



FREELANCE EDITING 101

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LESSON #3

Resources and Track Changes

If you want to be a successful editorial freelancer, you must have certain resources, depending on the type of work you plan to do and the type of clients you plan to work with.

These are the US publishing industry's standard references:

For Book Publishers and Most Popular Magazines (or authors of books or short stories that will be included in books, fiction or nonfiction, and articles for popular magazines):

- *The Chicago Manual of Style* (17th edition, published in 2017)
- *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (11th edition, © 2008)
- (Some also recommend *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary of English Usage*.)

For Newspaper Publishers (or authors of journalistic articles):

- *The Associated Press Stylebook* (reprinted every year)
- *Webster's New World College Dictionary* (5th edition, © 2020)

For Christian Publishers/Authors (books or articles):

- *The Christian Writer's Manual of Style* (© 2016)

The Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS) is a hardback book of more than a thousand pages. *The AP Stylebook* is about four hundred pages (and comes with a separate *Guide to Punctuation* that's another hundred pages or so). *The Christian Writer's Manual of Style* (CWMS) is more than six hundred pages long. And, of course, both dictionaries are quite voluminous.

Are you expected to know everything in all of the books? No. However, you should be familiar with the most common mistakes writers tend to make and know what the answers are. (The PEN Institute is developing a course on mastering CMOS and CWMS.)

Online Versions of Resources

The Chicago Manual of Style is available online for a prepaid annual subscription of \$41. (See <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/help-tools/subscription.html>.) The Christian PEN has a group subscription, which offers a discount on the annual fee. You can even purchase a two- or three-year subscription to save more money. If you're interested, go to <https://thechristianpen.com/cmos-subscription/>.

The CMOS website has an online index. You can go to <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html> and input key words for something you want to find out about, and they'll give you a list of the rule numbers and subheadings of all the paragraphs in the print edition that contain the word or phrase you entered.

Merriam-Webster has an online version of their standard dictionary at <https://www.merriam-webster.com>. You can select the collegiate edition from the website. The unabridged edition is available for purchase at <https://unabridged.merriam-webster.com/subscriber/register/p1>.

A Note about Merriam Webster's Dictionary

Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 11th edition, is the standard for book editing, but the print version is out-of-date. The last revision available for purchase was done in 2014. Most of us probably have an older version though. This is not the best option for our current reference.

After much confusion about the different dictionaries available, CEN contacted *MW* to ask for clarification. Here is a summary of what their editorial department said:

- The dictionary is available online and in app, print, e-book, and downloadable desktop software formats.
- The printed dictionary is updated occasionally and still called the 11th edition, but the last printing was in 2014.
- The free online dictionary (<https://www.merriam-webster.com>) is not the same as the online unabridged or collegiate versions (<http://unabridged.merriam-webster.com>), which are available for an annual subscription. There are also more references available in this subscription.
- Their app, available for Android (https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.merriamwebster&hl=en_US&gl=US) and iPhone (<https://apps.apple.com/us/app/merriam-webster-dictionary/id478126577>), is the same as the online collegiate dictionary. It is free but has advertisements. It is also available for a fee without ads.
- *The subscription-based collegiate version on the unabridged site is the most up-to-date version available.* It is what is recommended for editors and other professionals. While I used to not recommend paying for this annual subscription, I now absolutely recommend it after seeing the differences.

Know the Resources

Study the resources and refer to them *often*. Your clients are trusting you (and paying you) to know the rules and catch their mistakes.

Get into the habit of looking things up that you aren't 100 percent sure of . . . and even some things you *are* positive about. (My husband says the definition of the word *positive* is “being wrong at the top of your voice.”)

