

## Inside *The McGraw-Hill Desk Reference for Editors, Writers, and Proofreaders*

Get a sampling of what's inside *The McGraw-Hill Desk Reference for Editors, Writers, and Proofreaders* with these excerpts, from

**Part One: *Gearing Up to Edit***

**Part Two: *The 3 Cs: What to Look for as You Work***

**Part Three: *Onscreen and Online***

**Appendix A: *Specialty Editing***



### From Part I Gearing Up to Edit

#### ***Part Opener***

Before you actually sit down to edit a piece of writing, you need to gear up. You need to know some details about the project, about what's expected of you, and some basics about how to do your job. The two chapters in this part will prepare you to do your best work with no wasted motion.

#### ***From Chapter 1 Before You Begin***

Stop. Set down your red pencil. Move away from the keyboard. Before you read the first word or mark the first change, there are things about every editorial project you should know.

#### **What Level of Work Will You Do?**

Is it your job simply to snag typos and catch foot-tall faux pas in grammar, or will you need to check facts, reword, reorder, and generally revamp the writing to make it the best it can be? There's a big difference—and many levels of editorial effort—between the two approaches, and you shouldn't begin until you know what's wanted.

Editorial tasks fall on a continuum, with proofreading at one end and substantive editing at the other. Generally, in proofreading, the goal is editorial accuracy; in editing, it's accuracy *and* improvement. Here's how the levels of editorial review differ:

- **Standard proofreading** involves making sure writing is free of mechanical errors—in spelling, punctuation, consistency, and some elements of formatting—and is grammatically correct.
- **Editorial proofreading** encompasses all the tasks in standard proofreading, plus a few minor tweaks to ensure clarity and correct word choice.
- **Copyediting** involves all proofreading tasks and also improves phrasing and organization to make the writing more effective.
- **Substantive editing** calls for a greater level of rewriting and reorganization and even for suggesting new approaches and ideas.

Here's a single sentence, edited at the four different levels:

- **Original text:** *What makes a good editing jobs into a grate editing job, is keeping both the rules and the reader in mind.*
- **Standard proofreading:** *What makes a good editing job into a great editing job is keeping both the rules and the reader in mind.*
- **Editorial proofreading:** *What turns a good editing job into a great editing job is keeping both the rules and the reader in mind.*
- **Copyediting:** *Keeping the reader as well as the rules in mind is what turns a good editing job into a great one.*
- **Substantive editing:** *Good editors apply the rules of writing; great ones do it with the reader in mind.*



## From Part II

### The 3 Cs: What to Look For as You Work

#### *Part Opener*

Effective writing needs to be three things—*correct*, *consistent*, and *clear*. In this part, we'll show you what that means and give you the tools to ensure that anything you edit is all three. For those with loftier goals, we'll also offer guidance on how to take writing to the next level—*compelling*.

#### *From Chapter 3*

##### *Is It Correct?*

#### **Agreement Is All-Important**

Sentences in which the parts don't match up can confuse the reader or alter the meaning. Fortunately, most people naturally choose the right words. But there are times when the right choice is less obvious. Here are the basics of agreement, plus some help with perennial puzzlers.

**Counting Is Key.** Agreement in *number* is fundamental to good grammar. Singular subjects need singular verbs and singular pronouns, and plural subjects need plural verbs and plural pronouns: (CMS 5.12, 5.40–41, 5.123)

**Correct:** *Joe is a man who knows his own mind.*

**Correct:** *Bob and Steve are two men who know their own minds.*

Simple enough. But what happens when more words move in? To keep your subject and verb in sync, don't be distracted by what comes between them. (CMS 5.123; *Garner* 174–75; *WC* 92–93; *Woe* 50–53)



**Correct:** *Each of the candidates **has her** strengths.*

**Incorrect:** *Each of the candidates **have their** strengths.*

And make sure you've matched the right subject with the right verb. Watch out for sentences that have more than one:

**Correct:** *She is one of those people **who make** it look easy.*

**Incorrect:** *She is one of those people **who makes** it look easy.*

In this sentence, the first subject is *she*, and the first verb is *is*. No confusion there. But here's the tricky part: The second subject is *who*, and the second verb is *make*. And because *who* is standing in for *people*, it needs a plural verb (*make*, not *makes*).

**Tip**

With the phrases *one of the*, *one of those*, or *one of these*, look for the pronoun *that* or *who* before the verb. If it's there, the verb that follows is plural. If it's not, the verb is singular. (*Woe* 60–61; *Garner* 572–73)



## From Part III Onscreen and Online

### **Part Opener**

More and more, writing, editing, and proofreading involve a keyboard and a screen rather than a pencil and sticky notes. And hallelujah, we say. Electronic editing is a boon beyond belief, provided you and the software are on speaking terms.

In this part we'll help you make three ubiquitous applications—Microsoft Word, Adobe Acrobat, and Microsoft PowerPoint—your editing friends. We'll also give you pointers for editing materials on and for the World Wide Web.

Where we could, we've been generic as we discuss electronic editing tools, but often we had to be specific. So keep in mind that the information in these chapters is based on the version of the software noted and the default settings in that software.

If you're working with a different version, you may need to dig a bit to locate a particular tool or feature. And if your version is old enough, certain features might be missing. But for the most part, you should be able to find what you need with just a little hunting.

