



TRANSCRIPT: SEASON 2, EPISODE 1
HOW TO PREPARE YOUR BOOK FILE FOR EDITING

Denise Cowle: Hello and welcome to our first episode of Season 2 of The Editing Podcast!

Louise Harnby: Yes, it's great to be back. We've missed you all! And I've missed chatting with Denise! Actually, that's not true. We haven't stopped nattering – we just stopped recording that lunacy for a while.

DC: Yep, there *has* been lots and lots of chitchat while getting this season ready but it's lovely to be back in the saddle with our mics. We've even upped the sound quality a little for you by introducing a new recording system. Anyway, tell everyone what we're talking about this week, Louise.

LH: Sure. So this time round we're looking at preparing your file for editing because whether you're doing your own editing or hiring a pro, there are things you can do, and not do, to make life easier. The tips we're going to offer here are based on our own experience.

DC: That's right. Because the thing is, we've seen it all, and we know as well as anyone what the impact on time and money is when a book's files become, shall we say, overcomplicated.

LH: Yes, so the first piece of advice is NOT to design your book's interior before editing. Design is something you want to focus on after editing, not before. I don't know about you, Denise, but I've received numerous book files over the years that look beautiful ... until I destroy all that gorgeous layout with my 14,000 edits. It's heartbreaking, actually, because editors know how much time it takes to format a book and make it *look* lovely.

DC: It absolutely is! I really feel for authors who've put in all that effort because I'm going to have to go back and tell them that they've probably wasted hours. What I will say is that if you're creating a book that's ready for being printed, design will come into play at proofreading stage. Page proofs are absolutely perfect for the proofreader.

LH: That's right, and that's because the proofreader can check not only your spelling, punctuation and grammar but also the layout. They can make sure all your page numbers are chronological, that all the different elements of the text are formatted consistently, that the page margins are consistent, that the right fonts have been used and are appearing as you intended, and that any images, tables or figures are in the right place.

DC: Just so we're clear, page proofs are either hard-copy or PDF versions of the book that are laid out exactly as they'll appear in the final printed version.

LH: Yes, and that means that in effect you're looking at pretty much what a reader would see if they pulled your book off the shelf once it's been published. We talked about proofreading in Season 1, Episode 8, so if you want more detail on that, take a listen.

DC: Yes, and I think you included a link to your free proofreading checklist in that, didn't you, Louise?

LH: Yeah, that's right, but I'll stick it in the show notes here too. It basically covers everything that needs to be checked when proofreading designed page proofs.

DC: Now, with copyediting – and if you're proofreading raw-text files for digital books – it's a different story, and that's what we're going to focus on in this episode. If you follow these tips you'll produce a file that's editor-friendly.

LH: And this is all good news because it means less work for you, not more. You get to focus on the text, on what your writing's doing, rather than on what it looks like. So let's talk first about the type of file to edit in. Most professional editors work in Microsoft Word. That's because, despite the odd glitch, it's still the best word-processing software on the planet.

DC: It so is! It has a stack of onboard tools that help you style all the elements of your text consistently, and quickly locate potential problems that might need fixing. So I'm thinking about the Styles palette ...

LH: I absolutely adore that – it saves me so much time.

DC: Yes, me too. But there are grammar, spelling and readability tools as well, which you can find in the Check Document function in the Proofing section of the Review tab.

LH: I actually rate the onboard thesaurus in Word. But my favourite function, apart from the Styles gallery, is Track Changes.

DC: Yes, it's a must-use at the editing stage, I'd say.

LH: Isn't it just! Track Changes does what it says on the tin. It allows you and your editor to track, review and accept or reject every change that's made to a document.

DC: And if you're working with a pro editor, that means you, the author, stay in control even though someone else is changing your file. Just good old peace of mind. Also, Word is compatible with a host of macros that complement the editor's brain and eye. That means they can add an extra level of quality-control to the edit efficiently.

LH: And we're going to dedicate an entire episode to our favourite free macros that any writer or editor can use to polish a Word file, so watch out for that soon. One other thing I'd like to mention is that even if you've written your book in a different program – maybe, Scrivener, Google Docs or Apple Pages – I think it's still worth transferring the text to a Word file before you get down to self-editing at sentence level.

DC: I'd even go so far as to say it's essential if you're working with a pro editor. They'll do a better job, full stop.

LH: Yes. And in the Editing Bites section later, we've got a great tool for you if you want a really affordable way to improve your working knowledge of Word and how to get the best out of it when writing and editing.