Here's a true confession: A client once sent me a manuscript to edit, and she had a hyphen in the phrase *stepping stones*, which I told her was incorrect. She said she *really* wanted to use it. (This client was *always* asking to insert punctuation where it doesn't belong because she thought it “looks better that way.”) Well, whenever I want to press a point with a client, I go straight to the source—the appropriate style guide for punctuation or the appropriate dictionary for spelling and usage. When I checked *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate*, I discovered that a hyphen *is* in the noun *stepping-stone*! I was shocked, then mortified for a moment. Then I emailed my client and told her she was right and I was wrong. (Nobody's perfect all the time, right?)

So let's test what you think you already know without using the appropriate industry-standard resources. Only one word is correct in the following sets. Which word do you think is correct? (Don't use a dictionary, *CMOS*, or spell-check!) Keep track on a piece of paper—this will be part of your homework assignment.

1. all right / allright / alright
2. co worker / coworker / co-worker
3. Email / E-mail / email / e-mail
4. good by / good bye / goodbye / goodby / good-by / good-bye
5. Internet / internet
6. okay / OK / ok / Ok
7. on line / online / on-line
8. toward / towards
9. Web site / Website / website / web-site / Web-site / websight / Websight
10. y'all / ya'll / yawl

Discrepancies

Sometimes discrepancies exist between a style guide and its recommended dictionary. Most publishers will have in-house guidelines that cover these issues. Without that, a good rule of thumb would be to go by whichever reference was published most recently. For example, the 2017 edition of *The Chicago Manual of Style* would supersede the current edition of *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*.

Bibles

If you're going to proofread or edit anything that has Scripture quotations in it, you're going to need the most recent editions of the major versions/translations of the Bible.

Online Bibles are available on several websites. For example:

- Bible Gateway: www.biblegateway.com
- Bible Study Tools: <https://www.biblestudytools.com/>
- Study Light: www.studylight.org/

In addition, some websites offer online access to specific versions, such as the following:

- NIV (International Bible Society): <https://www.thenivbible.com/nivapp/>
- NRSV: <https://www.bible.com/versions/2016-nrsv-new-revised-standard-version>
- The Blue Letter Bible: <https://www.blueletterbible.org/>

Sites like these are convenient, especially if you're proofreading/editing on the computer (rather than on printed hard copy). But they aren't always accurate. (I've found and reported numerous discrepancies.) So you'll want to get printed copies of any Bible version you need to use.

You can't count on your clients to be accurate when quoting Scripture. Many simply quote from memory, which can be faulty. And even if they have the words right, the punctuation and capitalization might not be. Occasionally, an author may be quoting from an older edition.

I once edited a client's website content, and she quoted John 3:16 (NKJV):

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.”

Looks right, right? But it's not quite. The NKJV has “. . . whoever believes in Him *should* not perish” (not *shall*).

She also quoted Romans 6:23 (NKJV): “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Sounds good, doesn't it? But the NKJV ends that verse “. . . in Christ Jesus our Lord.” *In*, not *through*, and *Christ Jesus*, not *Jesus Christ*.

If you're working for a publishing house, *always* look up verses in a print Bible. If you're working for an author, you *could* use one of the online versions and just look up the verses that seem like they might not be right, then tell the author to check every Scripture quote carefully for accuracy, including punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.

Why is this so important? Two reasons: For one, the Bible is God's holy, inspired Word. Every nuance of Scripture is packed with meaning and purpose, notwithstanding the gyrations it goes through being translated from ancient Greek and Hebrew to modern English. Second, the Bible, like any other printed book, is copyrighted and therefore protected by copyright law (except for the King James Version, which is in public domain in the US; but in the UK, it is considered Crown property and is copyrighted).

Buying Bibles

Do you have to go out and spend a fortune on Bibles right away? Not necessarily. You could wait until you have a manuscript to proofread or edit and get the version(s) you need as you go along. And you don't have to buy new. You should be able to find inexpensive copies at a used bookstore or online. (Amazon.com has an extensive selection of used books, including Bibles, available from a variety of sources.)

