

Typo Crashes the Market...

Don't Let a Proofing Error Cost You a Fortune

Could a typographical error really bring Wall Street to its knees?

We may never get the full story, but the word is that a trader hit a “b” for billion rather than an “m” for million while selling stock futures. The thousandfold mistake caused the biggest midday stock market drop in history.

A Lesson to Learn

There's a good lesson in this for all communications professionals. Typos and other errors can be costly—really costly—and careful proofreading is essential for success in any business.

Here are some tips and techniques that will save you time, money and embarrassment.

The Time and Place

Put the creative treasure you just completed aside for a few hours or days, if you can. You need to clear your head and take a fresh look at what you've written so you won't skip over errors.

If possible, do your editing and proofreading in short blocks of time, rather than all at once.

Get rid of distractions and potential interruptions. Switch off the cell phone, pager or PDA and stay away from your email.

Keep a dictionary and a thesaurus close at hand.

The First Pass

Use a spell and grammar checker for only a *quick first look* at your document—then forget it!

Don't try to proofread on a computer screen. Print a copy and read it aloud and silently.

Start at the End

Proofread an article by starting at the end of the piece. When we read backwards, we're not reading for content, so we're not sidetracked by the temptation to edit the copy.

Proof the body of the text first. Then go back and proof the headings.

Although they command attention, headlines and headings are easy to overlook if you don't focus on them.

Proof Spelling First

Don't proof for every type of mistake at once. Do one proof for spelling. Do another proofing for errors like changes in fonts and font styles, missing or extra spaces or incorrect spacing between headlines and text or gutters between columns of text.

Double-check the little words; “or,” “of,” “it,” and “is” are often interchanged.

Read the Fine Print

Tiny type can give readers fits. If it's too hard for you to read, consider bumping the size up one or two points for easier reading.

Watch out for contractions and apostrophes. People often mix their and they're, its and it's, your and you're, etc.

Remember that the apostrophe is never used to denote plurals.

Don't Miss a Name

Check—and then recheck—proper names. Misspelling of individuals' names, places or organizations can be disastrous. If you are at all in doubt, contact someone who can give you the correct spelling.

Watch Out for Captions

Proofread captions to ensure that they are correct and match the pictures or artwork. Make sure that the number of names matches the number of people shown in photos.

Check All the Numbers

We've already seen what a misplaced “b” could do in the financial world. But what about the population of China: is it 1,200,000 or 1,200,000,000?

Make sure that all of your numbers are correct. It's also a good idea to check the math.

Closely review page numbers and other footer and header material for accuracy and correct order.

Get Outside Help

Finally, find a friend or colleague to proofread for you. You'll be amazed at the mistakes you've missed.

Better still, hire a pro. Catching one major error will more than pay for the proofreader's fee.

What's Next?

Now your publication is proofed and ready to go to press. You need to send it to the leader in on-demand digital communications that will help you select the right paper and binding style—and add the finishing touches to make your book a masterpiece.

Send the job to Copresco.

More Proofreading Tips

Check out Copresco's *TechTopics* No. 12 guidelines for more effective proofreading and a short treatise on spell checkers.

More ways to avoid embarrassing—and costly—proofreading mistakes and blunders are included.

The bulletin will be helpful to anyone who creates or is responsible for final approval of books and manuals for publication.

For a free *TechTopics* subscription, complete the form on our website.

Memorial Day

Copresco will be closed on Monday, May 31, in honor of Memorial Day.

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Address Correction Requested

"Johnny," the kindergarten teacher said gently, "you have your shoes on the



wrong feet." "But ma'am," he complained, "I haven't got any other feet."

An interviewer started to ask Yogi Berra about his two hits from the previous night when Berra corrected him and said he had three hits. The interviewer apologized. "I checked the paper, and the box score said you had two hits. The third must have been a typographical error." "Heck, no," Berra replied. "It was clean single to left."

How many Country & Western musicians does it take to change a light bulb? One to change the bulb, while four sing about how much better the old one was.

John Kennedy, on how he became a war hero: "It was easy—they sank my boat."

"We've got a war, a debt and a flag. If that doesn't make us a country, well, then I don't know what does."—James Russell Lowell

Four high school boys afflicted with spring fever skipped morning classes. After lunch, they reported to the teacher that they had had a flat tire. Much to their relief she smiled and said, "Well, you missed a test today, so take seats apart from one another and take out a piece of paper." Still smiling, she waited for them to sit down. Then she said: "First Question: Which tire was flat?"

The judge frowned as he peered over his glasses. "Haven't I seen that face of yours before?" "Indeed, sir," the defendant replied hopefully. "I gave your son violin



lessons last winter." "Ah, yes," recalled the judge, as he leaned back in his chair. "Twenty years!"

Q: What do you get if you cross a four-leaf clover with poison ivy?

A: A rash of good luck.

I have no plants in my house. They won't live for me. Some of them don't even wait to die. They commit suicide. —Jerry Seinfeld

Commercials for headache medicine are always talking about fast relief. Fast? It takes an hour just to pry the cotton out of the top of a fresh bottle!

You know you're addicted to surfing the net when it takes 15 minutes to scroll from the top to the bottom of your bookmarks.

A young boy's prayer: "Please make Tommy stop throwing things at me. You may remember, I've mentioned this before. He's still doing it."

Weirdo: Any eccentric who's not an artist.



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ISSN 1930-2274

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