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[DanPoynter@ParaPublishing.com](mailto:DanPoynter@ParaPublishing.com)

1-800-PARAPUB

# Hire a Proofreader

by Dan Poynter

Do not try to proof your own work. You are too close to the manuscript and will miss some typographical errors. You need a professional with fresh eyes to proof your work.

Your computer's spelling and grammar checkers are good for a first pass, but never rely on them exclusively. In fact, these computer marvels often teach us more about the language but they are not perfect. So use them for a first pass.

Jan Nathan, Executive Director of the Publishers Marketing Association, tells of an author/publisher who had his book professionally designed but decided to cut corners on proofreading. He relied on his computer's spellchecker.

After printing 5,000 copies, a colleague pointed out some misspelled words, both on the cover and inside. For example, the spellchecker did not catch the misspelling of "Foreword". All 5,000 covers announced the "Forward" by a very prominent person. By the way, this is a very common spelling mistake in books.

*When you publish a book, it's the world's book. The world edits it.*  
—Philip Roth, *New York Times Book Review*.

Make sure your proofreader uses standard proofreading marks so the corrections will be clear to all. For a chart of proofreader's marks, see your dictionary under (where else?) "proofreader's marks".

*Mother Nature's Nursery Rhymes*, a children's poetry book, was done. Bill Sheehan was hand-carrying the art to his printer in Hong Kong. During the long flight, he noticed that bees and their activity were mentioned in a poem on page 15, but there were no bees in the accompanying illustration. Upon landing, he called Itoko Maeno, the illustrator, back at

Advocacy Press in Santa Barbara. She suggested copying a bee from a previous page. Bill had the printer make the addition and that change saved the day.

There is more to proofing than just punctuation and spelling. And, it is never too late to proofread—again.

Do not skimp on proofreading. It is far more expensive to take ink off paper than to put it on. Make the book right. The more eyes the better.

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