When you do buy, make sure you're getting the up-to-date version. You can find out what the most recent edition of any Bible is on Bible Gateway's website (<https://www.biblegateway.com>). If you're looking at a Bible and wondering which edition it is, go to the copyright page (usually right after the title page) and find the copyright notice. It will look something like this:

Notice of copyright must appear on the title or copyright page of the work as follows:

All Scripture quotations in this publication are from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®. NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 2011 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved.

The last year listed is the most recent edition.

Quoting Scripture

It is important to quote Scripture accurately. Read *CMOS* #13.6–8 and *CWMS* pp. 236 and 326–336. All direct quotations (including Scripture verses) must be reprinted *exactly* as in the original, not only the wording but also the spelling, capitalization, and internal punctuation of the original. (There are exceptions; see *CWMS*.)

Run-in Scripture quotations and block quotations are formatted differently. However, both use full caps to cite the translation. Do not use small caps.

Block quotations should be done with a 0.5" indent on the left side. The right side can remain as is or can also be indented by 0.5" (depending on the publisher's guidelines).

Block quotations do not need quotation marks at the beginning or end unless they are a part of the quoted verses. Cite the reference directly after the passage in parentheses with no punctuation after it.

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. (Romans 8:1–6 NIV)

Run-in quotations should naturally flow in the text (no indent) and must have quotation marks at the beginning and end of the verse(s). Do not include ending punctuation after the last verse other than the ending quotation mark *unless* the actual verse includes a question mark or an exclamation point, which should go inside the quotes. Then cite the reference directly after the passage in parentheses and include the proper punctuation after the ending parenthesis, usually a period.

Her favorite verse is "For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son so that anyone who believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John

3:16 TLB).

The Bible says, “Jesus answered and said to him, ‘If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him’” (John 14:23 NASB).

Ask the Client

You’ll want to ask your clients if they want you to proofread their Scripture quotes. Even if they say no, you may want to randomly spot-check, or at least look up quotes that don’t look quite right, and point out any discrepancies you find. This may convince them to let you do a thorough proofread.

Keep in mind, this will take time, so quote your rate accordingly. But think about it—you’re getting *paid* to read the Bible. How cool is that?

In Lesson 6, “Tips for Editing Nonfiction,” we’ll discuss in detail the various things to look for when you’re proofreading or editing Scripture quotes.

Track Changes

Now let’s switch gears and discuss Track Changes (TC). Do you know what TC is? Track Changes is a feature in Microsoft Word that tracks (displays) every change (edit) made in a document. It is a priceless tool that will become your best friend as you edit. You need to know not only what TC is but also how to use it *and* how to explain it to your clients.

If you are new to editing, you may not have ever used Track Changes before. But if you plan on being a professional editor, you will need to learn how to use TC efficiently. You will use it *all the time*. Many authors aren’t familiar with this feature in Word, so editors also need to teach their clients how to use this amazing tool.

Several videos on the internet explain and demonstrate TC. Of course, it’s a bit different for PC and Mac users and might be a bit different depending on the version of Word you are using. You might be interested in Rachel E. Bradley’s course [Editing in MS Word](#). She’s a Word maven!

I (Christi) use Microsoft Word 2016 on a Mac. When I open a document in Word, I can click on the Review tab and turn on Track Changes. Or I can pull down the Tools menu at the top and select Track Changes.

When working with a client, you’ll want to be specific and explain that you will only edit using Track Changes (meaning you’ll edit electronically within Microsoft Word, not on paper). This is the paragraph I use when I first respond to a client about a potential project:

The manuscript should be sent as an email attachment (in Microsoft Word) and will be edited using Track Changes. (Let me know if you’re not familiar with that editing tool.)

Track Changes is beneficial because it puts the author in the driver’s seat—they get to choose which edits to accept and reject. In fact, they have to work through the tracked changes and click

Accept or Reject for each change you make. They also have to delete each comment bubble. For authors who are experienced in Track Changes and want that control, it can be a very useful tool. For authors who aren't knowledgeable about TC, it can be frustrating (for both author and editor—see my story below).

