

# PROOFREADING CHECKLIST

Proofreading is the final step in editing your novel. A common mistake is the conflation between proofreading and copy editing, but these are two very different processes—as you'll see in the list below. Where copy editing focuses on element consistency (spelling, style, punctuation), proofreading has a few more features: Namely, the final formatted file is complete, consistent in design, and the design and formatted elements are readable.

Common errors can include quotation marks facing the wrong direction, missing punctuation, and the occasional misspelling that makes it past copy editors (it happens!). Other errors can include inconsistent running heads (the headers at the tops of the pages that usually consist of the author's name and the manuscript title), pages that are an inconsistent length, and hyphen ladders (known simply as "ladders").

The checklist on the next page covers some of the most common proofreading checks, and it's similar to the one I use when proofreading client manuscripts.

Remember:

- Take it slow and easy when proofreading, and rely on your style sheet.
- Proofreading is not the place for rewriting. You might be tempted to make more changes; instead, let that instinct go. Proofreading is about changing as little as possible.

*Rachel L. Oestreich*

# Proofreading Checklist

## Before Reading:

- The file is complete
- Page numbers are consistent & consecutive
- Page headers (also called “running heads”) are consistent & spelled right
- Pages are all a consistent length

## While Reading:

- First paragraph of every chapter flush left (not indented)
- First paragraph after section break flush left (not indented)
- All quotation marks (“) and apostrophes (‘) are facing the right direction
- Ellipses are formatted correctly (refer to style sheet)
- All terms and names are spelled correctly
- All names and appropriate terms are capitalized
- Internal design elements are consistent
  - Chapter headers
  - Section/scene breaks
- There are no ladders (3+ lines ending in hyphens)
- There are no word stacks (3+ lines beginning/ending with the same word/same 3-5+ letters—this style option is unique to all; I like looking for stacks of 3+ letters, but you might have a different preference. Just make sure it's consistent.)

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If you have any questions about how to use this checklist, or if you'd like to double-check a change in your proofread, email me at the address below.