



Wordy Guide for Editors

US English



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Part 1

Editing for Wordy

Being an editor with Wordy means working from a standardized set of guidelines so that you know exactly what to do, and the client knows exactly what to expect from your work.

The Wordy Editor's Code of Ethics

As a Wordy editor, you are expected to be a native speaker of English with a good, professional working knowledge of English language, grammar, usage, punctuation, and standard editorial conventions. You are also expected to maintain a high ethical standard. That means you always strive to provide the highest standard of service, offering educated and well-considered edits and responding quickly, clearly, and courteously to client queries and concerns.

Wordy editors only accept jobs they believe to be within their sphere of competence. If you find you do not have the skills or knowledge needed to complete a job to the highest standard, you will return the job or seek guidance.

You may always refuse to edit material you find personally offensive for any reason. Once you have accepted a job, however, you must provide the highest level of service, regardless of your feelings about the ideas presented in the work.

At no time will a Wordy editor insert his or her beliefs into the author's work, by modifying text or through marginal comments, or offer commentary that is argumentative or denigrating to the work.

Some kinds of work are by nature outside our ethical code. Wordy editors will not:

- Provide content editing on university or school assignments, though we will happily provide a light-handed regular edit.
- Provide editing for materials that are clearly intended to be deceptive or fraudulent or that appear to be intended to support illegal activities.

If you encounter a job that appears to fall into these categories, or if you have ethical concerns about *any* job, you should report it to Wordy Support.

A Note on Style

Wordy's house style for U.S. clients is based on the *Chicago Manual of Style*, 16th edition, referred to throughout this guide (and by many working editors) simply as Chicago. If the client does not specify a style, or if the client's preferred style does not provide guidance on a particular issue, you should refer first to this guide and then to



Chicago. However, where another style—or a house style—is specified by the client, the requirements of that style guide override Chicago.

If you have a question regarding usage or style, first consult the client's style guide, if there is one, then this guide, then Chicago. For spelling and hyphenation of particular words, check Chicago section 7.85 and then refer to *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th edition.

Defining the Wordy Edit

Wordy offers two editing levels: the regular copyedit and content rewriting. A regular copyedit includes ensuring:

- Correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation;
- Appropriate vocabulary and usage;
- Internal consistency in argumentation and in usage; and
- Logical structure.

A content rewrite will also include rewriting or restructuring to enhance concision and flow, strengthen the argument, or respond to specific client requests (for instance, to reduce the length of a piece). Clients may also specify content rewrite when they need other services that fall outside the scope of a typical Wordy edit, such as help structuring references where some information is missing.

Wordy editing does *not* include:

- Content development (any writing apart from providing transitions or other very short additions to ensure consistent structure and, in a content rewrite, flow);
- Research or ghostwriting;
- Fact checking or verification, including verification of references;
- Commentary or advice on legal issues, such as permissions or libel, or on the accuracy of the text (except in case of obvious error); or
- Critique or evaluation of the text.

If you have any concerns about the scope of a job, or if a client requests services that are out of scope, please contact Wordy at support@wordy.com (or via the tool on the site) for guidance.

The guidance that follows offers some procedural advice and provides information about usage issues that present problems for many people and areas where multiple interpretations are possible.

If you have an issue you believe should be covered in this guide, let us know! Any questions or comments about these guidelines, or requests for information on a specific topic or usage issue, should be directed to Wordy at support@wordy.com.



Part 2

Copyediting: A Checklist

Structural and Textual Consistency

The first task in any Wordy edit is to ensure basic consistency. This means the text should develop a reasonable line of argument or progression of thought in a coherent logical manner. If this is not the case, you should note the problem.

In a copyedit, it is sufficient to flag the issue and perhaps suggest a fix where substantial restructuring is needed. If a content rewrite is requested, you should endeavor to provide a solution, querying only if the meaning is ambiguous.

In multi-author works, ensure consistency within chapters or sections; overall consistency between chapters may not be viable.

To ensure consistency in content, consider the following questions:

- Does the contents page match the text, both in titles and in page numbers?
- Are running heads and footers correct and consistently implemented?
- Are headings formatted at the correct level?
- Do captions match figures?
- Do figures tally with in-text mentions?
- Do references tally with in-text citations?
- Are spellings consistent?
- Have undue repetitions been eliminated?

