(10B) PROOF READING

Structure

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10B.0 AIMS

In this section we shall tell you about how the print instructions given by the copy editor are cross-checked by the proof reader to ensure the press has followed them. We have given you a set of the bare minimum proof reading symbols used by proof reader to give you an idea of the job. Note that here we do not aim to tell you everything about proof reading since that will need a whole course. We shall just tell you about what proof reading is, how it is done and its relevance.

10B.1 INTRODUCTION: PROOF READING AND PRESS INSTRUCTIONS

Since typographical instructions to the press will have to cover the entire mss of the book, as a copy editor or proof reader it is useful to know the main parts of a book (we have already given you a list of the parts). The relevance of knowing the parts of a book is that no part is missed during the process of printing. For example, the illustrations or bibliography are printed only at the final stage and there is the risk of their being left out if you are not familiar with all the parts.

The proof reader can check, via the detailed press instructions, that the entire set of instructions is both complete and adhered to.

After a text has been finalized by the content editor and the copy editor too has gone through it, making such suggestions and changes or corrections as will ensure consistency and readability, the typescript is passed on to the printer for composing and keying in this stage. It is not necessary that the illustrations such as photographs and charts are inserted. Going through the text as it emerges in galley proofs/first proofs is the first job of the proof reader.

Subsequently, errors that have been caught by the proof reader are corrected as per his suggestions. Another 'proof', we may term this as the second proof, is again checked by the proof reader. He uses the standard proof reading symbols and signs to do so and the printer/press again corrects these. Usually, at the point the text is finalized and the
illustrations etc. are to be sized and placed and now the author is now given a set of page-proofs to check.

In case the proof reader has queried the author at first or second proofs stages, the author may already have looked at the output. In fact, it is cheaper to let him make changes at the first or second proofs stage since these are easier and cheaper to make changes at this point.

When the pages have been decided as per the number of lines per page, the letter sizes and fonts and the margins, any changes the author makes will be expensive to incorporate. It is, therefore, important that the proof reader does a thorough job before the changes become too expensive and hold up the press.

10B.2 PROOF READING: A NEW WAY OF READING

How does the proof reader ‘read’ proofs? Firstly, he will have to ‘unlearn’ rapid reading when words are not read one at a time but in ‘blocks’ of three or more words. For example, if he were to read “Look before you” before the line or page changes, he will already have understood it to mean “Look before you leap”. It is possible that the author is writing of a freshly painted wall and he said “Look before you lean”. Again, if he was to read “In the zoo there were many liars and tigers”, he may well have read “lions” where as the word was “liars”!

10B.2.1 Read Every Word

In case you, the proof reader, read in “blocks” you can try using an opaque ruler placed over the next line of the text so that you read only the current line. Alternatively, you can try reading out aloud because in this way you are exposing the text to two of your senses – the visual and the auditory. It is quite possible that the ear catches what the eye does not.

10B.2.2 Read Sentence by Sentence

The proof reader who is concerned with correctness of grammar alone must also consider idiomatic usage, appropriate to the subject matter and of the correct degree of formality or informality. Looking at the spelling of words in isolation is not going to be of much help in catching errors. Reading, sentence by sentence, also again with the help of a ruler that covers distracting items with help to see that the spelling of a word, in context, may be wrong. There are numerous examples such as:

- There books were all torn.
- To many cooks spoil the broth.
- The book cost for rupees and fifty paise.

A.S. Hornby in Guide to Patterns and Usage in English presents specimens of errors which are known to be frequent. With experience you will yourself be able to make (on a memo pad) a list of errors or inconsistencies the particular author whose work you are looking at, is prone to.

10B.2.3 Read Backwards

Another foolproof way of catching errors is to read backwards! For example, if you are reading a sentence “Loot before you leap” and you have read it backwards, you will catch up word “Loot” which you may have otherwise read as “Look”. However, this would need you yourself to make several readings of the text for which you may not have the time. Further, you would with time, be more and more proficient in the English language yourself – and that means reading rapidly.
10B.3 LOOKING AT SURFACE FLAWS

“Surface” flaws that those that are visible on just looking at the page.

