

Advice on indexing

Planning an index

Before you compile the index to your book, you should take time to look through the indexes in several other comparable books and consider which indexes you have found useful in your own work.

Unless there is a special reason for multiple indexes, a single index serving all purposes is preferable: it is simpler to locate and the reader need look through only one sequence of entries. A few books do, however, include one or more small specialist indexes, each dealing exclusively with some principal aspect of the book such as an index of cases in a legal text or a list of first lines in a poetry book. If you think there is a good reason for having more than one index in your book, discuss this with your acquisition/commissioning editor before you start indexing.

Your readers' needs

Consider your readers' needs when compiling the index and adjust the complexity and language level accordingly. Information should be listed under the term that most readers will probably look at first. Use cross-references to list variations or written-out versions and abbreviations/acronyms. An understanding of the readers' needs will help you determine what to put in and what to leave out. Bear in mind that an index is a tool for the reader and not a summary of a book's content, you should always consider what is likely to be looked up.

When to prepare the index

Please supply the index with your manuscript submission.

We recommend the following method for compiling your index:

- Index prepared from the manuscript – structured with main headings, subheadings, cross references and concepts using the manuscript page numbers. This can be done yourself or by hiring a freelance indexer. Our production partner will then update the index with proof page numbers and an index proof will be provided to you at the same time as the page proofs of your book.

Other indexing options include:

- Provide a list of key index terms. Our production partner will generate the index with the correct proof page numbers and supply it to you at the same time as the page proofs of your book.
- Highlight terms to be indexed in the manuscript word file. The index will then be generated as above.
- Index *embedded* in word manuscript; index terms and page ranges are embedded in the manuscript using Microsoft Word Indexing tool or other indexing software (if available). *See Guide to Embedded Indexing.*

How to hire a Freelance Indexer

As the author, you will be best placed to compile the index for your book as you are the expert in the field and the most familiar with the book's content and the needs of your reader. However, if you are unable to compile the index yourself, an alternative option is to hire a professional indexer. You can find an indexer suitable for your book on the Society of Indexers (UK) website: <http://www.indexers.org.uk/> or the American Society for Indexing: <http://www.asindexing.org/>.

Here you can search for a professional indexer by their subject specialty, location, name or skill. The responsibility for hiring an indexer and arranging the payment lies with you.

Preparing an index

A typical index entry is composed of the main heading (and page numbers), subheadings (and page numbers), as well as cross-references (as required). An index should include important ideas, facts, names, and terms that receive significant discussion in the text. Items that are only mentioned incidentally in the text should not be included.

Main headings

Typically nouns (qualified or unqualified) rather than adjectives or verbs on their own

For example:

1. Terms or concepts used throughout the book.
2. Names of authors whose work is quoted or discussed at length.
3. Names of people mentioned because of their importance in the text.
4. Names of relevant countries, regions, and jurisdictions.
5. Names of relevant organisations, political parties, and institutions.

Subheadings

(Consider creating a sub-entry when a main entry would contain more than six page numbers)

For example:

1. Aspects or explanations of terms, concepts, and actions.
2. Subdivisions logically related to the main heading.
3. Works by authors listed as main headings.

Cross-References

“See” references are used to assist the reader in finding a subject or name that may appear in the text in more than one form – e.g. Carroll, Lewis *see* Dodgson, Charles Lutwidge; NATO *see* North Atlantic Treaty Organisation; Indians *see* Native Americans.

“See also” references are used to direct the reader to topics linked to the topic entry – e.g. bodies, falling *see also* motion; space; speed, time; velocity; weight; post-communist countries *see also* countries by name.

Synonyms

Where there are two or more possible synonyms, use the one the reader is most likely to look up, and put all the relevant items in that entry. Under the synonym put a cross-reference ‘*see* [main heading]’.

Concepts

You may want to index broad topics, phrases, themes or concepts that are not explicitly referenced in the text but will aid the reader when navigating central arguments in your book. By providing the manuscript page ranges for concepts the production partner will be able to locate the text to be indexed at proof stage.

Proper Names

References to a peer should be collected under either the title or the family name, whichever is the more familiar to the reader; if both forms are used in the book, or the peerage is a recent one, provide a cross-reference from the other form.

This principle applies to any person or place known by more than one name.

Saints, kings and popes are indexed under their forenames, but places, institutions, acts of Parliament, book and play titles, etc. are placed under the first word after the article:

William IV, king of England (but King William Street)

Lewis, John (but John Lewis Partnership Ltd)

Abortion Act, The

Importance of Being Earnest, The

Structuring entries

Wherever possible, related concepts should be grouped together. By this stage, you will probably already have begun to see which words to use as main entries and which as sub-entries. Only occasionally is it appropriate to have sub-sub-entries, and no more than two levels of subentries should be used.

If any one entry or sub-entry seems disproportionately long, consider dividing it into smaller parts. In the case of long entries, consider promoting the sub-entries to main entries in their own right.

Order of entries

Please note the following rules for alphabetization of entries:

- Entries should be alphabetized letter by letter (not word by word).
- If two headings differ only in that one has an initial capital – as ‘grey’ and ‘Grey’ in the example above – put the capitalised form second.
- Punctuation is ignored until you reach the first comma.
- Sort people's names by the family name or the prefix if one is present. Note that many exceptions are made to this rule for well-known persons commonly referred to without the prefix; see for example the biographical names section of Merriam–Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary.
- Cite and position titles of publications according to the first ‘significant’ word
- If ‘Saint’ is abbreviated to ‘St’ in the text, follow this convention in the index. Position names as if ‘Saint’ were spelt out in full.
- Treat accented and unaccented letters as equivalent – collate ‘ê’ with ‘e’, ‘ü’ with ‘u’, and so on.

Wording of entries

Here are some general guidelines about capturing entries and subentries:

- Main entries begin with a capital letter. Numbers and prefixes are ignored in this context.
- Subentries begin with lowercase letters unless the term is a proper noun.
- Entries are formatted as in the text (e.g., italics for genus and species names, and the use of subscripts and superscripts)
- Abbreviations at the beginning of a term must be written out. For example, *A. fumigatus* should be *Aspergillus fumigatus*
- An entry is divided from the page number by a comma and a space. Any number coming at the end of a term should be marked as belonging to the term (e.g., with a nonbreaking space).
- "See" and "See also" are always rendered in italics.

Use a main or compound noun rather than an adjective to index information. For example, instead of capturing the terms "Numbering footnotes," "Styling footnotes," and "Verifying footnotes" as three entries, capture them as in this example:

Footnotes
 numbering
 styling
 verifying

Adjectives can be used for sub-headings. Words such as 'of', 'and' or 'for' can be included in sub-entries, as long as they are used consistently:

lifting
 of patient with spinal injury
 on to a stretcher
 with a blanket
 with webbing bands

Any cross-reference should be the last item in an entry:

prime ministers
 appointment of
 constitutional function of
 compare presidents; *see also* under *individual names*

Use 'see' to provide cross-references to a synonym under which you've chosen to collect page references or introduce new concepts:

paper folding, *see* origami.
computer, *see* operating system; processor

Use "see also" to draw attention to related aspects of the same subject such as:

elections
 see also electoral reform