DC: So our next tip concerns the number of files your content's written in. We strongly recommend that unless you've agreed with your book editor to work serially – by that I mean on a chapter-by-chapter basis – you should create one master file that contains the full text of your book.

LH: Absolutely. If you send us 60 distinct chapters, all we do is merge them into one file ... after we've had a stiff gin, that is, to ease the frustration. And I think it's important to say here that this isn't me and Denise being a couple of grouchers, honestly. It's just that we want to ensure that your book is consistent, and that means being able to search easily for what's not falling into line.

DC: Yes, so in fiction, Louise will be looking to ensure that Kathryn with an initial K and r-y-n on the end doesn't become Catherine with a c and an i-n-e ending. When editing you can use the Find and Replace tool for that kind of thing but there are free and paid-for Word plug-ins that can help you identify problems like this efficiently. However, they're only effective when you're working with a single file.

LH: Yes, and Denise might want to run a check to make sure bulleted lists or the capitalisation of headings are consistent at each level in a non-fiction book.

And there are tools to help you do this – like our beloved PerfectIt – efficiently if you’re working in a single file.

DC: The same applies to ensuring that the various elements of your text are formatted consistently. For example, it’s conventional for the first paragraph in a chapter or section to *not* be indented, and you can use the style’s palette to define the appearance with one click. There’s a link to a tutorial on creating and using styles in the show notes.

LH: Now let’s talk about fonts. So you might have decided to use an unconventional font for your book interior. You’re perfectly entitled to use any font you choose ... just spare a thought for your editor’s eyes or your own. We recommend using something like Times New Roman, size 14. It’s a serif font, which means it’s easy on the eye. And that means editing is less of a struggle, which in turn means fewer things will be missed.

DC: Yes, some fonts are just awful to check though beautiful or fun to look at – so Serendipity, Chiller, **Old English Text** and *Blackadder* – but they’re a recipe for disaster at editing stage!

LH: Yes, and some sans serif fonts like Arial for example don’t always render capital I’s and lower-case L’s distinctly. I’ve had several thrillers cross my desk featuring agents from those well-known intelligence agencies ML5 and ML6!

Next up is colours. When authors start getting creative with colours, it can severely impede accuracy.

DC: That’s so true. We recommend you use black text on a white page. Again, it’s about readability. There’s no doubt that white text on a coloured block can stand out, especially in brochures and web content, and the contrast is visually appealing, but it’s really challenging if you’re editing for consistency and accuracy.

LH: I’ve had experience of that with fiction. A couple of years ago, I was asked to copyedit a fabulous book for an indie author. The pages were black and the text was pale pink. It was really effective and branded the book perfectly. But I begged the author for permission to change the file during editing. He was fine about it, but he’d still spent time setting up that design and it was wasted because I undid it and changed it to black on white.

DC: And the thing is that when we’re confronted with quirky stuff like that, we have to work much more slowly because it’s such a strain. And that means, yup, a higher price. Honestly, stick to black text on a white page when editing. You’ll save time and money.

LH: Let's talk now about paragraphs. Open up most fiction books and you'll likely see all the paragraphs indented with the exception of the first one in a chapter or section. Only those will be not indented. We can't recommend strongly enough using the ribbon in Word to create those indents. Then use the styles palette to define the paragraph style so that you can easily switch your text from indented to full-out with one click.

DC: Yes, don't use tabs, please. You'll end up with an unholy mess if you're publishing digitally. But there's another issue – if you decide to change the size of an indent, you can simply modify the style with a few clicks and your entire file will be reformatted automatically in seconds. If you use individual tabs to create your indents, you'll have to change all one billion of them individually.

LH: Not good!

DC: So not good!

LH: Again, you can find out how to do this in the video and blog post we've linked to in the show notes.

So let's talk about spacing now. At line and copyediting stage, don't worry about how many pages your text covers. Instead, focus on spacing your lines so that the text is easy to read. In Word, setting the line spacing at 1.25 or 1.5 works well for a font size of 12 or 14.

DC: If you're wondering how to do this, the line spacing function can be located by right-clicking on text and selecting PARAGRAPH. A window will open. Make sure you're in the INDENTS AND SPACING tab. Then amend the LINE SPACING field.

LH: Our next file-prep tip is defining headings. In fiction this will be chapter headings, and perhaps some date marker subheads if your story jumps around a little.

DC: But in non-fiction this is an even bigger issue. You might have 3 or 4 different heading styles in addition to figure, table and image headings. If you use Word's styles palette, and assign various inbuilt header styles, you'll ensure consistency right across your book file.

LH: You can modify these styles as you see fit. For chapter titles you can even ensure each one automatically starts on a fresh page. So to do that, right-click on the heading style, select MODIFY, then FORMAT, then PARAGRAPH. A window will open. Make sure you're in the LINE AND PAGE BREAKS tab. Then check the PAGE BREAK BEFORE box.

DC: So why is that useful? Well, it means you won't need to hit the return button 30 plus times to get the cursor to the top of the next page when you begin a new chapter.

LH: And you'll create a really quick way of ensuring that all your chapters or sections are listed chronologically because they'll appear in a list in Word's Navigation menu. If your chapters are numbered, any problems will be easy to identify.

DC: You can also shift chapters around in the Navigation menu, can't you?

LH: Ooh, that's right – just by clicking and dragging. It's dead easy.

DC: So how about page numbers? Well, in raw-text files, there's no need for page numbers or other headers and footers. These are things that need to be added at design stage, even for printed books. And Word records the page number in the bottom-left-hand corner of the screen of a PC, and that's what an editor will refer to if they need to direct your attention to a specific page.

LH: And there's another thing – if you plan to upload a final version of your file for ebook creation, your page numbers will need to be removed anyway, so that's another reason to add them in at the design stage for your printed book.

DC: Shall we talk about section breaks now? Now in non-fiction, section breaks are often accompanied by headings to indicate what the new content's about. But in fiction, they serve a different function, so why don't I let you chime in on that, Louise?

LH: Yes, that's right. So in fiction, we might use section breaks to indicate a shift in scene or a change in viewpoint. I'm not going to bang on about narrative viewpoint here because that's a topic all of its own. Now, it's perfectly acceptable to have just a line space – that's how I often see it done in fiction, unless the break comes at the end of a page – but the problem is that in raw text it's not always clear to a third-party interior designer, proofreader or copyeditor that a break is intended if it's only a line space.

And that's because sometimes a writer will accidentally hit the return button twice. If you don't want anyone, including yourself, to spend time working out whether the break is intended rather than focusing on the flow of your text, any errors that need correcting or the layout, I think it can be useful to mark them. I usually use three asterisks to denote my section breaks – you can always use the find and replace function to locate and change them to something else at design stage.

DC: That's really sensible advice, actually. It's for the same reason that using Word's styles palette to actually style a heading is a good idea ... it removes ambiguity.

LH: That's right. So how about pictures and images? The fiction I work on is usually adult stuff – I mean the readership is adult, not the content ... though I do edit adult-themed material too. But if you're writing a children's book, there might well be images. And, of course, in non-fiction there are often images to consider. So what would you recommend doing with these at editing stage, Denise?

DC: Right, so my recommendation is this. If your book includes photos, drawings, tables or figures, I'd suggest putting these in a separate folder and cueing them in in the file instead.

LH: Cueing? What do you mean by that?

DC: I do this by putting each image in a separate file in an Artwork folder, and naming the files in a logical structure, e.g. Image 01, Image 02 etc. I label images, tables and figures separately – Table 01, 02 and Figure 01, 02, etc. so that I can easily keep track of the different types. A tip: start your file numbers with 0 or 00 so that when you get to 10 or 100 it doesn't jump to the top of your file list – I need to see my files in the right order!

Then in the Word document I'll place an instruction for the designer that will say [insert Image 03 here]. That's the cue for them to take the image in the file of that name and insert it in the designed book. It may not be exactly at the point I've cued it, depending on the layout and flow of text, but they know it's to be as near there as possible. And I assign these instructions a Style on the palette – they're usually red and in square brackets so the designer can see spot them.

So one of the reasons this is a good idea is because images are so chunky. They increase the size of a book file massively. And that means that every time you save during the editing process, it takes longer to refresh the screen. When you or a third party is editing, that can save seconds each time. All of those add up, and that time costs money. It also means that Word is less likely to give up the ghost and crash under the weight of all those images! That's one of the worst timewasters that an editor has to deal with. Are you listening, Word?

LH: And I know this might sound a bit daft, but regular saving is essential, isn't it? Because if there's a power cut because the TV exploded, or the dog's been chewing your power cable, that can end up with 30 minutes or so of editing being lost. And that's a nightmare!

DC: Too right! And when it comes to emailing your file full of hi-res images to an editor or designer, it will be so huge that they'll have to use an external cloud-based transfer service. The file will take an hour to load unless they have rubbish broadband speed, in which case it will take two or three hours. Louise knows all about this because that's the price she pays for being able to see pheasants and deer in her garden!

LH: Yeah, poor me! But also, if you keep all your lovely images in the text file during editing, any amendments, deletions, and additions to the text will cause your carefully placed piccies to shift into spaces you didn't intend.

DC: That's it. It's much better to leave image placement to the interior-design stage.

Let's talk now about tables of contents. This is another element of a book file that I think writers tend to create too early because there's a good chance that a chunk of your page numbers and some of the chapter titles will be wrong by the time the editing has finished.

LH: If you're working in Word, and created your table of contents in that software, via the References tab, then you'll be able to update this reasonably quickly. But if you go for a manual option, you could be creating a lot of work for yourself or your editor.

DC: Yes, because when the book's interior is designed, everything will change again, and that could add up to perhaps an extra hour's work, which again is money down the drain.

LH: You still work for publishers, Denise, and I used to. And I don't know about you but I can remember proofreading a table of contents on designed page proofs that had been through multiple rounds of editing, and the table of contents was always wrong in several places.

DC: Same for me, absolutely! So sort out your table of contents before you do your final design, *not* at copyediting stage.

LH: Now let's talk about indexing. We're going to get a professional indexer on The Editing Podcast to talk about indexing, so we won't dig into too much detail today, other than to say, just please don't create a manual index for your book at editing stage. Think about this ... if the page numbers against a table of contents can get messed up during copyediting, the damage to an index is nothing short of catastrophic.

DC: And it's not just the page numbers, but the indexed entries too. The editing might lead to changes in spelling, compound hyphenation, capitalization.

LH: Yes, and some key terms and names will have been removed or changed or added, and none of these changes will be reflected in your carefully crafted index.

DC: I agree. Indexing should come after proofreading, ideally, but certainly not before or during copyediting stage.

Now all the suggestions we've offered for prepping your book file are just that. There isn't one way to do anything when it comes to writing and publishing, but we're telling you what we've learned in our combined, what?

LH: I dunno ... thirty plus years of publishing experience? Well, a lot anyway!

DC: Exactly. And we're telling you what we've learned and seen so that you can make things easy for yourself rather than tearing your hair out.

LH: Or crying. We want to save you the tears. And the frustration. And from throwing things.

DC: And swearing.

LH: Yes, and *lots* of swearing! There's absolutely a time and a place for great interior design, but the pre-editing stage is not it. Save yourself the bother and keep it simple.

So now it's time for Editing Bites! This is the regular part of the show where we each offer you a recommended tool or resource. What have you got for us this week, Denise?

DC: Mine is *How to Market a Book* by Joanna Penn. I'm so in awe of her! Especially when I discovered that she's achieved so much in only ten years! She's a best-selling author, worth millions, but in 2008 she had nothing – no book sales, no audience, no website, no social media, no podcast, no email list. No nothing. This book is for both traditional and indie authors who want to sell more books and/or create long-term income. A great resource from someone who's done the work.

LH: And mine is a tool to help you master Microsoft Word so that it's your friend. Our colleague Adrienne Montgomerie is an editorial consultant based in Canada but who works globally. I finally, after years, got to meet Adrienne at the Toronto SfEP conference in 2018, which was lovely. She's such great fun but a mine of knowledge too. And she's put together an amazing and affordable online self-study course called 'Editing in Word'. I wrote a review of it, which I'll put in the show notes too. And it's not just a book – there are demo video tutorials and checklists, and a support website. And it's just a whisper short of 25 quid – an absolute steal.

DC: That's all for this week. Thank you so much for listening to The Editing Podcast. You can rate, review and subscribe via your podcatcher.

And please tell your writer, editor and business friends ... basically anyone who writes! You can get in touch with us via The Editing Podcast Facebook page. Drop your questions in there too and we'll get back to you.

LH: And don't forget – all the links we've mentioned are in the show notes. Thanks for listening.

Editing bites

- Editing in Word, 2nd Edition, by Adrienne Montgomerie:
<http://bit.ly/2Xy3CPs>
- *How to Market a Book*, by Joanna Penn

Other resources

- Review of Montgomerie's Editing in Word, 2nd ed. by Louise Harnby (blog post): <http://bit.ly/2XrIDza>
- How to use styles (video tutorial): <https://youtu.be/1IRBqPm7LBk>
- How to use styles (blog post):
- PerfectIt: <https://intelligentediting.com/>
- The Author's Proofreading Companion (booklet containing raw-text tidy-up tips): <http://bit.ly/ProofCompanion>
- Proofreading checklist (PDF): <http://bit.ly/CheckProof>