

<https://www.stylemanual.gov.au/writing-and-designing-content/editing-and-proofreading> Editing and proofreading Editing and proofreading help ensure consistency so content meets user needs and expectations. Editing is integral to clear content Editing is part of the work of any team that creates and publishes content. Editing helps content meet user and business needs by ensuring it is: appropriate for the audience easily understood free from errors, consistent and complete. Digital Service Standard requirements You must make sure content is clear, accurate and consistent to meet the Digital Service Standard: Criterion 6. Consistent and responsive design Criterion 9. Make it accessible Accessibility requirements User needs: I can understand any information contained in an image. I can access equivalent information to anything contained in a video or audio file. I can change the content's presentation without losing information or structure. I can find and navigate the content and determine where I am on the webpage. I can avoid making any mistakes with my inputs, and correct any that I might make. Fundamentals: You must make sure content is consistent, has a clear structure and is error free to make it accessible for all users. Make sure content uses plain language. This helps all users and is essential for some. Avoid (or explain) unusual words, phrases and idioms. Expand all acronyms on their first use. Make sure other content elements, including captions, transcripts, alt text, link text, headings and instructions are accessible to all users. Web Content Accessibility Guidelines success criteria: Content types Structuring content Referencing and attribution 1.1.1 Non-text content – level A 1.2.2 Captions (prerecorded) – level A 1.2.3 Audio description or media alternative (prerecorded) – level A 1.3.1 Info and relationships – level A 1.3.2 Meaningful sequence – level A 1.3.3 Sensory characteristics – level A 2.4.2 Page titled – level A 2.5.3 Label in name – level A 3.3.2 Labels or instructions – level A 2.4.6 Headings and labels – level AA 3.3.3 Error suggestion – level AA 2.4.9 Link purpose (link only) – level AAA 2.4.10 Section headings – level AAA 3.1.5 Reading level – level AAA 3.1.3 Unusual words – level AAA 3.1.4 Abbreviations – level AAA 3.3.5 Help – level AAA Types of editing (levels) There are different levels of editing. Each involves specific tasks that happen at certain stages in content development. The aim in any level of edit is to meet user needs and make sure content is fit for purpose. Substantive editing focuses on content, style, structure and meaning The substantive edit reviews structural and textual elements when the draft content is complete. Substantive editing shapes text to make meaning clear. It also improves the structure, usability, language and presentation of the content. It is sometimes called a structural edit. Before starting, agree on the scope of the substantive edit in the team. The substantive edit can: conduct a plain English review to check sentence length, replace complex words with simpler alternatives and remove jargon check the design of the content to make sure it is the best possible format reorganise content to improve the flow of information and navigation identify gaps in the content or any information that can be removed reword content to make it easier to understand and to achieve consistent voice and tone check compliance with specific government requirements. The style sheet is updated through a substantive edit to record any decisions that can inform a copyedit. Substantive editing is not rewriting or fact-checking Substantive editing does not: write a significant amount of new content (but it can include advice to add more content) substantially rewrite to shorten text (but it can involve advice to delete content) choose the right typeface or apply formatting styles (but can include checking bolded, italicised and underlined font) fact-check, such as checking names of people and places, dates, citations, quotes or links to external content. An editor can rewrite or fact-check content, but these are separate tasks to substantive editing. They should happen before any editing begins. Copyediting focuses on consistency and accuracy Copyediting happens once the content is settled, for example, after the substantive edit. A copyedit shows whether content is consistent, accurate and complete. Before starting, agree on the scope of the copyedit within the team. An editor might identify substantive issues with the content during the copyedit. The team should decide how it will address those issues. If there is any more substantive editing or rewriting after the copyedit, the content will need to be copyedited again. During copyediting, an editor: corrects issues with language in line with the style sheet aligns the style of references and citations with agreed referencing style comments on inconsistencies in voice and tone. A copyedit also checks for issues or inconsistencies with: design, layout and function illustrations, tables, headings, sequences, internal links and other elements. The style sheet is updated during a copyedit to record style decisions. Copyediting is not substantive editing or rewriting Copyediting does not: restructure content (other than to make sentences clear and grammatically correct) write new content or shorten text rewrite text to unify voice or edit for plain English (other than to deal with isolated issues) format or design text fact-check check external links embedded in the content (other than a spot check in case there are systemic issues). Proofreading is about quality control Proofreading is a quality-assurance