

MANUSCRIPT PREPARATION

by Charles King

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All good manuscripts are alike.

Every flawed manuscript is flawed in a different way.

— Tolstoy (sort of)

SINCE IT IS impossible to anticipate all the ways an author and a computer can combine to make errors in a document, a guide like this cannot prevent all problems, but its general strategies, mixed with some common sense, should prove valuable to authors and editors.

The Chicago Manual of Style (15th Ed. is current) has a chapter on “The Author’s Responsibilities.” All authors and editors should read at least that chapter; it’s available in the reference section of many public libraries. *Chicago* has a thousand pages of information about publishing and English usage. I won’t try to reinvent the wheel in this guide. (If your publisher prefers a different style sheet, refer to that instead.)

Each book is unique. If you have a specific question not answered here and you can’t find the answer in *Chicago*, you should feel free to ask your publisher.

WORD PROCESSING

Word processing is to today's writing what penmanship was to the writing of the pre-typewriter age. If you know how to prepare a manuscript in a simple way uninhibited by the automatic messups of your word processing application, you will be fine. If not, it's like you haven't learned legible handwriting yet. Luckily, this is easier than learning to write.

BE CONSISTENT

If "gray" and "grey" are both acceptable spellings for that color you get when you mix the black paint with the white paint, and you want to use "grey" in your manuscript, that is a fine choice. But don't go back and forth.

Don't have a possessive *Chris'* for the first part of a book and a possessive *Chris's* for the second half (*Chicago* prefers the second method, with some notable exceptions).

Chapter I, Chapter Two, Chapter III is not a good sequence of chapter titles.

These are silly and obvious examples, but books are typically long and complicated things. Keeping a list of the stylistic choices in a manuscript is a good idea. I find that one handwritten note card per manuscript is often sufficient

Inconsistency of one sort or another is the most common pitfall for authors. The less consistent you are, the more expensive your project will be to polish up, and the more reluctant a publisher will be to take it seriously.

Inconsistency is an indication that the author does not care one way or the other about a certain issue, and a choice will be made on his or her behalf, sometimes without consultation. If it's important to the author, the author will be consistent.

SEE WHAT YOU'RE DOING

There is a pilcrow (¶) button (“Show All”) on the toolbar in most instances of Microsoft Word (“MSWord”) that allows you to see non-printing characters (or, within MSWord, hit Ctrl-Shift-8 in Windows, Cmnd-Shift-8 on the Mac). Use this feature. Toggle it on and off if you don’t like it on all the time. It will show you what you’re doing with non-printing characters and help you keep the manuscript clean and the costs of production low.

Using this button is usually the easiest way to dramatically improve the quality of an author’s workmanship.

WordPerfect has a similar feature called “Reveal Codes.”

WHAT A MANUSCRIPT SHOULD BE

In an efficient publishing workflow, a “manuscript” should be a single word processing file containing *all of the text* of a book. In a few unusual cases where nonfiction is especially complex and involves footnotes that renumber with each chapter’s beginning or other complex issues like that, each chapter may be its own file. But generally, a book should all be in one file. This will allow the author and editor to find and review repeated mistakes quickly.

I differ from *Chicago* when I suggest that you compose and maintain your entire manuscript in one file, but that’s about my only gripe with the manual. Having each section/chapter in its own file (as *Chicago* suggests) makes global correction of mistakes/consistency choices much more difficult. If you submit multiple files, the publisher will probably immediately combine them, which can cause formatting glitches. It’s better to review and handle those glitches on your end.

When I say “all of the text” I mean all of it. Dedication, Epigraph, Table of Contents (without page references) Foreword, Preface, Acknowledgements, Introduction, Text, Appendixes, Endnotes, Bibliography, Index (without page references) – everything. You don’t have to have all of those sections, obviously, and you could have more. You probably won’t compose them in that order, but whatever an author wants in the book should be included in the intended order before the author shares the document with other people.

In a traditional publishing model, authors often have a chance to work with a developmental editor (an agent often fills this role) and can add pieces to the front matter and back matter at a slow pace as he or she works toward completing the manuscript. An incremental approach to manuscript completion is often not an option nowadays, especially if an author is working without an agent; the more cost-conscious your budget, the more complete your manuscript should be prior to sharing it with other professionals.