Also, we've made no attempt to tell you *every* way to do something; just the way or ways we've found useful. We're sure some of you will have found other, maybe easier, ways to use some of the features we discuss; congratulations, and could you send us an e-mail?

Electronic editing is here to stay and getting easier all the time. If you haven't dipped into the virtual pool, the chapters that follow will help you get wet. If you're in it already (maybe up to your neck), you might learn some new strokes.



**From Chapter 6**  
**Microsoft Word Documents**

**Formatting**

Many times, production gurus, not editors, handle the finer points of formatting a Word document. But even if your focus is the words and not the window dressing, there are items you'll need to format, as a part of your editing.

And sometimes, particularly in business settings, whoever edits a document (report, newsletter, manual, etc.) also shines it up for printing and distribution. If that's your job, you'll need Word's formatting tools to do it.

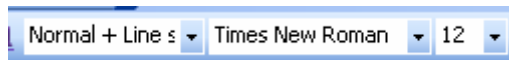
And there are a lot of them. Word offers so many ways to alter the appearance of a document that we won't even pretend to cover them all. Instead, we'll confine ourselves to the formatting tasks editors tackle most often, and the things that sometimes make them grind their teeth.

Over the years, we've spent way too much time fighting the formatting instead of tending the words, and we bet you have, too. Here are some ways to restore balance.

**Take Advantage of the Toolbars**

If formatting is part of your project, Word's Formatting toolbar will get almost as much of a workout as the Reviewing toolbar. With it, you can:

Change the style, font, and point size of text:



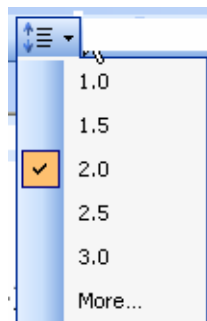
Click on **B** for bold, *I* for italics, or U for underlining:



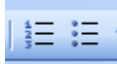
Left align, center, right align, and justify text:



Change the line spacing of text:



Create numbered or bulleted lists:

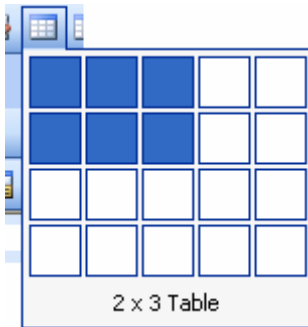


Choose a highlight color or a font color:

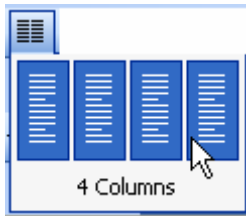


And in addition to the *real* basics, like opening, closing, saving, printing, cutting, copying, pasting, and spell-checking, the Basic toolbar contains editorial extras. On it, you can:

Insert a table, choosing the number of rows and columns in it:



Create columns by highlighting text and choosing how many columns you'd like it to break into:



## **From Appendix A Specialty Editing**

### ***Part Opener***

In many ways, editorial review is editorial review, no matter what the writing is about. Whether the subject is botany or brake repair, investing or interstellar space, your objective is always the same—to ensure that the finished product is correct, consistent, and clear. And the stepwise procedures you use to reach that goal (see Chapter 2) shouldn't vary.

That said, it's also true that each industry, each client, and each project has its own



nuances. There are literally hundreds of editorial specialty areas that have their own peculiarities and requirements, and familiarity with their quirks makes meeting their needs much easier.

To that end, we'll offer tips on four areas: advertising, annual reports with financials, catalog copy, and computer-related text.

## **Special Topics, Not Special Skills**

Don't think that because you don't have expertise in a particular field, you can't edit material for it. With the guidelines in this book, your general editorial experience, and a good style sheet or two, you have what it takes to do a very capable review.

Also, in reading any material, you begin to see *patterns*, and you quickly notice when something doesn't quite fit that pattern. For example, if in computer-related text you repeatedly see "Click on the OK button" and "Click on the Next button," and suddenly you see "*Press* the OK button," you know you've got an inconsistency on your hands that requires a change or a query.

Still, in specialty editing you might need to let go of some things you'd ordinarily mark or change in general text. Particular professions, industries, and projects often have reasons to use language in ways that don't conform to *Chicago* and *Webster's*, and you need to be sensitive to that. In specialty editing, it's important to be alert to, and respectful of, the style conventions of that specialty.

### ***From the section***

#### ***Computer-Related Text***

In computer-related materials, you'll see a lot of copy of that looks like English but isn't. It's a language spoken by computers, and computers are notoriously picky. Most people can overlook a misplaced comma or an extra space; computers can cough on them, or worse.

For that reason, as you tend to all the usual editorial tasks in computer-specific text, you'll need to tiptoe very carefully around programming code, field names, menus, screen elements, and other arcane, high-tech items.

But don't let that daunt you. Computer terminology is just another set of letters and symbols to watch for consistency and to query when they seem amiss. If you follow the guidelines described here and elsewhere in this book, any style guidelines you're given, and the checklist at the end of this chapter, *and* keep an eye out for patterns, you'll do fine.

Just remember one cardinal rule: don't make *any* changes to programming code. Correct the spelling, grammar, and punctuation in the text around it, but never alter the slightest detail in a piece of code. Even moving a period from outside quotation marks to inside or changing the capitalization of a word for "consistency" can cause a computer disaster. Following are examples of how code set off from text might appear:

```
hostname# router 1  
flash device:filename
```

