



The Copyeditor's Handbook: A Guide for Book Publishing and Corporate Communications, with Exercises and Answer Keys

Amy Einsohn

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The Copyeditor's Handbook is a lively, practical manual for newcomers to publishing and for experienced editors who want to fine-tune their skills or broaden their understanding of the craft. Addressed to copyeditors in book publishing and corporate communications, this thoughtful handbook explains what copyeditors do, what they look for when they edit a manuscript, and how they develop the editorial judgment needed to make sound decisions.

This revised edition reflects the most recent editions of *The Chicago Manual of Style* (15th ed.), the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (5th ed.), and *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (11th ed.).

The Copyeditor's Handbook: A Guide for Book Publishing and Corporate Communications, with Exercises and Answer Keys Details

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Clare Fitzgerald says

So my last career move was to take a copy editor position at a place that was happy to hire me with just my experience in technical editing and proofreading, and then proceeded to have no training in copy editing at all, let alone the substantive and developmental editing that they also expected. In an unsuccessful bid to self-train, I read The Copyeditor's Handbook, by Amy Einsohn.

Now, when I say this bid to self-train was unsuccessful, I do not mean that the book did not help me learn a lot about copyediting and improve, as nearly everyone I worked with regularly commented that I was improving. It's just that it did not save me my job, as the people I worked with and the people who decided who stayed and who got purged were different people, and the latter did not consult the former.

But I am glad I read the book anyway, for it is really an excellent treasure trove of information about what copyediting is, how best to approach it, what makes it different from other kinds of editing (information I sadly had to ignore but which I have filed away for future use in other positions), how office copyediting jobs are usually set up (this was where it was most obvious that the subject of the book was traditional book publishing, which is not what I was doing), and most importantly, how to do it. This involved a lot of exercises. The exercises were particularly great because they had an answer key that not only gave the right answers, but explained them, including style variants that would affect potential correct answers. It's also written in a lively, occasionally funny voice, and discusses the various controversies, myths, and general sticky points of language in a sensible, well-informed way. I also think it hits a good balance between teaching copyeditors to be conservative in their language use and edits without being cranky, backwards, or elitist.

I may need to invest in my own copy—it seems like a really good resource to have on hand and keep using.

Carrow Brown says

I was looking for a book about copyediting and this was a repeated referral. After reading, I can see why. It's fantastic in presentation, clear writing, and an easy read. I meant to take a week to read it, but finished it in a few days. The exercises in the book are a great reinforcement of the content and I bring the book with me to writing group now.

Dola Singh says

A must-read for anyone who takes editing seriously.

Kimi says

Betsy says

It's been 44 years since I started my first job out of college, as a copy editor at Scott, Foresman, educational publishers. Throughout my incredibly checkered career, one consistent thread has been editing. No matter what the job or where it's taken me, my editorial switch just always seems to be in the "on" position. This is the context for my reading of Amy Einsohn's very useful guide to copyediting.

Now that I'm retired from the completely engrossing field of user experience design, in which I worked as an information architect for many years, my dial is recalibrating to the somewhat less engrossing work of copyediting. I've been busy with this ever since I left VSA Partners, eager to abandon the "software du jour" requirements that made the job increasingly technical and ever more demanding.

I knew I needed some help in navigating the Chicago Manual of Style, which had tripled in size since my first copy, the 12th edition, in 1968. The 16th edition is over 1,000 pages and is fondly referred to as "the orange monster" by some of my editor pals. So I signed up for a couple of refresher courses offered online by the Editorial Freelancers Association, based in New York.

Einsohn's book is one of two texts for the course, and at a mere 500 or so pages it is the perfect companion piece to the CMS. The author writes with a light touch and a sense of humor. The language is simple and direct, and there are ample illustrations that accompany the text. Einsohn even includes exercises and an answer key.

If you think you've got potential as an editor, this book is a good place to start finding out. Most of copyediting consists of mechanical corrections and not the improvement of poorly written manuscripts. Surprised? I was, too, but this is reflective of the change that the world of publishing has undergone in the last three decades. If you're already working as a copy editor, you may be surprised to discover that making writing better falls in the category of "we don't have budget for that" and "that" is considered heavy copyediting. One thing this book and this course have made me realize is that I've been undercharging for my services!

Heather says

This is a terrific reference book. The book represents a lot of research and knowledge. Each chapter has many examples to demonstrate problems in writing, including practice sections at the end. It took me a while to read the entire book, but I know it will be a handy reference tool in the future.