Obvious exceptions to the “all of the text of a book” rule can be the page numbers referred to in the table of contents and index (you don’t know how the book will paginate, yet), the publisher name and city on the title page and the publisher’s copyright page boilerplate. If you make an internal page reference (“see page {A}”) you need to tag both the reference and the target sensibly using callouts (see “Callouts,” below) so that a typesetter will be able to fix them after layout is complete.

Like most of the businesses in the industry, CKMM requests a Microsoft Word file, or a Rich Text Format file (RTF). If you are composing your document in a word processing application other than MSWord, RTF is usually a “save as” option. RTF saves all of the italics, font size changes, etc., of your manuscript and you shouldn’t be doing very complex formatting, so this is almost always adequate.

CALLOUTS

Use callouts to briefly and succinctly instruct the typesetter. Callouts are instructions written into the manuscript that are not intended to appear in print. I usually request that authors/editors enclose callouts in {rounded brackets}. <Angle brackets> are also acceptable. Pick one method and use it consistently. Obviously, if those symbols are used elsewhere in your manuscript, you need to do something different like {{{triple rounds}}}.

Callouts are especially important where images and diagrams are to be inserted into the text. If you have artwork, keep it as separate files (don't embed images in the file; word processors ruin images). Example:

{Insert image forest.tif here, caption:
The Forest}

Example for an internal reference:

See page {A}.

Wherever you want this to point you should include another “{A}.” Use {A} {B} {C} or another sensible scheme.

Many manuscripts (like novels) require no callouts.

DON'T FIDDLE WITH FORMATTING

Ninety-five percent of the things your word processor can do are either useless or harmful to the publishing process. Preparing a good manuscript should be very little more than typing text and saving your work frequently.

Your manuscript should be one simple stream of writing with minimal effective formatting. Using the default settings of your word processing program for font, margins, justification, etc., is fine. Use Times or Times New Roman as your font. Regardless of this font's many problems and shortcomings, it's one of the easier fonts to work with across computer platforms and on computer monitors when dealing with word processors.) Your eventual book will not be typeset in Times New Roman, nor will it have a ragged right margin.

Moreover, the eventual book won't be typeset in MSWord. The word processing manuscript will be polished up in editorial and then imported into a commercial typesetting program and the typeface will be changed along with many other formatting things word processing programs don't do: attractive character spacing, glyph width variations, proper kerning, text and lining numbers, multi-line hyphenation and justification algorithms, full sets of ligatures, optical margin alignment (hanging punctuation), true small caps, baseline adherence, etc., etc.

But word processing programs are still the best tools for writing, reviewing your spelling and grammar, and presenting your work. They are also the best tools for reading and sharing editorial copy.

If your publisher requests double or single line spacing (vertical spacing), you should be able to do that on the fly with a couple of keystrokes. If you're coming through CKMM,

single spacing is fine, and emailing your manuscript as an attachment (rather than sending a paper copy) is preferred.

The reason we request an electronic version is that we want to be able to see how hard it's going to be to work with your book; we want to see what's *not* printing.

Example: it's possible to center a heading line by using the "center paragraph" button in MSWord (or Ctrl-E). It's also possible to center a line by hitting three spaces, a tab, typing "i'M cRaZy" and changing the color of the letters to white (invisible), another two spaces, another two tabs, three non-breaking spaces, an optional hyphen, another tab, and another space. Those two lines will look identical on paper. To a publisher, however, the difference is "I will keep reading" vs. "This project is trouble."

SUGGESTED SETTINGS FOR AUTOCORRECT

First, a disclaimer: CKMM is not technical support for MSWord. If you do not feel absolutely comfortable making a change to the settings of your word processor and accepting the consequences of doing so, please do not.

MSWord has some default autocorrect settings that are ideal for business memoranda, but which have some *significant* failings when it comes to book publishing. The false ellipsis and aggressive use of ordinals are two examples. Some (recent) versions of MSWord will automatically substitute *not* the en – and em—dashes for (space hyphen space) and (double hyphen) but rather will use a set of geometric shapes that gums up the works entirely when it comes to working with a publisher.