Before returning any job to a client, please ensure that you have carried out all of the tasks of a basic Wordy copyedit.

- Correct all grammar, punctuation, spelling, and usage.
- Ensure vocabulary and usage are appropriate to the subject matter, the audience, and the purpose of the document insofar as the brief allows you to judge this.
- Ensure consistency in terms of writing style, argument, and format.
- Resolve ambiguity of language (or query where you don't have enough information to resolve the ambiguity).
- Raise queries as appropriate to resolve inconsistencies or ambiguities; queries may be embedded in the document or they may be made via the Wordy messaging system. When a client responds to a messaged query before the edit is complete, you should implement the responses in the text.
- Ensure consistent formatting of headings, bulleted lists, and other displayed matter.



- Ensure the document is free from unwanted blank lines, extra spaces, and other unnecessary formatting.
- Ensure that figures and illustrations are appropriate to the text and correctly labeled and captioned.
- Check that internal cross-references are accurate.
- Check that references are formatted consistently.

If you are editing website text (typically in HTML format), you should also:

- Ensure sentences and paragraphs are short and to the point, and
- Check all hyperlinks.

Your changes should be made obviously visible to the client whenever possible. If you are working in Word or another word-processing software, use the program's change-tracking capabilities track all editing work. In other programs, you may need to use highlight, text colors, or comments to note changes. When editing .txt or HTML files in Wordy's tool, it is not necessary to track changes, as the system will do so for you.

Make sure you return the job to the client in the same format in which you received it. Avoid importing and exporting files (for instance, bringing a .txt file into Word and then saving as a .txt, or importing from Word into another word processor). Doing so will often result in lost formatting and may introduce unwanted elements.

If you do not have the software required to edit a file in its native format, do not accept the job.



Part 3

Elements of Wordy Style

In this section, we provide an overview of Wordy’s house style. This is not an exhaustive list, but rather a survey of particular elements that tend to be difficult for many people and of areas where Chicago, our governing style guide, leaves room for variation. For areas not covered here, consult Chicago.

Abbreviations and Contractions

- Periods should be used with abbreviations; do not use periods with acronyms. Examples: NATO, e.g., *but* Mr., Dr. Exception: Use periods with U.S. and U.K. Note that these abbreviations should only be used adjectivally; U.S. citizens, *but* citizens of the United States.
- No periods with metric units of measurement (see also Numbers and Units). Examples: kg, mph, 10 m/s², *but* ft., in.
- Acronyms and abbreviations should be fully spelled out at their first appearance in the text with the acronym or abbreviation in parentheses after the full term. The spelled-out term need not be capitalized unless it is capitalized for another reason (e.g., because it’s the name of an organization). Example: The International Rescue Committee (IRC) is an example of a well-organized nongovernmental organization (NGO).
- If the acronym or abbreviation is very well known to the intended audience, it may not need defining. Examples might include BBC, UN, NATO, DNA, RNA.
- Do not introduce an acronym if the term is used only once. Avoid a proliferation of acronyms, as they tend to make reading difficult.

Ages

See Numbers and Units.

Ampersand

- Avoid in running text; use “and” instead.
- Use in company names only when the company itself does so. Check the company’s website for this information; rely on running text, not the company logo.

Brand names

- Where possible, use generic terms rather than brand names. Examples: vacuum cleaner *not* Hoover, sticky notes *not* Post-It Notes.
- Avoid the trademark, copyright, and registered trademark symbols—©, ™, and ®—unless the context absolutely requires their inclusion. When they are used, these symbols are always superscript without a preceding space.



Capitalization

See also Internet Terminology, Titles.

Wordy follows Chicago in preferring a downstyle approach to capitalization—that is, minimal capitalization. Excess capitalization can be distracting for readers. See Chicago for a complete list of specific categories, such as historical periods, religions, and others, that are typically capitalized.

Note that additional capitalization may be appropriate in some contexts. For instance, it may be appropriate to capitalize a job title (i.e., managing director, chief executive officer) in a business document or in a program of speakers at an event.

Where the client's preference is clear in the document, appropriate to the context, and consistently applied, you should defer to that preference.

