headlines, columns, etc. But even though he or she may check for these types of things, the copyeditor concentrates more heavily on the terminology of the story than the form. His or her goal is to help you improve what you wrote so that it is the best it can be.

### **Proofreader:**

A proofreader is your last line of defense. He or she is responsible for the final quality check in order to catch the errors that were missed throughout the editing process and make sure your copy looks perfect for printing. But even though the proofreader does one last check for errors in spelling, grammar and semantics, and may check the correct word usage, such as homonyms and homophones, he or she is not checking terminology or any necessity for revisions. The proofreader does not suggest any changes to your writing. Instead, he or she is focused on form and making sure it looks correct.

A proofreader will examine the final copy of your work after it has been edited with a focus on:

- Formation
- Consistency of the layout
- Correct placement of columns and headlines on the page
- Correct placement of chapter breaks and scene breaks on the page
- Spacing: making sure there are no extra spaces between words or between lines
- Consistency with text font, highlights, bold, italics, spacing, underscoring, etc.
- Consistency in formatting, including headers, footers and the order of the page numbers
- Readability, such as clarity versus blurriness

The proofread will also check for the grammatical accurateness of the text, but not necessarily the message of the text. The proofreader works under the impression that by this stage, the message is as correct as it's going to get.

Depending on the project, and where and how it's being published, the proofreader may have other specific things he or she will look out for. But in the end, the proofreader's ultimate goal is to do one last check for basic errors

in the writing and make sure your copy is set correctly and looks perfect for printing.