You can also click Accept All and make all the changes. I usually do this for my clients and send back two documents: one with TC and one with all the changes accepted. Then, when I send the manuscript to a client, I include this paragraph:

There are two documents attached. One is labeled “TC,” which has all of the tracked changes in red and comments in blue. I’d suggest opening this document first and scrolling through to review the changes made. When you are ready to rework these chapters, open the document labeled “TC ACCEPTED,” which has all my edits accepted and only the comments in blue. This guarantees that all the necessary edits are made. As you work through this document, you’ll have to delete each comment. Please let me know if you have questions regarding Track Changes.

I send these two documents back for most clients and encourage them to begin their rewrites/changes in the document that is labeled “TC ACCEPTED.” This way, I know that all my edits were accepted. If there were a few edits or changes that the author would prefer not to make, it is easier for them to change them in this document, rather than accepting/rejecting ALL changes made. It can be overwhelming and confusing for a client (especially one who is not familiar with Track Changes) to open a document and see all the red changes and blue comment bubbles. They don’t know where to start or what to do! They can easily be confused about “accepting” and “rejecting” the changes you, as the editor, have made. I’ve even had one client chew me out for not editing her book well; however, she didn’t make any of the edits I made because she didn’t know how to accept my edits in Track Changes. She published her original work without *any* of my edits! Then her publicist criticized her for using an unprofessional editor. Yikes! It felt unfair to be judged harshly because of another person’s mistake and lack of knowledge about Track Changes. After this experience (many years ago), I began sending my clients both documents, “TC” and “TC ACCEPTED,” and encouraging them to work in the latter document.

For more in-depth demonstrations, review these sites:

- “How to Track Changes in Microsoft Word without Going Insane” by SD Sartain: <https://www.pcworld.com/article/2861859/how-to-track-changes-in-microsoft-word-without-going-insane.html>
- “Track Changes in Word,” Microsoft Support: <https://support.office.com/en-us/article/track-changes-in-word-for-mac-8d9a780c-3ebe-48b8-b87f-c61c3071c08a>
- “Microsoft Office Word 101: Use Track Changes More Efficiently” by Susan Harkins: <https://www.techrepublic.com/article/microsoft-office-word-101-use-track-changes-more-efficiently/>
- “How to Use Track Changes to Collaborate on Edits with Ease” by Blake Atwood: <https://thewritelife.com/how-to-use-track-changes/>

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LESSON #3 ASSIGNMENTS

For the Certificate of Completion, you must complete assignments #1–4 (assignment #5 is optional).

Assignment #1

What reference books do you need but don't have? Which one(s) do you plan to get right away? Which do you want to put on your "wish list"?

Assignment #2

What reference books do you use that are not listed in this lesson?

Assignment #3

Using the *Christian Writer's Manual of Style* (if you have it), mark which is correct (explain if necessary):

1. Spiritual / spiritual
2. Word of God / word of God
3. Biblical / biblical
4. Trinity / trinity
5. Heaven / heaven
6. Hell / hell
7. King of kings, Lord of lords / King of Kings and Lord of Lords / king of kings and lord of lords
8. Satan / satan
9. Book of Matthew / book of Matthew
10. the Gospels / the gospels

Assignment #4

Go back to the set of ten spelling words from page 3. List what you originally thought the correct spelling was, then check industry-standard resources. List the correct spelling next to what you thought was originally correct, then list what source you used.

1. all right / alright / alright
2. co worker / coworker / co-worker
3. Email / E-mail / email / e-mail
4. good by / good bye / goodbye / goodbye / good-by / good-bye
5. Internet / internet
6. okay / OK / ok / Ok
7. on line / online / on-line
8. toward / towards
9. Web site / Website / website / web-site / Web-site / websight / Websight
10. y'all / ya'll / yawl

Assignment #5 (optional)

Review the links listed on page 7 for Track Changes. What questions do you have about Track Changes? (Ask questions only *after* reviewing the additional information in these links.)