Currency

- Use numerals for currency and close up the symbol to the numeral. Examples: £1.00, €20, \$5 million.
- If a currency is unfamiliar to the target audience or could be ambiguous, the symbol is preceded by the capital letter (or letters) of the country concerned. Examples: AU\$5 (Australian), C\$5 (Canadian), NZ\$5 (New Zealand), E£5 (Egypt).
- £ and \$ without prefixed letters denote the British pound and U.S. dollar, respectively. Use € for the euro.

Dates and Time

- US usage styles dates month first: March 4, 2005. In running text, year should be set off by commas. Example: Orientation sessions were held on March 4, 2005, and April 3, 2006. *Or* Orientation sessions were held on March 4 and April 3, 2005.
- US usage generally calls for the 12-hour clock: 4:00 a.m., 6:55 p.m.
- Military documents may use a 24-hour clock: 0400, 1855.
- Note that this is different from the European 24-hour clock, which is styled with a colon: 04:00, 18:55.
- 500 BC and AD 750 (note the order of the numerals and abbreviations).
- Periods of time are not treated as measurements unless technical/scientific usage demands otherwise. Examples: one hour *not* 1 h, three days *not* 3 days.

Displayed lists

See Lists.

Hyphenation

See section 7.85 in Chicago for a comprehensive guide to how and when to hyphenate particular terms. We would encourage you to keep a copy of this table handy while working.



Inclusive language

- Do not use “he” (or “she”) to encompass “he or she.”
- Passive constructions may be used *sparingly* to avoid repetition of “he or she”; a better strategy is to restructure sentences to have plural subjects.
- “They” may not be used as a substitute for “he or she,” unless the subject of the sentence is plural.
- If a gender-neutral expression can be easily substituted for a non-neutral one (work-hours for man-hours; chair for chairman), then do so.
- Beyond gender bias, it can be difficult to keep up with what is currently preferred in referring to particular groups; in general:
 - Use expressions such as “disabled people” rather than “the disabled”;
 - Avoid terms such as “suffering from,” “battling against” with diseases;
 - “Girl” and “boy” refer to children, not adults;
 - Do not use “ethnic” to mean black or Asian. Refer to people as “belonging to an ethnic minority” or use the appropriate modifier, i.e., Asian or African or African American;
 - Use “person-first” language, i.e., “a person with autism” rather than “an autistic person.”

This can be a sensitive subject, particularly if the author is a member of the group referred to. If you’re unsure, gently query the terminology, offering alternatives and suggesting why the writer might want to reconsider the language.

Internet Terminology

- In URLs, omit `http://` if the URL starts with `www`.
- Use `HTML`, not `html`.
- Do not hyphenate “email,” but do hyphenate similarly derived terms (e.g., “e-commerce,” “e-tail,” “e-book”)
- Do not capitalize “web,” “web page,” or “website,” but do capitalize “World Wide Web” and “Internet.” Note that “website” is one word.
- Break long URLs in the following descending order of desirability:
 - after a single forward slash,
 - after the second slash of `http://`,
 - after a period,
 - after an underscore,
 - after a hyphen.

Italics

See also Titles.

- Titles of books, newspapers, television programs, movies, and other standalone works are italicized, but double quotation marks and roman text are used for articles,



chapters, episodes of television series, and other parts of larger works. Example: “A Scandal in Bohemia” is the first of the short stories in *The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes*.

- Unusual foreign words are italicized. Example: *vendange*, but salami. If in doubt, don’t italicize. If the same term is used repeatedly in a work, it is acceptable to italicize the first instance only. For specific usage, refer to Chicago.
- Variables in mathematics are italicized. Examples: *x* axis, $x + y = z$.
- Italics for emphasis are permissible. Example: He was *not* entirely honest about the incident.
- Some authors will use quotation marks to denote a word referred to as such; others will italicize these instances. Either is acceptable, as long as the usage is consistent. Example: The term *economical* refers to . . . or “Internet” is always capitalized.

