

Copy Editing at [company]

The function of a copy editor is different at different publishers. At some publishers, copy editing might include developmental editor tasks, such as improving flow and structure by moving sections and chapters. At other publishers, the copy editor might also do proofreading.

This document will explain how copy editing works at [company]. But first, let's set expectations about the kind of books we produce.

The Author is Always Right

At some publishers, editors are empowered to make changes as they see fit to make the best possible book. At [company], the author has paid us to produce a book that is exactly the way THEY want it.

We also need to get the book out quickly. We often say, "We're not making a \$100K book, we're making a \$25K book." The author isn't paying for endless rounds of edits and revisions to make the book perfect.

We obviously won't let a book go out with egregious errors, But there will be times as a copy editor when you'll see books come through that you think could be better. For example, the book you're editing might have way too many sports analogies. Maybe an author likes the look of really short sentences. Some authors don't like to use contractions (I'll vs I will) because they think it sounds unprofessional. (Whenever possible, we'll capture an author's wishes such as these in our project management app, Teamwork.)

At the end of the day, our job is to make the author happy and get the book finished quickly.

Multiple Copy Editing Levels

At [company], manuscript work is split between four positions:

- Ghostwriter (GW): Does the bulk of writing, editing, and polishing of manuscript
- Editor: Advises GW on developmental edits and line edits, including writing mechanics and content flow
- Copy Editor: Ensures final manuscript meets CMOS standards and follows [company] style guide, fixes grammatical errors
- Proofreader: Final check for error, typos and formatting issues before printing

Ghostwriter (GW)

The GW takes the rough manuscript (cleaned up interview transcripts) and turns it into a document that feels like a book, while preserving the author's voice. The GW at [company] does a lot of the work of a developmental editor, like keeping the material in line with the outline, ensuring the document has proper flow, moving sections where needed, and adding the right headings. (However, at [company] DE tasks like author handholding and project management are done by the Book Publisher position.)

The GW also does line editing work, editing the manuscript at the sentence level for clarity.

Editor

After the GW has shaped the manuscript, it goes to the Editor. The Editor at [company] performs line editing work, with a little DE work. The Editor will mark up anything they see that needs improvement, like language issues, writing mechanics, or confusing flow or structure. They give the GW the marked-up manuscript along with global comments. The GW revises the draft until it meets their Editor's standards. The manuscript then goes to the author, who will work through revisions with the GW. It's possible the author may veto the Editor's suggestions (or even change some of the GW's work). When the author is satisfied with the manuscript, it goes to the copy editor.

Copy Editor

At [company] the copy editor's role is light editing. They will ensure the final manuscript meets CMOS standards and follows [company] style guide, and that there are no grammatical errors or typos.

By the time the copy editor gets the manuscript, it has already gone through many rounds of revisions. The GW and the Editor have worked with the GW to improve language, structure and flow; the GW worked with the author to get everything *exactly* the way the author wants it. There have been authors who have done a fine-toothed comb revision of the manuscript and have even told the GW *exactly* where the periods for each sentence need to go. Remember the part about the author always being right? Keep repeating it to yourself as the copy editor. Even if you see things you think could be improved, it's not your job to improve them.

Proofreader

After the author has done their final review after all the copyedits, the book is formatted, and the galleys go to proofreading, the final step before printing.

A [company] Copy Editor SHOULD:

- Ensure the document conforms to the Chicago Manual of Style and the [company] Style Guide. This is the bulk of the work of the copy editor.
- Check that the document has proper formatting according to [company] style guide
- Ensure consistency in formatting and structure
- Fix errors in punctuation and grammar

NOTE: This is a high-level description. You'll receive the **Copy Editor's Checklist** with all the details of what you should do.

A [company] Copy Editor Should NOT:

- Perform a line edit on the manuscript. Caveat: If you encounter an especially badly constructed sentence that's hard to parse, leave a comment with the suggested fix.
- Add/remove headings
- Change heading titles
- Move sections and/or paragraphs to other locations in the document

- Change the structure or formatting of content in a section. For example, maybe you think the paragraph content in a section would work better in a bulleted list.
- Combine repeated information within a section
- Fact check (caveat: if you happen to be familiar with the subject matter and see something that's horribly wrong, leave a comment for the GW)

The bottom line: **consider the manuscript FINISHED by the time it gets to copy edit.**

Questions?

Hopefully that will give you a better sense of the copy edit process at [company]. If you have any questions, contact [Head of Editing].