

In-depth specifications for light, standard, and professional editing

Aspect	Light editing	Standard editing	Professional editing
Goal (in terms of overall and final manuscript status)	<i>Should be understandable in the sense that the main intents must be clear</i>	<i>Should adhere to basic standards of academic and scholarly English</i>	<i>Should adhere to the highest standards of academic and scholarly English</i>
Rule 1: Apostrophe	Ensure correct use of apostrophe for singular, plural, and collective nouns	Attend to all aspects of apostrophe use in general Follow recommended style for names ending with <i>s</i> Use prepositional phrases for false possessives that may be inappropriate Ensure consistency in the use of eponyms, or follow style if one is recommended	Differentiate between plural possessives and generic expressions; use the latter where appropriate Follow recommended style for the use or nonuse of apostrophes with eponyms
Rule 2: Fragments	Identify and correct obvious fragments	Identify and correct all sentences indicative of fragmentary thinking mixed constructions (e.g., <i>reason is . . . because</i>) unnecessary commas indicative of fragmentary thinking	
Rule 3: Serial comma	Add or delete serial commas in accordance with style preference	Add serial commas that are important for clarity of expression	Allow serial semicolon use only when commas cannot serve the purpose
Rule 4: Subject–verb agreement	Attend to simple subject–verb agreement issues Ensure use of correct plurals for Latin-derived terms	Take care of all aspects of subject–verb agreement in general: Apply rule of meaning where appropriate Pay attention to sentences containing <i>one of the</i> constructions Ensure use of correct singular and plural forms for technical terms Ensure agreement between the number of subject and verb with the number of other relevant items in a sentence	Ensure subject–verb agreement even in subtle expressions involving linking verbs Ensure use of singular or plural forms for sentences, as may be appropriate to the content and context Ensure logicity between subject and associated action (despite the technical jargon in which this aspect may sometimes get lost)
Rule 5: Restrictive and nonrestrictive elements		Differentiate restrictive and nonrestrictive elements; ensure correct comma use with nonrestrictive elements Use pronoun <i>that</i> for restrictive constructions that can be ambiguous or confusing when the pronoun <i>which</i> is used	Observe the rule to perfection

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		<p>Ensure correctness of use with regard to the following catchwords</p> <p><i>such as</i></p> <p><i>with</i></p> <p><i>using</i></p> <p><i>including something/certain things</i></p> <p><i>who</i></p> <p><i>whose</i></p> <p><i>where</i></p> <p><i>e.g. something/certain things</i></p> <p><i>i.e. something/certain things</i></p> <p><i>namely something/certain things</i></p>	<p>Recognize and correct all incorrect parenthetical expressions involving <i>with</i></p>
Rule 6: Keeping related words together	<p>Correct gross and obvious errors in syntax</p> <p>Query unclear sentences</p>	<p>Correct easily recognizable errors in syntax by simple transpositions and by positioning modifiers correctly</p> <p>Ensure correct positioning of the word <i>only</i></p> <p>Provide possible versions while querying unclear or ambiguous sentences</p>	<p>Apply the rule to perfection, keeping an eye on exceptions, where word order may be deliberately changed to provide connections to additional modifiers</p> <p>Actions may involve</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adding or modifying words in accordance with logic of associated action Positioning statement qualifiers correctly Using a set of parentheses for a pair of commas Using an in-text list to clarify meaning Providing (adding) missing words or links
Rule 7: Introductory elements	<p>Use a comma after long introductory constructions</p>	<p>Correct grossly incorrect connections between the introductory construction and the main clause</p> <p>Correct obvious dangling modifiers at the beginning of sentences</p> <p>Attend to the catchword <i>based on</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>based on</i> as a dangling modifier other incorrect uses of <i>based on</i> <p>Use or avoid commas as appropriate after introductory constructions</p>	<p>Recognize and correct all incorrect connections between the introductory construction and the main clause (including those that may not be apparent or easily recognizable because of the technical jargon)</p> <p>Understand the style of writing—preference to always use a comma or to use it only when necessary, often referred to as US and British styles—before enforcing comma use after introductory constructions</p> <p>Use logic to decide whether or not to retain the comma after the introductory construction in compound sentences (depending on the closeness of either clause to the introductory construction)</p>