Lists

- Displayed lists can be numbered or bulleted. Generally, numbers should be reserved for lists where the sequence is important.
- The text preceding a list usually (but not necessarily) ends in a colon.
- A list comprising short phrases is styled as follows:
 - The entries in the list may start with a lower or upper-case letter, as long as the usage is consistent;
 - Entries except the final entry end with a comma, if the items are grammatically simple, or a semicolon, for complex items; and
 - The last item in the list ends with a period.
- If the list is comprised of complete sentences, each item may be styled as a separate sentence, beginning with a capital letter and ending with a period.
- Text directly following lists should flush left unless a new paragraph is being started. Flush left paragraphs must be identified as such for the typesetter.

Numbers and Units

See also Ages, Currency, and Dates and Time.

- In general text, spell out numbers zero to one hundred. Other numbers are in numerals. In technical or scientific contexts, zero to nine are spelled out; 10 and above are in numerals.
- *However*, this is an area where client preferences vary widely, and context is critical: a technical document will most likely use numerals for ten and above, for instance. If the client’s preference is clear in the document, appropriate to the context, and consistently applied, you should defer to that preference.
- Use a comma in numbers over 999. Examples: 1,000; 10,000; 1,000,000
- Millions, etc., can be spelled out or given in numerals, depending on the context. Indices are acceptable in technical usage. Examples: 1,500,000, 1.5 million, 1.5×10^6 .
- Use a hyphen for spelled-out numbers between twenty-one and ninety-nine.



- Numerals may not start sentences in running text; if a sentence must begin with a number, the number should be spelled out.
- Numbers and words may be mixed in the same sentence. Example: He had previously owned two cats, but found himself in charge of 11 dormice. However, two numbers of the same items should use the same format. Example: He had 14 computers, but only 2 were working.
- Fractions: if spelled out, use a hyphen. Examples: one-half, three-quarters, one-tenth, 1/12.
- Percentages should always be expressed in numerals and followed by the word “percent” in running text; the % symbol is permissible in tables and illustrations. Examples: 2 percent, 22 percent.
- Units are always expressed in numerals and the unit label is separated from the numerals by a space. Examples: 60 kg, 4 cm, 15 hp, 48 Mb, 10 m/s².
- Do not hyphenate units. Example: 50 mg/day dosage *not* 50-mg/day dosage.
- Elide ranges using an endash, *not* a hyphen. Examples: 3:00–5:15 p.m. *not* 3:00-5:15 p.m. 1440–1500, pp. 123–144.

References

References may be styled in any number of ways, depending on the audience and intended publication outlet for the document. If the author’s preference is clear, consistently applied, and appropriate to the context, follow it. If the author has specified a particular style, please refer to the appropriate guide (many are available online). Otherwise, example styles are provided below. For specific examples, see Chicago.

Note that, in addition to the separate reference list, references may also be provided in footnotes or endnotes. In this case, the styling is largely the same as below, with some small adjustments to punctuation, and there is no references list. Consult Chicago for examples.

References List

- *Name/date (Harvard) style*. References should be listed in alphabetical order. References with the same first author are listed in the following order: single-author references (in date order), then references with two authors (in alphabetical order), then references with three or more authors (in year order). References with the same authors and year are differentiated by appending a, b, etc., to the year (ensure the text citations are also differentiated accordingly).
- *Numbered (Vancouver) style*. References are arranged in a numbered list, keyed to the order in which they are cited in the text.
- The following provides a general style for citations (the actual style may vary depending on a particular job, the author’s style, the specified style guide, and other factors.). If the references use the numbered style, the list should be in numerical order and the entries preceded by the number and a period. The entry number should be on the line, not superscript.



Journals

Liu, P. C., and Smith, A. P. (1991). Damage to concrete structures in a marine environment. *Journal of Materials and Structures* 24(142), 302–307.

Books

Taylor, H. F. W. 1990. *Cement Chemistry*, 2 edn., vol. 2. London: Academic Press.

Taylor, H. F. W. 1990. "Properties of Slurries." In *Cement Chemistry*, ed. D. W. Smith and A. Jones, pp. 390–394. London: Academic Press.

Conference Presentations

Presentations eventually published as papers in a conference proceedings should be styled just like a chapter in a book.

Bloggs, J. 1997. Properties of concrete. Paper presented at the 9th International Conference on Soil Mechanics, Dundee, April.

Standards and Reports

British Standards Institution. 1995. *A Study of Breakdown in Concrete*. BS 4486:2. BSI, Milton Keynes.

