

Checklist for proofreaders

Fortunately, the copy-editor will have done more than 95 per cent of the points in Chapter 16. Your job is just to see that the typesetter has set everything as instructed; so you'll be looking for 'typos' or print errors, or 'literals' – misspellings when the copy-editor 'nodded'. [At this point, the copy-editor adds a hyphen to that word (copy-editor), it having been previously missed by both of us. She cheers me up by writing 'nod . . . nod . . .' in the margin. One thing leads to another; I know it has something to do with Homer, but what? Before looking at the answer below, ask yourself truthfully, do you know the source? I find the answer in a dictionary of quotations: Horace (might as well do the Ben Schott thing – *Quintus Horatius Flaccus, 65–8 BC, Roman poet whose Odes and Epistles portray Roman life in great detail*). In *Ars Poetica*, he wrote: 'I'm aggrieved when sometimes even excellent Homer nods.' I'm happy to have found this out. It's annoying to know half a thing but not all. If I'd been copy-editing or proofreading this page, I'd have made no money for the past 15 minutes. There were another 46 Horace quotations to read, and just about every one is entirely memorable.]

Since you'll have the typescript alongside the proofs, you can see what the copy-editor has done, so as you read you'll become aware (or should do!) of any minor inconsistencies that have been allowed to pass by the copy-editor. Remember how useful it is to pencil in a mark in the margin so that you can refer back quickly to anything of which you are uncertain. When you have resolved a particular point, erase the pencil mark. Use post-its for quick referral to your own queries. Remember also to make sure the house editor has sent you a style guide (see Chapter 17). As you become more experienced you will need only to refresh your memory at the outset.

The proofreader will have to:

- ensure a consistent style has been used throughout
- check for any errors in spelling, layout, headings, etc.
- check all running heads, page numbers, cross-references, prelims, etc.
- check to see that page depths are not too short or too long, in other words be ready to spot an obvious case, say a page three lines short for no reason
- fill in page numbers on the contents page; check the number corresponds to the correct page in the text
- mark up typesetter's errors in red, editorial (copy-editor's) in blue unless proofreading on-screen
- make only such changes as are absolutely necessary, i.e. keep them to a minimum
- make a separate list of any queries you may have, including if you are unsure as to whether to change something