Style Guidelines for Proof-Readers and Editors

Formatting

Book formats can easily be accidentally ruined while the document is still in Word format. At the end of the process it must still be possible to create one single 198mm x 129mm text pdf to send to the printers. Editors and proof-readers are recommended to test their work by creating a pdf of the file: it should come out as one single formatted pdf at the original dimensions. If you have multiple files, you've messed it up.

Proof-reading

Our general requirements are:

UK English spelling and grammar. Our bible is Chambers Dictionary. Check online if you're unsure at any of the following websites:

- Please don't mess with the formatting (see above). Never, never please include tabs or extra spaces to create an effect
- House style has recently changed and is currently single quotes for direct speech AND single for everything else. However some of our older publications use double quotes for direct speech, and if the book is part of a series (e.g. Jane Tulloch's 'Murrays' series), we might return to double quotes for the sake of consistency. Please consult with the editor or publisher for clarification. UK punctuation expects that all punctuation is written inside the final quote marks, but where quote-marks are used other than for speech, the punctuation will follow the final quote mark.
- Check chapter headings and page numbers are correct
- Check for widows/orphans
- Check front matter and end-pieces
- Please name the returned file as <BookNameZZddmmyy.docx> where ZZ is your initials, and ddmmyy is the date you send it. You will receive similarly-formatted files from others and should therefore be possible to follow an electronic trail of changes
- Please feel free to make full use of commas. The use of commas and other punctuation is partly personal taste; we can always reject what we don't like. However thhe Oxford comma is a no-no in the UK.
- No need to use gender neutral language. This seems to be a North American issue.
- Numbers: This is a matter of feel. Our view is that shorter numbers should be written out, longer ones written as numbers. Years can be '1970s', but 'the seventies' looks better quite often. Do *not* be tied to fixed rules, but within any particular document, please be consistent.
- I don't think I'm bothered by orphans unless they actually start a section – with so much speech, they're bound to happen fairly regularly anyway. If we can watch out for one-liner widows, I hope that'll do.
- Capitalising the positions is a matter of taste, but sense should be used. Where an individiual is identified by his or her position, use capitals. "The general in charge of... was David Smith", but "General David Smith was in charge." However, the President of the United States and the Queen both get capitals throughout.
- Spell out one-word numbers, "fourteen", "forty", but "106". Also dates should be in numbers, also measurements
- Fewer use of commas after introductory phrases.
- Use that (not who) for teams, groups, staff.
- Use full-time, never-ending, but no one as two words is OK.
- No commas with prepositional phrases.
- Ellipses smashed together.
- Don't change adverb placement.
- Finally... beware of any style manuals, especially Chicago. A good proof-reader works by instinct.