



EDITING STYLES FOR THESES/DISSERTATIONS SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY AND A&M COLLEGE OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

EDITING YOUR THESIS/DISSERTATION

What is Involved?

Editing is all about making it easy for the reader to read your work. It is important that the adviser and the student understand the limits of the work permitted and the amount of time needed to edit a text.

The editing process involves looking at the work in three ways:

- Editing for **structure**
- Editing for **language and style**
- **Proofreading**

Structure – helps the reader follow the logic of your argument.

Language and style – good use of grammar and consistency in writing style.

Proofreading – gets rid of the spelling errors, inconsistent formatting and other distractions to allow the reader to remain focused on your writing.

You need to start planning the structure and style before you start writing it. You will need to find out the required conventions for your discipline, whether there is a particular style manual you will be required to follow, what referencing system needs to be used.

The proofreading part comes at the end of writing the thesis/dissertation.

It is the student's responsibility to make sure the language in the thesis/dissertation is comprehensible and to perform a grammar check before submitting the text for copy-editing. Any text found to be in an overly rough state will be returned to the student for rewriting before editing can proceed.

Before submitting your thesis/dissertation for editing please make sure you have followed the following steps:

- The thesis/dissertation must be complete (this means all parts of the text, front matter and back matter).
- The thesis/dissertation must be proofread by the student with a spell-checker and a grammar-checker and corrections made.
- The thesis/dissertation must be formatted in the style required by your specific discipline. Papers that are not formatted correctly will be returned before editing can proceed.
- Your adviser must fill out and sign the Thesis/Dissertation Form, which states that the thesis/dissertation is ready to be submitted for editing.

- The student is required to make the changes indicated by the editors. After the student has made all of the changes indicated, a final Format Check is conducted.

GUIDELINES

The editing must never affect the content or structure of the student's thesis/dissertation. The editor should not specify changes that go beyond simple correction of grammar, idiom, punctuation, spelling, and mechanics and must be careful in applying structural editing standards, stylistic editing standards, copy editing standards and proofreading standards. Rather than drafting alterations under these standards, the editor should depend on queries to the student phrased to put the onus on the student (i.e. "Please clarify this sentence," not "Do you mean X +Y"). If the editor must re-write a sentence to illuminate a problem, he or she should retain the student's own wording as much as possible.

Until the thesis/dissertation has been accepted, the editor should keep a copy that shows the editing, either a photocopy of editing or a tracked-changes copy of electronic editing. The editor should also keep copies of query sheets, correspondence, and other pertinent material.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

Obtaining written permission to edit a thesis/dissertation is the best way for the editor and the student to protect themselves from censure by the thesis/dissertation committee. Since the thesis/dissertation committee chair has the final authority, the editor must determine exactly what has been authorized in a particular instance. Since committee chairs and students may not be familiar with correct editorial terms and the various types of editing, securing permission may be difficult.

The different kinds of editing styles are explained below:

- **Copy Editing** – Grammar, spelling, punctuation and other mechanics of style
- **Deep Editing** – Basic spelling and grammar mistakes, basic formatting, rewriting bits, translating terminology
- **Format Check** – Final proofreading before the manuscript is submitted to ProQuest
- **Proofreading** – Checking for typos and format mistakes
- **Stylistic Editing** – Clarify meaning, smoothing language and other non-mechanical line-by-line editing. The term also means editing for style.
- **Substantive or Structure Editing** – Clarifying and/or reorganizing a manuscript for content and structure is not done. This level of critique is reserved for the thesis/dissertation adviser.

The editor of a thesis/dissertation should think carefully about the wording. Members of the intended audience of a thesis/dissertation are experts in a particular field of study, so **the editor should become familiar with that field's specialized terminology and query its use with special caution.**

The styling of citation needs care. Thesis/Dissertation writers are often required to use a particular style, and their ability to do so is part of what is being tested. If the student has made errors, especially consistent errors, the editor should use queries to draw attention to them but should not correct them. The same applies for citations where they would be expected; the editor should not supply them.

When working on a thesis/dissertation, the editor should not question the student's statements of fact or conclusions drawn from them in the argument. What the editor watches for are the errors, often in incidental comments that creep into almost everyone's writing.

GENERAL POINTERS

- Use a formal, academic style. (Refer to the John B. Cade Library for different style manuals).
- Style and conventions (i.e. use of first person, I) can vary between disciplines.
- Seek advice and read other theses/dissertations in your specific discipline to gauge the appropriate style.
- Seek help on written English.
- Make sure every sentence is grammatically correct and logically connected.

WHO CAN HELP?

A professional editor may be used, providing the level of editing is limited to proofreading and general advice on structure, as set out in these guidelines.

Any editorial assistance should be properly acknowledged in the Acknowledgements section of the thesis/dissertation.

Your committee chair will be able to provide advice on structure, style and conventions. They will also be able to advise on assistance available for improving skills in written English.

