



*Tips and tools*  
FOR CONTENT & DESIGN

# Copy Editing Checklist

Copy editors need to check spelling and grammar, ensure consistency, fix acronyms, improve readability ... even make sure URLs work!

A checklist can help. At Dragonfly, this checklist for Microsoft Word documents has been key to increasing the quality and consistency of our editing. We hope it helps you too.

## 1. DO YOUR HOUSEKEEPING

Before you turn on Track Changes, tidy up the document. Cosmetic changes like these don't need to be recorded.

**Select Save a Copy and rename the file according to your conventions.**

**Search and replace:**

- two spaces → one space
- quote → curly quote
- apostrophe → curly apostrophe
- en dash → em dash (as appropriate)
- double hyphen → en dash or em dash (as appropriate)
- spaces around ens, ems, and slashes → no spaces
- e.g. and i.e. → e.g., and i.e.,

## 2. COPY EDIT

Make two passes through the document, start to finish. Read slowly and carefully the first time. Go at a reader's pace the second time. Reading at different speeds will help you catch different types of errors.

**Turn on Track Changes.**

**Set view to Simple Markup.**

**Run spell-check.**

**Make your first copyediting pass:**

- Fix spelling, grammar, and punctuation.
- Ensure consistent style (e.g., capitalization, hyphenation, and numbers).
- Ensure correct syntax and usage.
- Query inconsistencies, factual errors, gaps in logic, and organizational problems.
- Query sexist/biased language and inappropriate tone.
- Confirm URLs, phone numbers, email addresses, and the like.

**Improve readability and clarity:**

- Enhance readability by reducing jargon, breaking up overly long sentences or paragraphs, and adding heads/subheads.
- Enhance clarity by rewording awkward, convoluted, confusing, or imprecise text.
- Enhance conciseness by reducing wordiness, redundancy, and passive voice.

**Reconcile acronyms:**

- Spell out acronyms at first reference.
- Delete acronyms used only once.
- Create an acronym list or add missing acronyms to an existing list.

**Record any queries using Comments.**

**Make a second quick pass, looking for errors that were missed or accidentally introduced in your first pass.**

**Review your comments; remove or resolve any you can.**



### 3. RUN A HORIZONTAL QUALITY CHECK

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Now, instead of reading the document top to bottom, skip from one similar section to another, looking for consistency across the document.

- Check front matter:**
  - Are volume numbers and names correct?
  - Do they match what's in the header and footer?
- Check all cross-references:**
  - Are references to other sections, volumes, attachments, or appendices correct?
- Check exhibits:**
  - Are captions correctly capitalized and punctuated?
  - Is numbering correct and consecutive?
  - Does each exhibit have a callout, correctly numbered?
- Examine bulleted lists. Does each have:**
  - Correct end punctuation for the introductory sentence?
  - Correct punctuation for each bulleted item?
  - Items worded in a parallel manner?
- Fix the table of contents:**
  - Are all entries correct?
  - Are all page numbers correct?

- Ensure correct, consistent formatting across:**
  - Headers and footers
  - Page numbering and section numbering
  - Font type and size
  - Use of italics and boldface
  - Margins, leading, and justification of text
- If there's a bibliography, check:**
  - Consistency of reference list with given style
  - Consistency of in-text citations with given style
  - Agreement between citations and reference list

### 4. FINISH UP

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Almost done! These last few steps will help you catch errors inadvertently entered in the text.

- Turn off Track Changes.**
- Run a final replace of two spaces → one space.**
- Run a final spell-check.**

Do a final Save, and you're done!

