



Australian  
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# Checking Publication Proofs

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## Overview

After a manuscript has been accepted for publishing by a journal, the journal staff take the content provided by the author and transform it into a paper. This can involve editing, and in some cases, re-writing of the content by the journal editors. Journals may vary enormously in how much they will change a manuscript.

The proof of the article is then sent to the author, and the author usually receives approximately 48 hours to respond to the proofs and any queries sent by the journal editor.

To ensure scientific accuracy and integrity, it is vitally important to check the proofs extremely carefully, as errors in the final publication can potentially undermine all the hard research and work leading up to it.

*Beware: in some cases, such as online advanced publication, the last chance to substantially change the manuscript may be before things specifically labelled as 'proofs' are received. i.e. so ensure you are aware at what point the manuscript is finalised and unable to be changed, and apply a thorough check at this point*

## What will you need to get started?

In order to check the proofs, you will need:

- The final submitted copy of the article and any supplementary material submitted to the journal
- Any queries sent through by the journal editor
- A copy of the proofs
- Ideally, two people who can compare the proof to the submitted copy
- Where necessary, access to the code/syntax used for the data analysis and access to background materials.

In addition, it is good practice to **circulate a copy of the proofs** and submitted article to co-authors or collaborators and ask for any comments. The publication is the work of the co-authors as well and it is important they get the chance to review and comment on the finished product. Moreover, there is a risk you will miss errors that they may otherwise pick up.

## What needs to be checked?

Checking proofs requires checking numbers, table, figures, wording, and references for accuracy. It is essential to compare the numbers in the tables and figures of the proof against those in the submitted article to ensure they have been copied across correctly. You need to ensure you read carefully through the entirety of the proof to pick up any errors which may have been present in the submitted article. The main steps to checking a proof

are detailed below. There is no definite order in which these need to be done, but it is good practice to ensure that at least two people have checked the proofs.

### Checking tables and figures

- Compare the numbers in the tables and figures of the proof to those in the submitted article.
- Check the table notes (if any) in the proof to ensure they read correctly and match those provided in the submitted article.
- Ensure the headings/labels of the tables and figures are correct in the proofs.

### Checking the text

- Check the author names and affiliations to ensure they are correct.
- Compare every number in the text of the proof to those in the tables and figures to ensure they are correct. If any discrepancies are found, you may need to go back to the original syntax or analysis results to double-check the numbers.
- Check the proofs for appropriateness of wording, formatting etc.
- If you are submitting to an international journal ensure that the wording used is appropriate for an international audience (i.e. use \$50,000 rather than 50K).
- Check that all abbreviations/acronyms in the text are written out in full before first use.
- Read through the entire proof to ensure that the text reads correctly and to identify any errors.
- Check the reference list against those cited in the text to ensure that the citation matches the reference.

### Writing amendments and answering queries

Suggested changes to the proofs and answers to queries should be provided to the journal editor in the requested format. To ensure responses to proofs are received by the journal on time, always follow the exact instructions provided by the journal.

If making notes (hand-written or electronic) on the proof, it is good practice to also write a summary list of the suggested changes/answers to queries in a word document.

Amendments and query responses should be written in a courteous and professional tone (see below examples for suggesting wording and tone); remember there is usually a hard-working and conscientious person at the other end of your email.

If you are making substantive changes, it is useful to explain why you need these changes (for example: to ensure accuracy, for clarity, for consistency etc.)

Once completed, amendments and query responses (including the summary word document) should be emailed back to the journal editor or sent in the requested format. An example of a word document summary of amendments/responses to queries and a return email are provided below.

## Example – amendments and queries

### Amendments proof

**Paper: 2009-3593. Screen-time, obesity, ageing and disability: findings from 91,266 participants in the 45 and up study cohort**

### AUTHOR QUERIES

Q1. For affiliations 1, 2 and 3 the department is as stated. For affiliation 4, please add “Prevention Research Collaboration”, as indicated.

Q2. I confirm this change is fine.

Q3. I confirm this change is fine.

Q4. I confirm this change is fine

### OTHER AMENDMENTS

1. Please remove the word “cohort” from the title. This had been changed previously at the request of a reviewer.

2. Please add the superscript “2” after the author Emily Banks. She is also affiliated with the Sax Institute.

3. Please replace the word “in” with “between” in the third line of the abstract.

4. Page 2, first column. Please delete the hyphen at the end of the first line.

5. Table 1. Please amend this so that all of the lines requiring “%” and “n” come first, followed by the lines requiring “mean” and “SD”. I attach a corrected table as a guide.

6. Table 1. Vegetable intake and Fruit intake should be servings/day, rather than servings/week

7. Table 2. Please add a zero to the 0.7 – last figure, 4<sup>th</sup> last line of the table, as indicated, so that the numbers have a consistent number of decimal places.

8. Figures 1 and 2. Please re-insert the horizontal reference lines into the figures, as indicated. They are difficult to interpret without these. The line at the relative risk of 1.0 is particularly important.

9. Legend for figures 1 and 2. The last part of each of the legends should read “RR are plotted against the median daily screen-time for each category”

10. Figure 3. Please amend “School certificate” to “Less than secondary school” and amend “HSC or equivalent” to “Secondary school graduate”. This is to be consistent with the text and also to allow for an international audience. I attach a corrected figure as a guide.

11. Page 9, column 2, paragraph 2, last 4 lines. Please delete the words “it is unclear whether this difference in effect of television viewing on obesity between men and women in this publication was statistically significant.” from the last four lines of this paragraph. The reference (26) needs to be retained.

12. Page 10, column 1, first line. Please italicise the words “beyondblue: the national depression initiative”. This is a branding requirement.

## Example – email response to journal

Dear X,

Thank you so much for sending us the proofs of our article – it is really pleasing to see how it will look in its final form.

I attach a marked up pdf and a list of amendments, as a word document.

Please let me know if anything is unclear or if there is anything you would like to discuss.

Best wishes,

X

## Checklist for checking publication proofs

### Before you get started

- Get copies of required documents including: final submitted copy of article and supplementary material, copy of the proofs and any queries by journal editor
- Circulate a copy of the proofs and the submitted article to other authors/collaborators and ask for comments

### Checking the tables and figures

- Compare the numbers in the tables and figures of the proof to those in the submitted article. Note any discrepancies
- Check the table notes (if any) in the proof to ensure they read correctly and match those provided in the submitted article. Note any needed corrections.
- Ensure the headings/labels of the tables and figures are correct in the proofs. Note any needed corrections.

### Checking the text of the article

- Check the author names and affiliations to ensure they are correct.
- Compare every number in the text of the proof to those in the tables and figures to ensure they are correct. Note any discrepancies
- Check the proofs for appropriateness of wording, formatting etc. Note any needed corrections.
- Check that all abbreviations/acronyms in the text are written out in full before first use.
- Read through the entire proof to ensure that the text reads correctly and to identify any errors.
- Check the reference list against those cited in the text to ensure that the citation matches the reference.

### Writing amendments and submitting to journal editor

- Compile a list of the amendments in the format requested by the journal editor
- Write responses to the journal editor queries
- Send amendments and responses to queries back to the journal editor by the time specified and in the requested format