Rachel Hoyle says

A quick reference and a must-have for any editor or writer. I haven't had a grammar lesson, since middle school, so this was a much-needed refresher on grammar, usage, and tricky/confusing word placement. There are exercises at the end of each chapter and corresponding answers in the back. Definitely worth the read/purchase!

Thomas Ray says

If you are reading this, you'll know the truth of this quote!

<https://www.goodreads.com/trivia/details...>

Ashley says

{This review is for the Third Edition, published in 2011.}

With all of the books out there on copyediting, it's not easy to know which ones are worthwhile and which ones are just freshly packaged regurgitation of stuff we already know. I'd heard of this book and made a mental note—but it wasn't until I came across Carol Fisher Saller's glowing praise and her interview with Einsohn (on Saller's Subversive Copyeditor blog) that I was sold. If it's good enough for our snarky friend at the University of Chicago Press, it's good enough for me.

And while *The Chicago Manual of Style* will always be my first love, who wouldn't appreciate a handbook with little gems like this:

"The American Revolution may have freed the colonies from British rule (and British spelling), but the legacy of post-Elizabethan social and political anxiety is still with us, in the form of, among other niceties, the taboo on ending sentences with prepositions, the turmoil over less and fewer, and the injunction against splitting infinitives."

The 560-page book (430 not counting glossaries, answer key, and index) is divided into three parts: The ABCs of Copyediting (which gets a narrow 67 pages); Editorial Style (the bulk of the book—for people who have a good ear for the English language but don't necessarily remember all the rules, this part will help you go back and learn why your ear tells you to punctuate a certain way); and Language Editing (including the section "Beyond Grammar," which touches on diction, stronger word choice, variety, and the like; I'm just getting to this part, which is the area I hope to learn the most from). There's also a comprehensive glossary, plus exercises and an answer key.

Though I'm still in the middle of this book, it stood out to me very early on as an especially helpful resource. Einsohn knows her stuff, and she pulls in well-chosen points from Follett, *Words into Type*, Strunk & White, *The Chicago Manual*, etc., as needed. Her approach is descriptive rather than prescriptive, which brings good

balance to the equation for black-and-white thinkers like me.

I had to smile when I saw that chapter 3 (Reference Books and Resources) recommends a title by “Carole” Fisher Saller. That’s right—somehow Carol gained an unusual, decorative “e” on her first name. But if Saller herself can overlook this typo and still deem herself a big fan of the book, I certainly can too. :)

10/12/2012 update:

Finished! The section on expository style from the copyeditor’s perspective was by far the most helpful part of the book for me. As Einsohn points out:

“There are several useful books on expository style, but most of them are, quite naturally, addressed to writers. For copyeditors, however, the task is not to develop one’s own style nor to revise a manuscript to meet one’s own taste. Rather, the task is to decide which kinks or knots in someone else’s writing seem likely to disrupt communication with the intended readers and then to revise those patches as unobtrusively as possible. These judgments are among the most difficult a copyeditor makes ...”

She follows this statement with 20 pages of very specific guidelines for making those difficult judgment calls—guidelines I need to emblazon over my desk. Or possibly on my forehead. Good stuff.

MaChelle Hill Thomas says

Resource guide in constant rotation

Elisa says

As far as reference books go, *The Copyeditor's Handbook* is informative, interesting, and easy to read. Einsohn writes clearly and succinctly and leaves no angle of copyediting unexplored. I'm an etymology nerd so I especially loved the footnotes about historic disagreements in terms of editing. Overall, a highly practical manual anyone interested in copyediting should have at the ready.

Andy says

Half the people on the major freelance editing and writing circuit have desktop published their own books (which they'll happily sell you--in PDF format), and not one that I've read is worth a yard-sale price. Einsohn's book, on the other hand, really gives the entry-level editor what is needed to start the job on the right foot: advice, techniques, processes, and loads of tips and practice segments.

Now, all you need is someone to pay you for being a manuscript tyrant...

Swapnali Saikia says

This was my first book purchase when I took up my first job as an editor for technology writing in the corporate world. I found the book extremely helpful, because we hardly had any guidance or training on the art and science of copyediting. What I best liked about this book is the "Reference Book and Resources" section. I bought some of the books recommended in this section, and the learning from those books is manifold.

Clare Carter says

2.5 stars

I had to read this for class and it was long and boring but I SUPPOSE I learned some stuff.

Katie says

As engaging as a book about copy-editing can be. A great guide for beginners. I skipped the parts that seemed very outdated (i.e. working with hard copies).
