



## Preparing material for print layout Common problems and practical solutions

### Proofing of laid out pages

#### Portable Document Format (PDF) files

Proofs of document layouts are sent as PDF ("Portable Document Format") format files. PDF documents greatly speed up the process of proofing. They are much faster than the traditional method – printing a copy of each proof and posting this proof to the editor so that the editor could then mark up two copies (one that they could keep to check the next version) the proof and post it back to the layout person. PDFs are therefore cost effective as well as faster.

PDFs retain the look and feel of a document even when the editor does not have copies of the same typefaces used on their own computer (the typefaces are, in effect, 'embedded' in the PDF file – without having to formally 'own' a copy of those typefaces – along with the images). In addition, PDF files – being compressible – can be reduced to a much smaller size than the actual press-quality file would be. This makes it easy to send such files via email. They can be easily viewed using the free Adobe Acrobat Reader software usually included as part of one's software package. If the software is not included one can simply download this from:

<http://get.adobe.com/reader>

There are disadvantages as well though that one should be aware of. A proof is a *low resolution* file – it will *not* show how images will print out *completely* accurately on an actual press. Your designer/layout person must be a professional you can trust – one who is aware of print needs and warns of any potential image problems that may be missed when viewing such low resolution pdf files. In addition – colours do not always accurately display. One must remember that one is viewing the proof on a low-resolution computer screen. That computer screen, as well as being low-resolution, is only able to *emulate* the press – 'CMYK' – colour spectrum roughly. It is using a light based – 'RGB' – colour spectrum. (More information on understanding colour spectrums can be found in the additional guide sheets)

#### Methods of marking up proofs

There is no 'correct' way of marking up proofs for amendment and correction – but there are efficient ways!

Traditionally, two hard copies (that is... printed out copies) of a proof are marked up using traditional copy editor's marks. One copy is retained (for checking) and one copy is sent to the designer/layout person.

The accepted standard marks for copy preparation and proof correction are those of the British Standards Institution (BSI). You can download a set of these marks from the following address:  
[http://www.cse.dmu.ac.uk/~bstahl/CORRECTION\\_MARKS.pdf](http://www.cse.dmu.ac.uk/~bstahl/CORRECTION_MARKS.pdf)

Every author has their own approach though – the key thing is, of course, that the editor makes clear their intentions to the designer/layout person.

From our experience, many editors prefer a simple text listing. For simplicity this can be reduced to a simple:

"Page[X], Column[X], Paragraph[X], Line[X]  
[Original text]  
[Correction requested]"

*(where the shaded text is replaced with the appropriate editorial changes - the other marks do not need to be included of course!).*

With the rapid development of pdf technologies, many editors have moved on to marking up pdf files directly. These pdf files can then be directly sent via email back to the designer/layout person for correction.

The basic version of the Adobe Acrobat Reader software – the standard pdf viewing software is free to download (at [adobe.com](http://adobe.com)). It is commonly bundled with a computer's system software. One can edit pdf files without necessarily owning the full version of Adobe Acrobat (the 'Pro' version), but we would suggest that this is a worthwhile consideration if one intends to edit on a regular basis.

We have noticed that the different mark-up options ('annotations') available in the Adobe software can cause some recognition problems on strongly coloured proofs – with small marks being missed by the individual working from that proof. If marks are small we suggest the practical solution of using a sticky note mark to *draw attention to* that mark.

If the amendments required are few it may well be easier simply to call the designer/layout person directly and go through those final changes over the telephone.

Ultimately, the choice is down to what the individual editor feels most comfortable with, of course. A good designer/layout person will be able to work to the editor's preferred editing approach.