My suggestions for MSWord settings are as follows (menu choice Insert – AutoText – AutoText – AutoFormat as You Type):

"Straight Quotes" with "Smart Quotes" ON.
Everything else OFF.

Note that some versions of MSWord have a duplicate list of options at (Insert – AutoText – AutoText – Auto Format). In other words, the same options are given at "Auto Format as You Type" and "Auto Format" and choices on one window do not automatically affect choices on the other; you'll probably want to change both.

You may have to use your version of MSWord for other tasks, so this might create a problem in other parts of your life and work. Do what's right for you. The menu choices may be slightly different depending on your version of MSWord and operating system. Again, if you are not comfortable making these changes, please do not make them.

Websites and email addresses in a book manuscript should be black and not live hyperlinks.

I also suggest "Normal View" rather than "Page Layout View" (buttons usually in the lower left of MSWord screen) and View – Zoom – Page Width to make text as big and readable as possible. You'll want to see subtle things like the difference between italic punctuation and roman (regular) punctuation, so large lettering on your screen is useful.

ONE SPACE AT THE END OF A SENTENCE

One space at the end of sentences is the standard for the publishing industry. If you have questions about this, ask your publisher. It's usually a fairly easy fix (find and replace all instances of two spaces with one space – repeat until they're all gone). If you've also used multiple spaces to format tables, center lines, etc., you'll have more work to do here.

RESTRAIN YOUR FORMATTING URGES

Generally speaking, use bold only for headings, never as part of a paragraph. Use italics for emphasis, and avoid underlining and all caps wherever possible. If you feel you must use all caps, consider small caps instead.

Consider this hierarchy of interruption for formatting (from least offensive to most offensive).

Inoffensive (if used in moderation):

italics

SMALL CAPS

Jarring (avoid when possible):

ALL CAPS

bold

underlining

“Interruption” means a reader’s eye is drawn to the special text before it reaches that point on the page. A cardinal rule of typesetting is to avoid interrupting the reader. Jarring or immoderate formatting interrupts the reader.

Don’t create embedded text boxes for sidebars or anything like that; those work only locally on your computer in your application and operating system, and will not work in other people’s applications and operating systems. If you need a sidebar, use a callout (see “Callouts,” above).

Footnotes are an obvious exception to the “one simple stream” rule, as they exist in an embedded, parallel document. Most word processing programs handle footnotes adequately. When it comes time to typeset, it is sometimes easier and less

expensive to have chapter endnotes or book endnotes than page footnotes. Academic-style embedded citations are ideal and require less work and expense.

If you need to present something in a table with two columns, just use tabs. If you need three or more columns, use the tables feature of your word processor. If it's something other than MSWord, confirm that your RTF "save as" output works properly with your publisher before formatting more than one table. There are millions of ways to mess up a table; use the minimal amount of effective formatting.

If your table becomes especially complex, you may be able to use a spreadsheet application, and that table can be treated as an illustration. Stay away from gray or color shading of any sort unless your publisher specifically permits it.

INDEXING

An index is often an important part of a work of non-fiction, and some libraries will not stock a non-fiction book unless it has an index. Read *The Chicago Manual of Style* carefully for index guidelines (they also sell their indexing chapter as a stand-alone book). Good indexing is sometimes nearly as time-consuming as writing the book itself; don't expect it to be easy or inexpensive. Set aside the time to do it well.

If you want to do the index yourself, it is best if you create a list of index entries without page number references, and submit that with your manuscript (so the appropriate number of pages and spine width for the cover design will be used from the start). After the book is typeset, reviewed, corrected, and approved as final, you can go back to your old word processing manuscript, insert page breaks at the appropriate points in the document to get the pagination the same as the finished book, and index based on that. Once

a project has moved from word processing to typeset, the word processing files are generally abandoned by the publisher; typo corrections to typeset files are not incorporated back into word processing files. You will be responsible for keeping your word processing manuscript current, so plan carefully. It is best if you finalize your word processing file first so there are no errors or necessary rewrites; this can save a huge amount of time.