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		Ensure that double introductory constructions are also logically connected with the main clause	Handle double introductory constructions as appropriate (use transpositions if necessary) to ensure logical connection with the main clause
Rule 8: Pronouns	Correct grossly incorrect pronouns (singular/plural forms)	<p>Use pronoun as appropriate when the ending and beginning of successive sentences have the same term.</p> <p>Ensure general pronoun–antecedent agreement</p> <p>Recognize and correct pronoun shift (in number)</p> <p>Ensure use of correct case of pronouns</p> <p>Pay attention to the following pronouns/situations:</p> <p><i>who</i> vs. <i>whom</i></p> <p>pronouns with linking verbs</p> <p>Recognize and correct inappropriate pronoun use</p> <p><i>those</i> vs. <i>these</i></p> <p><i>who</i> vs. <i>which</i></p> <p><i>who</i> vs. <i>that</i> (or vice versa)</p> <p><i>which</i> vs. <i>who/whom</i> (or <i>in whom</i>)</p> <p><i>where</i> vs. <i>that</i></p> <p>Recognize and correct pronouns pointing to something other than what is meant</p> <p>Recognize and correct pronouns that do not point clearly to the antecedent present</p>	<p>Check every pronoun used for appropriateness and correct if necessary</p> <p>Ensure use of subjective case for third-person pronouns placed after <i>than</i></p> <p>Recognize and correct ambiguous pronouns—those that may point to two things</p> <p>Recognize pronouns <i>this /these</i> or <i>it</i> used to represent an entire idea and correct if necessary (say by addition of noun)</p> <p>Use nouns or pronouns as appropriate in successive sentences to avoid monotony</p> <p>Insert missing pronouns where appropriate</p>
Rule 9: Joining (or connecting) independent clauses	<p>Separate run-on sentences and commas splices as appropriate</p> <p>Use comma and conjunction in compound sentences</p>	<p>Address all aspects related to joining of independent clauses:</p> <p>comma and conjunction</p> <p>conjunction without a preceding comma (where appropriate)</p> <p>semicolon</p> <p>semicolon and conjunctive adverb</p> <p>Correct grossly inappropriate transition words</p>	<p>Use logic (in relation to sentence structure and content) for deciding whether a comma and conjunction or a semicolon may be appropriate</p> <p>Use other considerations (such as inherent or intended parallelism) for such decisions</p> <p>Ensure correct use (or nonuse if appropriate) of comma in compound sentences in which the subject is given only once; use a pronoun for the second part, if necessary</p> <p>Correct all inappropriate transition words</p>

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			Use transpositions where appropriate to smoothen transitions between sentences
Rule 10: Colon	<p>Correct obvious errors in the use of colon (e.g., a semicolon before an introduced list, which may be just a typing error)</p> <p>Use lowercase when what follows the colon is not an independent clause; follow writer for all other situations</p>	<p>Ensure that the colon is used correctly (and that the colon and semicolon are not used interchangeably)</p> <p>Use logic (or preference, if stated) for decisions related to case after colon</p>	<p>Recognize ineffective colon use and correct as appropriate to make the colon effective</p> <p>Take judgment calls on borderline situations where both a colon and a semicolon may work</p>
Rule 11: Dash	Replace, if appropriate, spaced-out hyphens and double hyphens with em dashes or spaced-out en dashes (in accordance with preferred style)	Ensure that the dash is used correctly	Pay attention to the relative merits of a set of commas, parentheses, or dashes, and use the most appropriate set for each situation
Rule 12: Parallelism	<p>Ensure use of correct preposition when it modifies all elements of a series</p> <p>Correct grossly incorrect preposition use</p>	<p>Ensure correct use of parallel expressions for similar elements in sentences</p> <p>Ensure correct expression in coordinate expressions such as the following: <i>either . . . or</i> <i>neither . . . nor</i> <i>not only . . . but also</i></p> <p>Add prepositions as appropriate to correct false comparisons involving <i>than</i> or <i>as</i></p> <p>Ensure use of similar formats (noun forms, verb forms, infinitives, clauses) for a set of headings, for items in display lists</p> <p>Ensure use of appropriate prepositions for common terms occurring in pairs or in a series</p> <p>Ensure use of appropriate prepositions for common terms used alone (rather than in pairs or in series)</p> <p>Ensure use of appropriate prepositions for common idiomatic expressions</p> <p>Repeat prepositions as appropriate to correct structural errors and provide symmetry as well as to correct unintended wrong statements</p>	<p>Pay attention to all variations of <i>not only . . . but also</i> (omission of either <i>also</i>, <i>but also</i>, or <i>not only</i> in accordance with the writer's intent)</p> <p>Ensure use of appropriate prepositions for all terms occurring in pairs or in a series</p> <p>Correct incorrect prepositions that may not be easily recognizable as incorrect (often because of the smooth flow of the sentence); similarly, insert missing prepositions that may go unnoticed for the same reason</p> <p>Ensure use of correct preposition in all idiomatic expressions</p> <p>Repeat prepositions as appropriate to provide the right connections and a better flow of sentences (and thus an easier grasp) or to indicate subtle distinctions</p> <p>Recognize and retain seemingly repetitious prepositions that may provide the very force to certain sentences (i.e., retain prepositions that may take the force out of a sentence if removed)</p>