process. It happens after the copyedit. It is a final check on visual and textual elements. A proofread confirms that the content: is correct is complete meets the organisation's requirements to publish. Proofreading gives assurance: the content is ready to 'go live' the printing press can start running. Proofreading compares the content that is about to go live or to print with a master copy. The master copy is the current copy of the approved text. The master copy should be error-free so the proofreader can check for any introduced errors. A proofread compares the master copy with: the publishing platform the design proof from the designer a printer's proof from the printer. The proofread makes sure nothing gets changed or missed in any of these steps. The style sheet is a critical tool for this task, even though proofreading is not editing. (What many people call 'proofreading' is what editors call 'copyediting'.) The style sheet ensures proofreaders' work follows earlier style decisions. Proofreaders do not make changes to content. Proofreaders query issues such as: content that is different to the master copy, including changes, introduced errors and missing content missing or incorrectly placed elements such as links, page numbers, table headings and captions design elements like typefaces, heading styles and hierarchies, page breaks and spacing obvious errors in spelling or grammar, checked against the style sheet anything that goes against the decisions in the style sheet. The proofreader's queries go to whoever is responsible for resolving particular issues. There can be several rounds of proofreading until no errors remain. Each time proofing corrections are made, the proofreader should check the content again. Each check ensures there are no flow-on errors to the text, layout or design. 'Blind proofreading' is when there is no master copy. This requires an experienced proofreader, because there is no authorised version to compare against. Proofreading is not editing Proofreading is not editing and it is not a substitute for copyediting. Proofreading does not include checking: for inconsistent language, spelling or grammar non-textual elements, such as the content of tables or illustrations. Proofreaders notice issues and query them. Proofreading is not a chance to

have another round of editing, add more content, or add new functions to content. Proofreading is better with 2 people Proofreaders are most effective when working in teams of 2. The team is: a copyholder, who reads aloud from the master copy a reader, who checks the final version for changes and errors and marks up the content. This approach is especially helpful when checking complex, data-rich content, such as: mathematical or scientific content annual reports long financial tables. A style sheet is a useful tool The style sheet is a living record and a tool for communicating decisions in the content team. It helps to ensure quality and consistency. A style sheet includes decisions about: the dictionary you follow any spelling variations any variations you are making from this manual or your organisation's style guide. It can also include any style decisions informed by user research on user needs and accessibility. An editor adds to the style sheet as they edit, including elements such as: spelling capitalisation grammar punctuation. The updates ensure the style sheet records all decisions. Updates remove the need to repeat the decision-making process on any aspect of the content. Keeping a style sheet up to date means all team members can use the same style, making the content as consistent as possible. Australian standards set out specialist skills and know-how The Institute of Professional Editors (IPED), in consultation with all Australian editing societies, has developed the IPED standards for editing practice. This resource sets out the core standards that professional editors should meet. It is the foundation for IPED's national accreditation scheme. Release notes The digital edition provides an overview of editing and proofreading. It does not provide short-hand markup for proofreading, as the focus is on the digital environment. The sixth edition had a chapter on editing and proofreading that focused more on print. The Content Guide did not include information about editing and proofreading. About this page References Flann E, Hill B and Wang L (2014) *The Australian editing handbook*, Wiley, Milton. Canberra Society of Editors (2000) Commissioning checklist, Canberra Society of Editors website, accessed 23 April 2020. IPED (Institute of Professional Editors) (2013) *Australian standards for editing practice*, 2nd edn, IPED, accessed 10 March 2020. Lynch PJ and Horton S (2016) *Web style guide*, 4th edn, Yale University Press, New Haven and London. Mackenzie J (2011) *The editor's companion*, 2nd edn, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne. Neason A (15 January 2019) 'The perils of publishing without a fact-checking net', *Columbia Journalism Review*, accessed 10 March 2020. Nicoll C (2018) *Copyediting for accreditation* [unpublished training materials], Canberra Society of Editors, Canberra. Richards S (2017) *Content design*, Content Design London, London. Whitbread D (2009) *Design manual*, 2nd edn, UNSW Press, Sydney. W3C (World Wide Web Consortium) (2016) 'Readable: understanding Guideline 3.1', *Understanding WCAG 2.0: A guide to understanding and implementing WCAG 2.0*, W3C website, accessed 9 December 2019. W3C (2016) 'Web accessibility evaluation tools list', *Web Accessibility Initiative*, W3C website, accessed 8 December 2019. Last updated This page was updated Wednesday 3 November 2021.