10B.3.1 Physical Presentation of Text

You may notice one set of words in larger type than another, in a different font from the others or you may notice inconsistency in spacing between words, between lines, between paragraphs and so on. Further, there may be inconsistency in justification of lines – left, right, both or as the style set may be. Yet again, while looking at page proofs, you may notice that the margins of white space around the text are broader or narrower than usual. Remember, the copy editor would already have given instructions for these; you then would be the last person to see the matter before it is printed. You may need to check with the style sheet of your publishing house, the copy editor, or even with the printer if he is experienced enough before pointing out seeming inconsistencies.

10B.3.2 Consistency

Consistency refers to consistency of physical presentation, consistency in spelling and in grammar. Even if the author is saying the same thing again and again, he may choose to be consistent/inconsistent. It is up to you to identify his purpose and ensure that you have implemented and not thwarted his purpose! For example, a common usage nowadays is for people to say “Anyways, as I was saying”, whereas the correct form is “Anyway, as I was saying”. Avoid correcting this if you consistently encounter it. You are safest if you (a) cross-check, and (b) read against ’copy’.

10B.3.3 Reading Against ‘Copy’

While the convergence of roles in small publishing houses has virtually eliminated the copyholder, he used to serve a useful purpose. The copyholder used to actually ‘hold’ the master copy and read out, word-by-word, capitals and small letters and punctuations while the proof reader checked. For example, look at the sentence: “Don’t you know what time it is already?” He would read this out as “Double quotation marks open, capital D,o,n, apostrophe, t, space, y,o,u, space . . . a,l,r,e,a,d,y question mark, quotation marks closed”.

10B.4 CHECKING LAYOUT

For this, you would find it helpful to use a scale and measure out margins, line spaces, indentations, etc. Also, you would need to go through, say, the first chapter, making notes as you go along, with respect to the physical dimensions of the page, the placement of page numbers the locations of the first word and first line of a new chapter etc. Once you have made this “master” for yourself, you will find you can work faster and with more confidence.

Layout, as you already know, also includes placement of elements other than the text alone. You will need to check that a sentence that says, “Look at the illustration given below” has not been, during the process of page making, got moved to another page and so the said illustration is no longer “below”. The copy editor and layout artist would no doubt have given appropriate instructions but it is the proof reader who will ultimately see whether these have been implemented.

10B.5 QUERYING

As proof reader, you may encounter certain difficulties which you may not be able to, want to, or be expected to handle independently. At the same time, you may find
yourself becoming excessively cautious and start consulting others for every little doubt. What should the golden mean be?

10B.5.1 Facts

If you, with experience, feel that some of the facts given are wrong, you must consult the author thus:

? Author

? Facts

If you do not understand the meaning of a statement, for example, a sentence that reads “Not all the girls have done well and not all the boys have done badly”, you may indicate it thus:

? meaning

10B.5.2 Spellings

However, where spellings are concerned, after reading through the text and keeping a record, as we have suggested earlier, you may yourself be able to resolve the issue. For example, if the word “Varma” has been spelt with an ‘a’ after ‘v’ right through the text and only in the reference or the bibliography has the spelling changed to “Verma”, you will have to know whether this has been compiled by someone else. If the author so wishes, the publisher gets the bibliography made by someone else, your query is handled – the person compiling the bibliography has made this mistake.

10B.5.3 Other Queries

Page numbers, cross-references, placement of tables, etc. may have problems and these must have occurred during the page making process. You, and no-one else is responsible for collating these and you must make the changes. The commonest error is “see below”, “see above” and you may replace these words suitably by “which follows” or “as given earlier”.