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			Recognize and correct intended parallelisms; similarly, recognize and complete inherent but incomplete parallel expressions of thought
Rule 13: Needless words		Address commonly used expressions that are known to have redundant words (<i>green in color, past experience, advance planning</i>) Watch out for meandering expressions and simplify them to the extent possible	Watch out for redundancies of any kind, keeping in mind the rhythm of the language and the sentence under consideration Be judicious while deciding whether a repetition is intentional or accidental
Rule 14: Voice	Correct grossly incorrect voice in the text	Respect the writer's voice and attempt to retain it whatever be the changes made	Have a keen eye for sentence structure, content, and context, and use voice as may be appropriate for each situation
Spelling	Allow variable spelling (<i>neighbor</i> , but <i>honour</i>) if permitted, but ensure consistency in spelling of each word	Enforce British or American spelling as prescribed; ensure that the rule is not applied to spellings within extracts	
Abbreviations	Enforce project-specific rules for abbreviations Ensure introduction as well as consistency of usage of all abbreviations	Follow specified preferences: expanding all abbreviations in tables/figures or allowing them if they have already been introduced in the text Enforce journal-specific preferences for abbreviations: e.g., IGR used by the writer for <i>intrauterine growth retardation</i> vs. IUGR preferred per style; also use relevant manual if a list is not provided	Pay attention to the use of abbreviations in the different parts of the manuscript (follow norms as appropriate or as specified) Review sentences having multiple abbreviations; expand any of them if a sentence sounds funny or too tedious to understand
Hyphenation	Follow author's usage, but ensure consistency for simple hyphenation with prefixes and suffixes; query author if necessary	Follow project-specific rules for hyphenation of all prefixes and suffixes Follow principles of hyphenation to ensure correct hyphenation where appropriate, keeping in mind possible preferences of the writer	Pay attention to technical terms (and use hyphens only when necessary)
En dash		Follow stated preferences of en dash use	Follow principles of en dash use, maintaining a clear distinction between the functional roles of the en dash and the hyphen
Capitalization	Follow writer for capitalization; ensure consistency of usage Correct grossly incorrect capitalization	Follow all standard norms for capitalization, keeping in mind the type of publication and the preference	Ensure that capitalization is used only where appropriate

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Article use	Ensure correct use of indefinite articles (<i>a</i> or <i>an</i>); correct glaring errors related to the use or nonuse of the definite article (<i>the</i>)	Ensure accuracy with regard to the use of the definite article Be judicious in the use of the definite article in headings	Ensure precision with regard to the use and nonuse of the definite article, paying attention to context-related or author-intended subtleties
Use of quotation marks and italic	Use single or double quotation marks per stated preference	Eliminate redundant uses of quotation marks (when capitalization alone can provide the needed differentiation) Reserve the use of quotation marks for true quotes as well as for ironic expressions; use italic for emphasis, for certain names and titles, and terms Use boldface or bold italic sparingly, and as appropriate for the level of differentiation required	Pay attention to exceptional uses of quotation marks (where neither italicization nor capitalization may work) Ensure a judicious use of quotations marks and other typographic improvisations (italic, boldface, bold italic) to make clear the presentation of the material
Use and nonuse of commas with multiple adjectives	Observe and insert obviously missing commas in multiple adjectives	Pay attention to comma use in multiple adjectives, keeping in mind the order and function of the adjectives	Ensure accuracy of comma use with multiple adjectives (may require greater effort in medical manuscripts)
Tense in scientific writing	Correct gross errors in tense, keeping in mind the general style of writing	Pay attention to unintended or incorrect shifts in tense in highly technical material	Ensure precise use of tense, keeping in mind the base tense of the writing as well as the description of events that happened, listing of known facts, and the opinions of the writer
Placement of reference citations		Position reference numbers next to an author's name (when such preferences are specified)	Position reference citations correctly, in accordance with sentence structure and content
Bias-free language		Correct expressions that indicate gender-bias (when this is specifically requested) Follow suggestions and alternatives as provided	Pay attention to and remove all forms of gender bias Use people-first language where possible, but ensure that the expressions are not stilted
Medical expressions		Follow preference of specific words and terms, if provided Correct obvious errors relating to any kind of medical expression	Observe and correct errors relating to any of the following: Presentation and admission Physical examination and case history, description of subjects/patients Description of tests done and results obtained Description of actions taken Inappropriate terms used for descriptions Mixing up of subjects or their presentation with medical history, tests, treatment, or procedures

