

Tracy Johnson

Copyeditor

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COPYEDITING SERVICES

I read your manuscript word for word and, as such, I categorize copyediting into three levels: 1) light; 2) medium; and 3) heavy.

Light copyediting focuses primarily on certain mechanical issues:

- Spelling, capitalization, punctuation, hyphenation, and grammar.
- Subject-verb agreement and syntax (word order).
- Incorrect usage of words.
- Consistent treatment of numbers.
- Dangling modifiers (usually seen in phrases).
- Homophones (words pronounced the same as another word but not necessarily sharing the same meaning). They may or may not differ in spelling. Examples: rose (flower) or rose (past tense of rise); carat, caret, and carrot.
- Malapropism (the act of using an incorrect word in place of one that is similar in pronunciation). Incorrect: “We will precede cautiously.” Correct: “We will proceed cautiously.”
- Checking table of contents against figures, tables, etc. (cross referencing). Ensuring that everything is in correct order, including correctness of chapter numbers.
- Preparing a style sheet for rules and consistency. (*The Chicago Manual of Style* is what I refer to. However, I can accommodate other style manuals or guides as well.)
- Querying the author regarding conflicting statements, factual inconsistencies, or suspected factual errors.

Medium copyediting includes all of the above in addition to the following:

- Proposing rephrasing of convoluted writing.
- Flagging inappropriate, inaccurate, or ambiguous statements.
- Changing text and headings to achieve parallel structure.
- Enforcing consistent style, voice, and tone.
- Asking for definition of terms requiring clarification.
- Suggesting alternative word choices.
- Recommending alternatives for confusing or awkward sentences or phrases.
- Querying the author regarding repetition of words.

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Heavy copyediting (substantive) includes everything involved in the two levels above, plus some or all of the following:

- Proposing rephrasing of convoluted writing.
- Cutting wordiness, triteness, and inappropriate jargon.
- Changing passive voice to active voice, if requested.
- Smoothing transitions and moving sentences to improve readability.
- Suggesting new or reworded headings.
- Redistributing heading levels for a more logical structure.
- Suggesting and possibly implementing additions and deletions, noting them at the sentence and paragraph level.
- Moving material from long notes into text.
- Fact checking.
- Moving ancillary material from text into notes.
- Adding or removing tables.
- Removing non-essential words and tightening prose.
- Formatting manuscript.
- Creating a bibliography from documentation in the notes.

Basically, there are more judgment calls and rewrites involved in the substantive editing stage. The editor goes far above simply correcting grammar and misspellings, attempting to improve the overall flow of the text or message.