10B.6 SPOTTING ERRORS

Increasingly, you will notice that while reading proofs, your first task is to spot errors. Further, you will see that if a sentence has one spelling error and you have corrected it, the tendency is to move on to the next sentence. However, you must read the sentence again and you may discover that the sentence has yet another error, maybe of a different kind – a word repeated. For example, this happens particularly if the page changes and the sentence “Some of the failures have been due to to the poor training” carries two ‘to’s.

You will also learn, over time, where it is that a particular compositor or page-making program is most prone to error. Now you may start training to be a copy editor!

Here is a list of the problems commonly encountered at the proofreading level and these are:

• In spellings, numbers, dates, capitals and abbreviations, italics, bold and more critical of all where accuracy is concerned – quotations, and

• In grammar, punctuation and idioms.
• Missing elements like the preliminary pages, headings, headlines, numbering of pages (location included), sections, tables, illustrations.

• Physical or surface errors like fonts, letter size, line spacing, paragraphing, indentation, quotes that open and do not close, italics or bold that go on far beyond the indented sections.

## 10B.7 LEAVE WELL ALONE: IDIOMS, IDIOSYNCRASIES, STYLE

This is what we may call the golden mean. Being over-enthusiastic may be counterproductive. If you have encountered a tendency, you may just mark it and query it to the concerned person. It may well be that the author intended to make a point with unequal spacing or spelling and that may have been the reason for the copy editor’s decision not to correct the action while sending the ms for printing. We would also like you to keep on your table a self-guide when you have noted the author’s ways of stating facts or saying “Sincerely yours” instead of “Yours sincerely”. This may be an element of style which the author has consistently, consciously cultivated and it would be wise to leave it alone.

## 10B.8 SUMMING UP

In this part of the unit, we have tried to show you how to read proofs without actually going into marking the proofs. We have, thus, introduced you to the concept of reading slowly, with the rationale for doing so, how and where to look for surface flaws, whether to handle problems oneself or to query these. Finally, we have told you when to leave well alone because the bigger crime is to introduce errors rather than leave them be.

## 10B.9 GLOSSARY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compose</td>
<td>typeset and key in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compositor</td>
<td>a printing craftsman who sets up type manually, makes up the pages and corrects them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copy preparer</td>
<td>person who translates the designer’s typographical specifications into instructions on the typescript (Butcher)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orphan</td>
<td>the first line of a para appearing as the last line of a page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typography</td>
<td>the designer who visualizes what the finished book should look like and gives appropriate specifications for it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widow</td>
<td>the last line of a para appearing at the top of the next page</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## 10B.10 FURTHER READING


### APPENDIX: PROOF READING SYMBOLS

You may obtain a complete list of these from the British Standard Institution website: www.bsi.org.uk or from “Common Proofreading Symbols” (Webster.commnetedu/writing/symbols.html)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbols</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>⟨</td>
<td>insert a comma</td>
<td>The mayor’s brother, I tell you, is a crook.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‚</td>
<td>apostrophe or single quotation mark</td>
<td>I wouldn’t know where to put this vase.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>∧</td>
<td>insert something</td>
<td>I know it, in fact, everyone knows it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>↬</td>
<td>use double quotation marks</td>
<td>My favorite poem is “Design.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☺</td>
<td>use a period here</td>
<td>This is a declarative sentence ☺</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❁</td>
<td>delete</td>
<td>The elephant’s trunk is really its nose.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>⬇</td>
<td>transpose elements</td>
<td>He only picked the one he likes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>🌿</td>
<td>close up this space</td>
<td>Jordan lost his favorite basketball ball.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#</td>
<td>a space needed here</td>
<td>I have only three friends: Ted, Raoul, and Alice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>¶</td>
<td>begin new paragraph</td>
<td>&quot;I knew it,&quot; I said. &quot;I thought so,&quot; she replied.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☹</td>
<td>no paragraph</td>
<td>&quot;I knew it, she said. He’s no good.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Proof Reading