Bloggs, J. 1995. *A Study of Breakdown in Concrete*. RTa 54a. Philadelphia: American Society for Testing Materials.

Bloggs, J. 1996. *A Study of Breakdown in Concrete*. Report STP 67. Detroit, MI: American Concrete Institute.

Theses

Bloggs, J. 1995. A study of breakdown in concrete. PhD thesis, University of Sussex, Brighton.

In-Text Citations

Citations to reference list entries are made either using a parenthetical note including the author name(s) and date of the work cited or using a number reference keyed to the reference list.

Name/Date Style

- For items with one two or three authors, give all authors' names in the citation. For items with four or more authors, give the first author's name followed by "et al." and the year (Ramones and Blondie 1982; Smith, Jones, and Wesson 2004; Jett et al. 2006).
- Use semicolons to separate lists of citations. Do not use commas between the author's name and the year. Example: Smith and Blackheart (1990) reported previous findings (Ramones and Blondie 1978; Jett et al. 1979).



- If there is more than one citation within parentheses, they should be ordered either alphabetically or by year, beginning with the most recent. Make sure ordering is consistent throughout the text.
- In a list of citations, combine those differing only in the year. Example: (Ramonés and Blondie 1978; Smith and Jones 1991a, b, 1995; Zither et al. 1978, 1990).

Numbered Style

- All citations must be numbered in the order in which they will be encountered by a reader. This includes citations in figures and tables.
- In some styles, numbers are enclosed in parentheses or in square brackets; in others, they are italicized or in superscript. Ensure consistency. In all cases, multiple citations are indicated by a list of numbers separated by commas without a following space. Examples: Smith and Blackheart [11] reported previous findings [12,13]. Smith and Blackheart¹¹ reported previous findings.^{12,13}
- If superscript numbers are used, these should be placed outside punctuation. Example: by Smith;¹¹ but not all.^{12–14}
- Elide ranges using an endash. Example: [8,12–15] *not* [8,12,13,14,15].

Science

Scientific fields have their own style requirements and rules of usage. If you are not familiar with these fields, consider carefully your qualification to accept a particular job. For guidance, consult the style guide commonly used in the field in question (generally CBE or AMA) and Chicago, sections 8.118–8.151 as well as sections on numbers and units.

Sexism

See Inclusive Language.

Superscripts and Subscripts

- Word processors often insert superscripts in ordinal numbers (1st, 2nd, 3rd); remove these superscripts unless the context or clear client preference demands otherwise.
- Ensure common chemical formulae use subscript numbers. Examples: CO₂, H₂O, O₂, NO_x.

Time

See Dates and Time.



Titles

Job Titles

- Generally, job titles should be lower-cased. Examples: John Smith, the managing director of Glaxo; the bishop of Winchester; the chief executive was present.
- Titles are capitalized when they precede a proper name. Example: Managing Director John Smith spoke on . . .

Publication Titles

- Book and periodical titles are italicized and capitalized; the word directly following a colon in a two-part title also takes an initial capital. Titles of book chapters and periodical stories are enclosed in quotation marks and capitalized.
- The inclusion of “the” in the title of a newspaper or other periodical follows the usage established by the publication itself. Examples: *The Bookseller* but the *Guardian* (as in its own style guide).



Part 4

Usage

Collective Nouns

- Treat as singular unless the context demands a plural verb. Examples: The choir was due to appear in the concert. The team is in good spirits; they expect to win.

Farther and Further

Although the distinction is not rigidly enforced, “farther” generally refers to physical distance and “further” to more metaphorical distances. It is not unusual to see “further” used where “farther” is more strictly correct; the reverse is less common and should be corrected.

Fewer and Less

- “Fewer” is used for countable nouns and “less” for uncountable. Examples: There are fewer cars on the road nowadays. There is less traffic at night.

Into, In to, Onto, On to

Pay attention that “into” is not meant when “in to” is meant. In general, the one word preposition indicates position, while the two words indicate the direction of an action. Examples: “He turned into an ogre.” *but* “He turned his essay in to the teacher.” “They stepped onto the dance floor.” *but* “They went on to Albuquerque.

Log in, Login

“Log in” is the verb form (*not* “log into”); “login” is the noun or adjective form. Examples: “She logged in to the bank website to pay her bills.” *but* “She entered her login to gain access to the account.”