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General word usage	Correct obvious and grossly incorrect word usage	Correct errors relating to the following (any of which may be specified for this level):	Correct incorrect word usage of any kind (including those mentioned here)
Words that may be checked routinely		Ensure the following routinely: <i>cannot</i> (not <i>can not</i> , except in rare situations) <i>between A and B</i> (not <i>between A or B</i> ; not <i>between A to B</i>)	
Words often associated with incorrect expressions		Check correctness of expression in phrases having the following words: <i>similar, similarly to</i> <i>versus</i>	
Words and word pairs whose usage are often unclear		Pay attention to usage of the following words: <i>if, whether</i> (and <i>whether or not</i>) <i>between, among</i> <i>ensure, assure</i> <i>comprise, compose</i> <i>where</i> <i>like, such as</i> Replace <i>likely</i> with <i>probably</i> or <i>quite likely</i>	
Quantifiers with countable and uncountable nouns	Correct grossly incorrect quantifiers used with countable and uncountable nouns	Ensure consistency in the use of <i>ic/ical</i> forms; follow preferences if given Pay attention to quantifiers used with countable and uncountable nouns (see examples below) <i>few, a few</i> <i>little, a little</i> <i>fewer, less</i> <i>higher, lower</i> vs. <i>greater, lesser</i>	Ensure correctness and consistency in the use of <i>ic/ical</i> forms Ensure use of correct and appropriate quantifiers for all countable and uncountable nouns
Words considered as belonging to Old English		Change the following words as indicated <i>whilst</i> to <i>while</i> <i>amidst</i> to <i>amid</i> <i>amongst</i> to <i>among</i> <i>might</i> to <i>may</i> (where appropriate)	
Words whose meanings are often not clearly understood		Make the following changes where appropriate <i>majority</i> to <i>most</i> <i>dramatically</i> to <i>markedly</i> <i>past</i> to <i>last</i> <i>varying</i> to <i>various</i> <i>differing</i> to <i>different</i> <i>following</i> to <i>after</i>	
Words considered jargon (for simpler words that may work well)		Make the following changes where appropriate <i>utilize /utilizing</i> to <i>use /using</i> <i>prior to</i> to <i>before</i>	

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Words most frequently misused in scientific writing		<p><i>in excess of</i> to <i>over</i> or <i>more than</i></p> <p>Recognize and correct errors related to the following words:</p> <p><i>while, whereas, although</i> <i>as, since, because</i> <i>due to</i> <i>from . . . to</i></p>	<p>Change <i>A and/or B</i> constructions to <i>A or B</i> or <i>A and B</i> or <i>A or B (or both)</i> as appropriate to the context</p> <p>Wherever possible, use <i>than</i> to simplify second-degree comparisons involving <i>compared to/compared with</i></p>
Words considered informal or inappropriate in scientific writing		<p>Change the following words as indicated</p> <p><i>exam</i> to <i>examination</i> <i>lab</i> to <i>laboratory</i> <i>environs</i> to <i>environment</i> <i>believe</i> to <i>think</i> <i>feel/felt</i> to <i>think/thought</i> <i>carried out</i> to <i>performed</i> (where appropriate) <i>got</i> to <i>obtained</i> (or any other verb appropriate to the context) <i>determine</i> to <i>analyze</i> (where appropriate) <i>so far</i> to <i>to date</i> (where appropriate)</p>	
Words whose usage may be specified		<p>Change the following words as indicated, but only if specific preferences are mentioned</p> <p><i>above/below</i> to <i>here, earlier, or later</i> (as appropriate to the context) [<i>above</i> and <i>below</i> are directional cross-references within the text, and are avoided purely for typography-related reasons]</p> <p><i>article</i> to <i>chapter</i> (or <i>review, discussion, manuscript, paper</i>) (and vice versa)</p> <p><i>over \$5000, over 18 years,</i> and the like are part and parcel of idiomatic English. Change <i>over</i> to <i>more than</i> (in general use) or <i>older than</i> (with respect to age) only when specifically requested to do so (or forms part of preferred style)</p>	
Words considered euphemistic		<p>Change the following words as indicated (in the context of investigations based on animal models)</p> <p><i>sacrificed</i> to <i>killed</i> <i>euthanized</i> to <i>killed</i></p>	
Words that may be incorrect for the context or discussion		<p>Recognize and correct words that are obviously incorrect for the context or discussion</p>	<p>Recognize and correct all words (general and technical) that may be incorrect for the context or discussion</p>