Old-fashioned index cards, the typeset page proofs, and a pencil with a nice eraser are still the best tools for indexing, in my opinion. Use a computer for the final typing, not the searching.

In the workflow, the index will be treated as a third distinct project (text, index, cover) and the text must be finished in absolutely every way before you begin work on the index. In other words, you must sign off on the typeset pages as final and in need of no further revisions before you begin working on the index. If you discover errors in the text after that point, it's too late to correct them. This bears repeating: once you have approved the pages as complete and moved on to the index, you may not edit the text again.

If you require help with the index, the typesetter can often provide you with an objective list of word matches by page based on your list of words. This will pick up all instances of the exact string of characters (e.g., “Ted Williams”) for a phrase, but will miss any sort of indirect reference (e.g., “The Kid”), and may pick up inappropriate garbage as well, depending on how common the word is. I call this objective indexing process a “starter” index, and simply list the page numbers. Example: 99, 100, 101, 102, 103. It is up to the author/editor/indexer to decide if it is, for examples, one continuous discussion of the topic (99–103), two distinct discussions (99–100, 101–103), or five unconnected instances of the term/name (99, 100, 101, 102, 103).

THE POETRY CONUNDRUM

If your book is a long poem or collection of poems, I encourage you to realize from the start that the standard word processing default line length is much longer than the line length of a standard size trade paperback, and I encourage you to change your font size or margins instead of using the defaults. If you are sensitive to your lines of poetry wrapping, you, not the typesetter, are responsible for keeping them short.

The ideal length for a typeset line in a short printed book of poetry is about two alphabets:

abcdefghijklmнопqrstuvwxyzабцdefghijklmнопqrstuvwxyz

This can be extended by a dozen letters without too much design angst, but the default settings for a word processing application usually encourage a much longer line (three alphabets or more in a business memorandum aesthetic), which encourages the author to have long lines that don't look like they'll wrap but actually will.

Obviously, if you're writing in a verse form that requires long line lengths and there's a reason for a really long line, write long lines, but otherwise, modify the font size (or change your margins) for a reality check.

AVOID SPECIAL CHARACTERS IF POSSIBLE

Whenever possible, limit yourself to uppercase and lowercase letters, numerals, the punctuation you see on your keyboard, and a few other special characters detailed below. If you need special characters, call on ASCII characters from the font you're using (you may wish to download a special

character chart included on this website), or reference the popular “Symbol” font.

If you must use a bullet list, keep the “bullets” the little round, solid circles. Don’t use wacky shapes. If you have multi-level bullet lists (points and sub-points), consult your publisher for help.

TAB VS. INDENT

This is a tricky concept and you might want to skip this section and come back to it when you are feeling especially awake.

Tabs and indents look alike when printed from your local word processor to your local desktop printer, and they are both created in MSWord by striking the [Tab] key. But if you mix them in a manuscript, it can create problems.

A tabbed paragraph is one that begins with the actual invisible *character* of a tab (in “Show All” it looks like a little right-pointing arrow at the beginning of the paragraph).

An indented paragraph is one that has a first line indent as a *property of the paragraph*, but doesn’t actually begin with a tab character.

MSWord will give you a *tab character* if you start a paragraph on an empty line and hit the [Tab] key. MSWord will give you an *indent* if you begin writing, and then go back and key [Tab] at the beginning of the paragraph. In other words, it’s usually what’s to the *right* of the cursor (empty line or text) that determines whether you’ll get a tab or an indent.

One way to check this is by turning on the ruler (View—Ruler). The little stalactites and stalagmites on the ruler show you whether the first line is being indented or not.

If you have a paragraph that begins with a *tab character*, and you hit [Enter] at the end of it, your next paragraph

will start all the way flush left with no indent. On the other hand, if you have an *indent* at the beginning of a paragraph, and you hit [Enter] at the end of the paragraph, your next paragraph will usually be automatically indented.

A paragraph will often emulate the previous paragraph in MSWord (not always).

Please use *indents* throughout your book, saving tabs for special charts only. If “Show All” is not used in composition, there will usually be an unintentional mix of tabs and indents in a book. In order to change a tab to an indent, delete it and hit the [Tab] key again in the same place: *voila* (infuriating, isn’t it?).

[Tab] key and *tab character*. Two different things. One is a physical key on your keyboard and the other an invisible character in your computer file.

If this *Tab vs. Indent* issue is too confusing, you may ignore it. Someone will clean it up in edit, and it’s not the most horrible slowdown or expense. The more complicated your document, the more likely it will be that the distinction will be important to avoiding confusion.

Never smack the space bar x number of times to indent.

THE NON-BREAKING SPACE, ELLIPSES

It is sometimes useful to use a non-breaking space (“nb space”). Your line-breaks in word processing will not correspond with the line-breaks in the eventual book, so it is not always obvious where there will be a problem.

If you want a properly spaced ellipsis (...) rather than a false ellipsis character (...) or three consecutive points (...) — note the slight differences — it is inappropriate for a line to break *in the middle* of the ellipsis. It is also often inappropriate and confusing to the reader for the line to

break just *before* the ellipsis. Therefore, an ellipsis is best typed: [nb space] [point] [nb space] [point] [nb space] [point] [*normal space*]. The spaces between the dots may be altered in typeset to become half spaces.

You may choose to follow *Chicago*'s “three or four dot” method where a sentence can end and then be followed by an ellipsis like this. . . . In that case, the first point is a period and is not preceded by a space. The spaces in between points should be non-breaking spaces. The space after the fourth dot should be a normal “breakable” space.

In MSWord, a non-breaking space is created with Ctrl-Shift-Spacebar. (Option-Shift-Spacebar on the Mac.) This will look the same as a normal space unless you turn “Show All” (¶) on, at which point the difference becomes visible.

If this is simply too confusing, don’t worry about it. Just use three periods. It is not the biggest slowdown or the biggest expense on the formatting side. But please don’t assume that it’s effortlessly simple or free.

Note that if you type four periods in a row in many instances of MSWord (depending on autocorrect settings), it will automatically give you a false ellipsis followed by a period. If you’re ending a sentence and then trailing off, you want the period to come first *but it doesn’t*. That creates a situation where manual review of ellipses is necessary, taking more time at the manuscript editing stage. Turn that automatic “correction” off if you can (see “Suggested Settings for Autocorrect,” above); it’s not a correction.

If an ellipsis begins or ends a standard quotation, there should be no space between the first/last dot and the quotation mark. “. . . Example . . .”

So the gist of this little section is this: if you only use three points and no more for your ellipses, and don’t have many of them, it’s okay to use three periods with no spaces before, between or after (or the false ellipsis character if you

must) and the typesetter will be able to make some global replacements to correct them and review quotation mark instances individually. If you are going to use the three-or-four-dot method varying by context, you need to control your ellipses more precisely, and you need to learn how to use non-breaking spaces between dots, or the book is going to incur more costs in cleanup because it is going to require more subjective human intervention.

KNOW YOUR DASHES

Manuscripts should use either the em dash—with no spaces left and right or the en dash – with spaces left and right, as the punctuation mark of the mid-sentence dash. Be consistent.

The em dash—is twice as wide as the en dash – en dashes and em dashes are sometimes called en rules and em rules, respectively.

The em is sometimes sneered at as boorish, but this is largely personal taste. I sometimes like to replace the sequence space-endash-space with half spaces and a hybrid en/em—like this. That sort of tweaking is done at the typesetting stage, not in manuscript preparation.

A manuscript with ens mid-sentence – like this, may also use ems for interruptions like th— (they are not mutually exclusive).

Ens and ems should not be *mixed* throughout a manuscript to fill the same function. Pick one method and go with it. Note that these characters are *not on* most standard keyboards. The hyphen - and double hyphen--are typographically wrong when used as a dash, and leaving those in your manuscript will require some cleanup. The double hyphen is okay (if you can't figure out how to make dashes) if it is *absolutely* consistent and can be replaced globally with one of the dash strategies.

Some word processors (like MSWord) will try to automatically change your [space][hyphen][space] to a [space]*short dash*[space] and your [hyphen][hyphen] to a *long dash*. *Warning:* you may not be able to see this, but this substitution will *not* give you the true em dash or en dash from the font you're using; it will reference an outside “punctuation” font extension or geometric shape instead. Highlighting the character may tell you it's still in your current font, but it won't actually be: this can be *very frustrating* for your publisher. Those false dashes can be *quite* difficult to work with in a commercial publishing setting, and can cause delays. Always use the en dash and em dash from the actual font. Here's how to access them:

Em Dash—

Windows:

Make sure your NumLock key is on.

Hold down Alt, type 0151 on your number pad, let go Alt

Mac:

Option-Shift-Hyphen

En Dash –

Windows:

Make sure your NumLock key is on.

Hold down Alt, type 0150 on your number pad, let go Alt

Mac:

Option-Hyphen

Note that the dash one gets in MSWord when hitting Ctrl-Shift-Hyphen is *not an en dash*. Copy and paste a correct en dash and a whatever-that-is over into a text-only program like Windows Notepad and you'll see the difference.

Yes the application is broken, it's not “what you see is what you get” like it's supposed to be, and it can be a pain. This number pad code method is the best way to do it correctly. For a printable list of special characters and how to type them on the PC or the Mac, see the main Manuscript Preparation page.

Note that most style sheets also prefer the en dash *with no spaces* (rather than a hyphen) to indicate a range or “going from one to the other” relationship. In other words, I went to college from 1989–1993 (en dash), not 1989-1993 (hyphen). A London-Boston ship (hyphen) is a ship that combines the styles of London and Boston designs and is always read “London Boston ship” and never “London to Boston ship” while a London–Boston ship (en dash) is a ship that goes from London to Boston and is read “London to Boston ship” and not “London Boston ship.” With the technological limitations of the manual typewriter era (and now the internet era), many no longer discern this distinction, but it's a proper one to make.

Scientists and mathematicians are often particular about their symbols, and some have serious opinions about which symbol is the best subtraction/negative sign. Some believe that a symbol pulled from the popular “Symbol” typeface is better than a hyphen or en dash. There is also a multiplier/cross product sign × in a standard Windows font that is different from a lower-case x. I usually let scientists do whatever they prefer so long as they're consistent.

The more complicated the manuscript, the more responsible the author is for assuring that the complicated parts are perfectly consistent.

OTHER HYPHENS

There are also “non-breaking hyphens” and “optional hyphens” in some word processors. You can ignore both of these as part of the 95% of the program that does more harm than good; the rare instance where a hyphen is confusing at a line end in the typeset draft can be corrected with the typesetter when you’re reviewing the typeset draft (page proofs). Don’t use a word processor to handle line-end hyphenation to break words into syllables; word processors generally do a poor job of it and gum up the works in a publishing workflow.

THE SHAPES OF QUOTES (IN ENGLISH)

Double quotes look like this: “ ”

Inch marks (double primes) look like this: “ ”

This is a computer symbol with no typographic meaning: “ ”

This symbol is used on the web but is not a quotation mark: “ ”

Single quotes look like this: ‘ ’ (‘ is also an apostrophe)

Foot marks (primes) look like this: ‘ ’

This is a computer symbol with no typographic meaning: ‘ ’

This symbol is used on the web but is not a quotation mark: ‘ ’

(Primes are also used scientifically for things like degree minutes and degree seconds.)

In English, you always want your double quotes to be 66 and 99 shaped and your single quotes to be 6 and 9 shaped. If you have “smart quotes” (this is a misnomer since “dumb quotes” aren’t quotes) turned ON in MSWord’s autocorrect settings, it might seem like you *can’t* uncurl your quotes, but there’s a trick to it. Type the “ and you’ll get a 66-shaped

quote, but then immediately hit Ctrl-Z (Cmnd-Z on Mac) to undo the autocorrection. Presto: you have a ". Use the same trick to change an autocorrected ' to a '. Since you probably don't have primes and double-primes in your font, use the "dumb quotes" for foot/inch marks and they will be converted to primes during typeset.

When you call 'em on the 'phone to see if the 'plane is on time 'cause the '54 Mercury isn't ready, you're using a lot of apostrophes at the *beginnings* of words. These should be 9-shaped, as shown here. The easiest way to prevent 6-shaped mistakes is to put an obviously wrong character in front of each apostrophe.

call %'em on the %'phone to see if the %'plane is on time %'cause the %'54 Mercury . . .

Then erase the obviously wrong character:

call 'em on the 'phone to see if the 'plane is on time 'cause the '54 Mercury . . .

(While 'plane and 'phone are somewhat archaic with the leading apostrophe, publish a memoir written during World War II and you'll end up using them a lot. Publishing is quite a wonderful adventure!)

Authors often compose books over time, and move from machine to machine. Book manuscripts often survive at least one crash/reinstallation/upgrade of the application or the operating system. If your quote curling settings switch at all, it can spoil your work. If even a single "dumb quote" is discovered filling in for a "quote," the publisher will likely change all double and single quotes/marks to their default shapes and then hunt for exceptions like 5'2" and Fish 'n' Chips. To avoid wasted time and expense, do an exhaustive review of all quotes/apostrophes before sharing a manuscript with a publisher.

ROMAN AND ITALIC PUNCTUATION

One reason I advocate using Times New Roman (or Times) as the font for composition and editing is that there is a clear and recognizable, albeit subtle difference between an italic comma and a roman (regular) comma on screen, and between an italic period and a roman period. (Quotes are also noticeably 66 and 99 shaped in Times variants, which is helpful.) If you train your eyes to recognize these differences, you can close in on perfection for your manuscript. *For example*, if the comma belongs to the “for example” beginning this sentence (the phrase emphasized) it should be italic; it doesn’t, so it’s roman in this case. If a comma belongs to the emphasized phrase *eggs, bacon, and coffee*, the comma may be italic. Note that the comma after *coffee* is not italic. Ignore, for now, the fact that I used the “Oxford comma” after *bacon* if that incites you to riot. If an entire sentence is italic, its punctuation (excepting, preferably, its parentheses) should be all italic.

(Use italic parentheses sparingly if at all; they look odd.)

Roman and italic *periods* are much more difficult to distinguish, but remember that you don’t necessarily know what typeface a publisher is going to use for your book. It is better to err on the side of doing it correctly; have all your punctuation, including the periods, in the correct style according to context.

Many website authoring programs (and hence many websites) force punctuation marks to share the style of the preceding word, and some style sheets suggest doing this to avoid letterfitting/kerning pitfalls that are now easy to avoid. This is a somewhat thuggish approach to the issue, and book publishing should espouse the most sensitive aesthetic available.

ORDINALS

Raised ordinals like 1st, 2nd and 3rd can be used in headings to save space. In the body of a book they are interruptions (they pull the eye from doing normal left-to-right motions in the desired, orderly way down the page). They also make use of tiny lettering that can end up looking washed out or broken at some of the more economical print shops. Avoid them when possible.

Typesetters prefer to use *text numbers* in the body of a book. These numbers 1234567890 ascend and descend a lot like lowercase letters and are sometimes called “lowercase numbers;” they don’t stand out from the page as much as *titling numbers* (or “uppercase numbers”) do: 1234567890. Raised ordinals look awkward set against text numbers.

If you read *Chicago*’s suggestions on which numbers you should write out and which you should have as numerals, you’ll probably realize you should just be writing fifth, twenty-seventh, sixteenth century, etc. much of the time anyway.

BREAKING PAGES

When writing a manuscript, don’t worry about “widow and orphan” control. If a chapter ends with one line dangling on a page by itself, don’t fret about it. The typesetter will be using a completely different application, page size, and typeface to set lettering, and if you force a page at a strange spot to marry your manuscript to a letter-sized page, you may end up with a strange result on a book-sized page.

At the ends of chapters, feel free to use the page break character (PC: Ctrl-Enter, Mac: Insert – Break – Page Break) to advance to the next page rather than hitting Enter over

and over again until an arbitrary 8½" × 11" page is broken. Working with "Show All" (¶) toggled on will make this a lot easier to see.

SUMMARY

The more complex your manuscript, the more your knowledge of the behind-the-scenes stuff on the computer will aid the publishing workflow.

Autoformat in MSWord often equals automistake. If you are comfortable doing so, turn it off except for quote curling.

Unless there is a strong reason to break out, limit yourself to letters, numbers, and the punctuation marks you can type with your keyboard. Know how to make quote marks/apostrophes 6-shaped or 9-shaped, and how to make them into "dumb quotes" (to become inch and foot marks in typeset) when needed. Choose one method for dashes and apply it consistently. Use the number pad code versions in Windows, not the keyboard shortcut versions, for dashes. Use *italics* or **SMALL CAPS** for emphasis/acronyms, not **bold** or SCREAMING. If you absolutely must raise your voice, do it infrequently and it will have a better effect (I learned this from my grandmother).

In addition to these visible characters, understand how non-breaking spaces, tabs, indents, and page breaks work.

Beyond these few additions to the standard keys on your keyboard, the more formatting you do, the more formatting will usually need to be undone, potentially slowing down or financially burdening the project. Keep it simple.

The Non-Standard-Keyboard Characters You Should Know How to Make

- 99, 66, 9, 6 shaped quote marks
- 9 shaped apostrophe
- dumb quotes " " (become primes '' in typeset)
- en dash
- em dash
- non-breaking space
- page break
- indent rather than tab

SOME FINAL THOUGHTS

Some publishers will review a manuscript on paper initially then immediately request an electronic copy. Some (and CKMM) review the electronic copy to begin with. Either way, the electronic condition of the manuscript is important nowadays.

Editing can often be done by redlining a document (like a lawyer does to a contract, to show all additions and deletions) with a word processing feature and Acrobat PDF output rather than sending a marked manuscript back and forth.

If I've typeset a book, I don't rely upon the author to read it carefully on-screen (the author has read the book a hundred times at that point), so I usually send a laser printout of the first typeset page proofs, but most everything else is electronic.

All-electronic workflows are appealing and inexpensive, but they also carry some baggage. The age of the manual typewriter persists sometimes, and many people still type a lowercase L instead of a 1, example: 199l. Many people still

underline instead of italicizing, since that's all typewriters used to be able to do, even though italics are much more appropriate for emphasis, titles, ship names, etc. in professional publishing.

I remember learning to type on a manual typewriter. Mine had a “half space” key, and I could make dashes with clever use of half spaces and back spaces. But many people didn’t have the half space, so dashes sort of died out by virtue of technological discouragement, even though they’re important.

If you have a standard computer keyboard, you have not one but two keys that can produce each of the following characters: /*-.0123456789.

The unusual ‘\| are there, but you can’t type – or—without doing something special, and the six marks ‘ ’ “ ” ” and ' are all tied to a single key. There’s an ellipsis character ... but it’s so tightly spaced that it’s reviled by typesetters and called the “false” ellipsis. If you know a lot about computers, you can reprogram your keyboard to have your favorite symbols set up to take the place of ‘\|, and you can edit your font so that ... looks like ... but if you know a lot about computers, you probably don’t have a problem memorizing the little workarounds I’ve described in this guide. Hopefully, these minor quirks in the present computer era will not discourage you from writing or publishing, and will help you improve your “penmanship.”

It is frustrating to me to receive something with all straight quotes in it and have to turn around and ask the editor or author for it to be fixed, or upcharge for manuscript editing when the book was supposedly already “edited” by one or more professionals. The fact of the matter is: there’s no computer program to tell me if your 'cause is the beginning of an American quote-within-a-quote ('cause) or a dialect contraction of “because” ('cause). If the manuscript is not invested with meaning, it needs to be reinvested with mean-

ing; if you don't do it right, it has to be puzzled over by a reader, and that is extra time and expense.

This is all to say that the role of author and/or the role of editor should involve a certain proficiency with the computer. If not, the publisher will end up spending more time and money on the process, even if the author and editor are both perfect professionals in every other respect.

A manuscript is like a house. Janitors and interior designers can both make a house look better. If you hire an interior designer to help you with your house, but don't clean it up first, the designer won't be able to see the "big picture" and will have to spend some time doing janitorial work (probably an unwise use of your money) before beginning. The more you can enable your publisher to fill the role of "interior designer" instead of "janitor," the fewer people need to be involved, and the better off the book will be.

Best of luck preparing your manuscript, and please let us know if you have any questions.