None is, None are

- Both are acceptable in the correct context. Examples: The book has ten chapters; none is relevant to our immediate concerns. Many people are watching the end of this exciting game; none are willing to leave early.

Relative Pronouns

- Use “that,” “who,” and “whom” to introduce identifying (defining, restrictive) clauses; there is no punctuation before the pronoun.



- Use “which,” “who,” and “whom” to introduce non-identifying (nondefining, unrestrictive) clauses; use a comma before the pronoun.
Examples: He married the woman that he met on the beach. He married the woman, whom he met on the beach, after just one week. The marriage, which took place on Monday, was arranged in a hurry.

Who, Whom

In relative clauses, “who” refers to the subject of the verb in the clause and “whom” to the object or complement. Examples: She played chess against an opponent whom she had never played before. She played chess against an opponent who was more experienced than she.

Problem Words

Amid and among, *not* amidst and amongst

Comprise, *not* “comprise of”
Coordinate, cooperate, etc. (not hyphenated)

Email, *but* e-commerce, etc.

Freelance writer/editor/etc., *not* ‘freelancer’

Internet (capitalized)

Lifestyle (one word, no hyphen)

Ongoing (not hyphenated)

Online (always one word)

On-screen before the noun *but* on screen after (on-screen editor *but* work on screen)

Under way as an adverb, *but* underway as an adjective

While, *not* whilst



Part 5

Punctuation

Chicago includes a thorough and helpful chapter on punctuation in US usage. For the most part, you should be familiar with these basic rules. This section does not provide a complete overview, but only highlights potential problem areas and instances where there is room for variation.

Apostrophes

- Ensure correct usage—apostrophes appear in possessives and contractions but not in plurals. Examples:
 - The cat’s whiskers
 - The bees’ knees
 - 100 years’ time
 - The fox slunk back to its lair.
 - It’s well known that foxes have lairs.
 - Dos and don’ts
 - 1960s

Colon

- A colon is used to:
 - introduce a list,
 - introduce a long quotation, or
 - introduce an explanation or amplification.
- A colon *may* be used to introduce a short quotation introduced by a simple identifier of the speaker (Hamlet replied: “Words, words, words.”), but this is not a common usage and it should be minimized. A comma would be the preferred option in this case.
- Note that when a colon introduces a list, what precedes the colon *must* comprise a complete sentence on its own. If it does not, no separating punctuation is called for. Example: We need four people to work on this project: an editor, a translator, a proofreader, and a project manager. *but* The four people who will work on this project will include an editor, a translator, a proofreader, and a project manager.
- The colon is always followed by a capital letter if what follows it runs two full sentences or more. If what follows is one complete sentence, the capital is optional, as long as usage is consistent. If the material following is a phrase or list, there is no capital.
Examples: There was a problem with my bike: the back tire was punctured.
My bike had two problems: The back tire was punctured. The handlebars were bent.
My bike had two problems: the back tire and the handlebars.



Comma

- See Chicago sections 6.16–6.53 for comprehensive guidance on general use of the comma in US usage.
- Chicago prefers the use of the serial comma (or Oxford comma). Where the client is inconsistent, use the serial comma. If the client's preference not to use the serial comma is clear, consistently applied, and appropriate to the context, defer to the client.
- Whatever the overriding policy, always use a serial comma if it is required for clarity (although frequently, in these cases, it is better to restructure the sentence).

Dashes

The character for a dash in Chicago usage is the closed-up emdash (that is, an emdash without spaces around it). *Do not* use a hyphen or two hyphens, with or without spaces. Some styles use a spaced endash for the dash; while the closed emdash is preferred, you may defer to a clear, consistent client preference for the spaced endash.

In either case, learn how to create these characters in your operating system and word processor.

Hyphens

- Hyphens are generally not used with most prefixes or established compounds. But use where necessary for clarity (re-cover, recover, re-enter, re-creation, recreation).
- Chicago section 7.85 offers a comprehensive guide for when to hyphenate compounds and words formed with prefixes. We strongly encourage you to keep a copy of this table nearby when you're editing, as it can quickly answer most hyphenation questions.
- If you're in doubt and Chicago does not provide an answer, consult a dictionary. Wordy's preferred dictionary is *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed.