

Index-editing Checklist

Chicago Manual of Style 16.133

Editing an index requires some or all of the following steps, not necessarily in the order given here. Note that it is not necessary to check every heading and every locator against the work—which would take forever—but it is necessary to read the index carefully and to refer to the page proofs from time to time.

- 1 Check headings—in both the main entries and subentries—for alphabetical order.
- 2 Check the spelling, capitalization, and font (i.e., italics or roman) of each heading, consulting the page proofs if in doubt.
- 3 Check punctuation—commas, colons, semicolons, en dashes, etc.—for proper style and consistency (see 16.94–100).
- 4 Check cross-references to make sure they go somewhere and that headings match (see 16.21). Make sure they are needed; if only a few locators are involved, substitute these for the *see* reference (see 16.16). Ensure that the placement of all cross-references within entries is consistent.
- 5 Add cross-references you believe are necessary.
- 6 Check to make sure there are no false locators such as “193–93” or “12102” (and figure out whether these may be the product of a typo) and make sure the locators to each main heading and subheading are in ascending order.
- 7 Check subentries for consistency of order, whether alphabetical or chronological. See 16.68–70.
- 8 If some entries seem overanalyzed (many subentries with only one locator or, worse, with the same locator), try to combine some of them if it can be done without sacrificing their usefulness. If subheadings are more elaborately worded than necessary, try to simplify them.
- 9 If awkward or unnecessary sub-subentries appear, correct them by adding appropriate repeated subentries or by adjusting punctuation (see 16.27, 16.28).
- 10 Look for long strings of unanalyzed locators and break them up, if possible, with subentries (see 16.10, 16.129).
- 11 Evaluate the accuracy of locators by a random check of five to ten entries. If more than one error shows up, consult the author or the indexer; every locator may have to be rechecked.
- 12 If the index needs trimming, delete any entries (and cross-references thereto) that you know from your work on the book are trivial, such as references to persons or places used only as examples of something. But be careful. You may offend someone or let yourself in for a lot of work. A handful of unnecessary entries, if they are very short, does not mar an otherwise good index.