

PROOFMARKS - How to communicate your text changes without ambiguity

In 1976 a British Standard for proofreading marks, BS 5261, was established. Although perhaps not so well known today, these marks remain an excellent way of conveying your text changes to someone else, whether you are editing words within your organisation or communicating with Lancing Press.

It is important that everyone work together with a common set of symbols to avoid misunderstandings. This chart shows some of the more commonly-used marks. A mark is usually placed within the body of the copy at the relevant place within the text with clarification in the margin.

Instruction	Textual mark	Marginal mark	Instruction	Textual mark	Marginal mark
Delete	/ through character or through characters to be deleted	9/ (use oblique to separate multiple corrections in same line)	Change italic to roman type	circle character(s) to be changed	4/
Delete and close up	as above, but T or	9	Change bold to roman type	circle character(s) to be changed	~
Insert in text new matter indicated in the margin	^	new matter followed by ^	Transpose characters or words	□ between characters or words	□/
Insert in text new punctuation indicated in the margin; full point, comma, etc	^	punctuation circled	Insert space between words	Y between each word requiring spacing	Y/
Substitute in text matter indicated in margin	/ or through existing matter	new matter followed by /	Insert space between lines	— between lines requiring spacing	textual mark extends into margin
Insert additional matter identified by letter in a diamond (used for large amounts of copy)	^	^ followed by for example	Reduce space between words or characters or lines	as above but T between each word or character or between lines	T/ textual mark extends into margin
Leave as printed	----- under character(s) to remain	stet	Delete space between words or characters	○ between words or characters	○/
Change to italic	— under character(s) to be changed	u/	Indent	□ round matter to be indented	□
Change to small capital letters	== under character(s) to be changed	=/	Centre matter	□□ round matter to be centred	□□/
Change to capital letters	==== under character(s) to be changed	≡/	Start new paragraph	┌ before first word of paragraph	┌/
Change to bold type	~~~~ under character(s) to be changed	~	Run on	—	—/
Change capitals to lower case letters	circle character(s) to be changed	≠/	Insert apostrophe	^ Where required	^
			Insert quotation mark	^ Where required	^ or ^ or ^
			Insert superior character	^ Where required	eg 3
			Insert inferior character or figure	^ Where required	eg 1/2