RESOURCES AVAILABLE AT THE JOHN B. CADE LIBRARY

Gibaldi, Joseph. MLA Handbook for Writers of research papers. Modern Language Association of America. Call number: PN 147 .G444 1998. Location: **Hardcopy available at ready reference desk.**

Lunenburg, Frederick C. Writing a Successful Thesis or Dissertation: Tips and Strategies for Students in the Social and Behavioral Sciences. Corwin Press. Call number: LB2369 .L814 2008. Location: **General stacks.**

Turabian, Kate L. A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers. University of Chicago Press. Call number: LB2369 .T8 2007. Location: **Hardcopy available at ready reference desk.**

The Chicago Manual of Style 16th ed. The University of Chicago Press. Call number: Z253 .U69 2010. Location: **Hardcopy available at ready reference desk.**

Concise Rules of APA Style. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. Call number: BF76.7 .C66 2005. Location: **Hardcopy available at ready reference desk.**

Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association. American Psychological Association. Call number: BF76.7 .P83 2010. Location: **Hardcopy available at ready reference desk.**

PROOFREADING

“Proofreading” means checking formatted, edited material for accuracy of inputting, for adherence to a specified design, and for mechanical errors in text, such as spelling mistakes or small deviations from the (editorial) style sheet.

YES

NO

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|-------|-------|--|
| _____ | _____ | Ensuring all elements are present |
| _____ | _____ | Correcting, if authorized to do so, typographical and formatting errors. |
| _____ | _____ | Correcting, if authorized to do so, inconsistencies in elements such as heading, cross-references, and titles of websites. |
| _____ | _____ | Assessing end-of-line word divisions and marking incorrect or awkward line or page breaks for correction. |
| _____ | _____ | Correcting, if authorized to do so, inconsistencies in spelling, punctuation, and visual elements. |

Additional proofreading tasks if appropriate:

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| _____ | _____ | Handling proofing stages after first proofs; e.g., checking alterations and the rest of the type, including line breaks, throughout the changed portion; checking all page breaks, and checking the consistency and accuracy of elements affected by text flow, including cross-references, page headers or footers, non-text items, and the table of contents. |
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COPY EDITING

“Copy editing” means editing for grammar, spelling, punctuation, usage, and other mechanics of style; checking for consistency of mechanics and for internal consistency of facts; indicating the hierarchy of headings and subheadings, and approximate placement of art (including graphs, tables, maps). If specified, it may include:

- applying a system of citation
- Editing captions and credit lines (e.g., citations of sources for art/graphics)
- Editing front matter (title page, contents page, lists of tables, figures, and maps, and acknowledgements)

“Copy Editing” is often loosely used to refer to stylistic and even structural editing or fact checking.

YES	NO	
___	___	Correcting errors in grammar and syntax
___	___	Correcting errors and inconsistencies in punctuation
___	___	Correcting errors in spelling
___	___	Correcting errors in word usage and amending offensiveness in diction.
___	___	Establishing and maintain consistent mechanical editing styles (e.g., capitalization, abbreviations, treatment of numbers)
___	___	Follow common practices and the faculty’s preferences for conventions such as the use of italics, boldface, and underlines, of metric or imperial measurements, and of abbreviations and symbols, the treatment of technical and trademarked terms, and the choice of spelling and punctuation styles. Developing and/or following an editorial style sheet (a list of words or terms that must be spelled, capitalized, hyphenated, or otherwise treated in specific ways in this manuscript)
___	___	Errors or inconsistencies in the style of citations and references; querying any that appear to be missing. Querying missing acknowledgments or permissions for the reproduction of copyright material. (The editor has no responsibility for obtaining reprint permissions but may point out where they may be needed).
___	___	Ensuring internal consistency of text and art or figures, and of cross-references
___	___	Treating non-English terms in English text appropriately and consistently
___	___	Querying questionable items that should-be checked for correctness (e.g., proper names, titles, dates, quotations) and apparent errors of other facts within the realm of general knowledge only
___	___	Querying apparent errors in mathematical material (e.g., incorrect metric/imperial conversions)
___	___	Ensuring all elements are present and complete.

STYLISTIC EDITING

“Stylistic editing” means working to clarify meaning, polish language, and other non-mechanical line-by-line editing.

YES NO

___ ___ Correcting if authorized to do so, confusing sentence structures, wrong word choices, and ambiguous passages

___ ___ Checking tables, figures, and visual material for clarity

___ ___ Correcting if authorized to do so, infelicitous or illogical connections and transitions.
Checking sentences and paragraphs for variety and consistency

___ ___ Querying or eliminating inappropriate jargon, redundancies, and verbosity.

STRUCTURAL EDITING

“Structural Editing” means assessing and shaping material to improve its organization, content, and suitability for the intended audience and purpose. Among the few structural editing tasks that may be undertaken for theses/dissertations are:

YES NO

___ ___ Querying imbalances in content

___ ___ Querying material that might be presented in another form

___ ___ Identifying and flagging possible legal problems (e.g., libel, plagiarism, privacy violations, missing reprint permissions, failure to give sources) or departures from social acceptability (e.g., gender, ethnicity, age, or other bias).