

Anatomy of a book

Editors work on all kinds of text, from marketing materials, theses and reports to blogs and websites. However, a core area of work for many editors is still books, for print or online publication. All books are different, but many adhere to a standard basic structure. This helps the author and the publisher order the information, but more importantly it helps the reader navigate the finished book, making it a truly useful and accessible resource.

This fact sheet looks at some of the main features of books. Not all books will include all of the features – some are more applicable to either fiction or non-fiction, and the order of them might vary, but this is a useful starting point.

Key terminology

Recto/Verso

The recto is the right-hand page in a double-page spread (two facing pages). The verso is the other side of the same page. Page 1 of a book intended to be read from left to right is always on the recto, with page 2 and all subsequent even numbers on the verso.

Folios

These are the page numbers. The proofreader will need to check them. They will also need to check and perhaps insert cross-references. Folio is also the name for a sheet of typescript, and a traditional book size.

Running heads/Footers

These are the headings that run across the tops of pages (or sometimes the bottoms of pages, or the sides). They are usually omitted from the opening page(s) of chapters or sections within the book. Running heads help with navigation by reminding the reader of the title of the book, and/or the chapter or section they are currently reading. The copyeditor might be tasked with writing running heads, sometimes to a strict character limit. The proofreader will need to check they're correctly applied.

Format

The size of a book (height × width, in millimetres).

Extent

The length of a book (number of pages).

Front matter/Prelims

This is the opening section of the book, which contains information about the book but is separate from the main body. Often it is numbered differently from the rest of the book, for example using roman numerals.

Half-title and title page

Not all books will have a half-title and a title page. The half-title is typically the first page of the book, opposite the endpapers, and it will show just the title of the book. The title page is a double-page spread that usually displays (on the recto) the name of the book and the subtitle, the author(s)/main illustrator(s) and the publisher's name and colophon (logo). There may be a frontispiece (illustration or photo) on the verso.

Imprint page

The imprint page includes the publisher's name, address and website, the date of publication, the copyright notice, ISBN (International Standard Book Number) and other publication information. It may also list the other contributors to a book, and where the book was printed. Sometimes the imprint details are placed at the end of the book.

Contents

The contents lists the parts or chapters of the book with page references. It may also list sections within chapters, if there is space. The page references will need to be checked (and sometimes completed) by the proofreader. It's also important to make sure that the titles of parts and chapters listed match the final wording and capitalisation on the pages within the book. There may also be separate contents lists of figures or tables.

Preface

The preface introduces the book, and is usually written by the author. It is typically one or two pages long.

Prologue

A prologue is sometimes used in fiction, to present information that helps the reader understand the book, but which does not belong in the main body of the text.

Foreword

The foreword is a type of introduction written by someone other than the author, often another expert in the field. As well as introducing the book, it lends extra credibility. It is usually a page or two long.

Dedication/Thanks/Acknowledgements

This might appear at the beginning or the end of the book, and will usually be a line or two (sometimes a longer paragraph) from the author, thanking people who have helped them finish the book. It may also be where the editorial and design teams are thanked, if they're not listed on the imprint page.

Contributors

If a book is a contributory volume, with multiple authors and a volume editor (or editors), they may be listed on a page or pages. Typically each will have a paragraph detailing their credentials, perhaps with a photo. The entries should be of a roughly similar length, and the copyeditor or proofreader may need to ensure consistency in presentation of job titles, for example.

Using this book

Some larger books will include a page or two showing how to navigate them, including any special features or cross-referencing devices. The proofreader will need to ensure cross-references are up to date.

Main body

The main body of the book is everything that comes between the front matter and the end matter, and this is usually the largest element of the book. It is often divided into parts and/or chapters, and chapters may be subdivided into smaller sections. There may be an introduction to the book, which will be included in the main numbering sequence rather than the prelims.

Parts, chapters and sections are marked by headings of different weights. A copyeditor will often need to check or apply these heading weights to ensure the text is ordered in a logical way. If a book has footnotes or endnotes, these are signposted by superscript markers in the text (or markers in brackets), usually consecutive

numbers. Finally, the book may include artwork and figures, with associated text such as captions and annotations.

End matter

Epilogue

Like a prologue, an epilogue is a device that can be used in fiction, but it's not essential. It can help to conclude the book, and make sense of what has come before to provide a satisfying ending.

Appendix

The appendix of the book (and there may be more than one) is a place for supplementary information that supports content within the main body of the book. An appendix might contain tables, charts or lists.

Glossary

A glossary is an alphabetical list of specialist words that appear in the text, with definitions. Where they appear in the main body of the book they may be highlighted – on first mention, or each time they appear in a new chapter.

Notes

Markers in the text indicate the presence of a note, where a reader can find more information to support an assertion or fact. Often this will be a publication for reference, but a note may also be used to expand further on a point in the text, or provide contextual information. Notes can be arranged at the end of the book or chapter – endnotes – or at the bottom of the page where the text marker appears – footnotes.

References/Bibliography

If references are presented as a single list, this will appear at the end of the book, in the order in which they are referred to in the text (in a style such as Vancouver) or in alphabetical order (in a style such as Harvard). A bibliography is an alphabetical list (by author name) of all the sources the author consulted when writing the book. It is therefore more comprehensive than the list of references. All the sources cited should appear in the bibliography, but there may also be other sources listed here that influenced the writing of the book but have not been directly cited. Sometimes the bibliography is called 'further reading', highlighting its purpose in providing the reader with extra information.

The formatting of references in the bibliography and the reference list will often conform to a popular referencing system such as Harvard, APA, Chicago or MHRA.

Index(es)

Most non-fiction books will have a general index (or they should have one!) – an alphabetical list of headwords and the pages on which they appear. Some will also have a separate index of figures, or other sub-indexes to help with specific types of navigation within the book, for example a list of recipes that can be prepared in less than 30 minutes for a cookbook. An index should be prepared by a professional indexer, although sometimes academic authors are asked to prepare their own.

Acknowledgements/Credits

There is usually a page or several pages at the back of the book (although it can also appear at the front) where acknowledgement is given to providers and copyright holders of material reproduced in the book that does not belong to the author or the publisher. This can include illustrations, photographs, other graphics and excerpts of text. There is sometimes a disclaimer in case any acknowledgements have been omitted, offering to rectify this in future editions of the book.

Other elements

Endpapers

The sometimes highly decorative papers that join the cover to the inside pages of the book. Proofreaders and copyeditors won't usually be aware of endpapers in the course of their work, unless they encounter the finished book. Project managers may need to consider them when sending a book to production.

Cover copy

Cover or jacket copy is sometimes called the blurb, and copyeditors and proofreaders are not typically involved in producing it. Often this will be written in-house, in consultation with the sales and marketing team. There may also be text on the inside of the cover or the flaps.

Further reading

APA Style, apastyle.apa.org

Judith Butcher, Caroline Drake and Maureen Leach (2012). *Butcher's Copy-editing*. 4th edition. Cambridge University Press.

MHRA Style Guide Online, mhra.org.uk/style

Anne Waddingham (2014). *New Hart's Rules*. 2nd edition. Oxford University Press.

Society of Indexers, indexers.org.uk

The Chicago Manual of Style Online, chicagomanualofstyle.org

Penguin Random House, 'Publishing terminology explained', penguinrandomhousecareers.co.uk/publishing-terminology-explained

Written by the CIEP information team

The Chartered Institute of Editing and Proofreading (CIEP) is a non-profit body promoting excellence in English-language editing. We set and demonstrate editorial standards, and we are a community, training hub and support network for editorial professionals – the people who work to make text accurate, clear and fit for purpose.



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