

Navigation

Content

[Picture Book](#)

[Chapter Book Content](#)

[Young Adult Content](#)

Style

[Children's Picture Book](#)

[Chapter & Young Adult Books](#)

Visual

[Children's Picture Book](#)

[Chapter Books & Young Adult](#)

[Technical](#)

Picture Book Content

Picture books are intended for young children aged two to nine (preschool through 2nd grade). The visual narrative is just as significant as the written narrative and is weighted accordingly. Picture books often teach children morals and lessons, such as compassion, social interaction, or numbers and letters. They can also just be for fun. Picture books are designed to be easy to understand and engaging for the youngest readers and, therefore, follow one central character and a very simple plot. (500 to 1500 words in 32 to 40 pages)

Content 1. Appeal. The book...

1. Is entertaining, educational, or important in a way that is appropriate to the target age. It has exceptional appeal to both children and the adults who read it to the child.
2. Tells a story with information appropriate for this age. It might appeal to children but will get old fast for an adult reading out loud.
3. Tells an important story but misses target age group interests.
4. Is uninteresting but has some merit or parents might not approve of the subject matter.
5. Is so unappealing that children likely won't sit through a first reading.

Content 2. Organization/length. The book is...

1. Well organized, and its length is approximately 500 to 1500 words (not including front and back matter).
2. Mostly well organized, and/or length is slightly too long to keep the reader's attention.
3. Sometimes hard to follow due to poor organization and/or too much detail, making the length too long.
4. Generally disorganized and difficult to follow, and/or length is inappropriate.
5. Nearly impossible to follow or finish due to lack of organization or inappropriate length.

Content 3. Plot or progression. The book...

1. Has a beginning, middle, and end, allowing all the pieces to come together or uses alphabet/numerals or a similar progression. Children are the heroes of the story.
2. Is understandable but leaves some questions unanswered or is centered around too much input from adults.
3. Is hard to follow but has a satisfying conclusion.
4. Is hard to follow and doesn't seem to have a point, or the ending is unsatisfying. An adult solves the problem rather than the child.
5. Is a confusing and unsatisfactory read.

Content 4. The main characters (human/animal/inanimate object)...

1. Are typically preschool to second grade (4 to 8 years old) and exhibit motivations that are familiar and endearing to children.
2. Are interesting but not endearing.
3. Are sufficient to carry the story to a satisfying conclusion.
4. Are not relatable to children of this age or have adult protagonists as heroes.
5. Are not relatable at all. We don't care what happens to them.

Content 5. Value/Impact. The story...

1. Has a solid lesson or entertainment value, and children will want to read the book repeatedly.
2. Has a lesson, but it's over the heads of the children, but the book still has entertainment value.
3. Doesn't keep the child entertained, so they might not want to read it again.
4. Struggles to hold the child's interest, and they won't care about reading the book again.
5. Is uninteresting, and the child won't want to finish this book.

[Go to Picture Book Style](#)

Chapter Book Content

Early Chapter Books are aimed at children aged seven to ten (first through fourth grade) who have graduated from picture books. Books are long enough to be separated into short chapters and focus on one storyline without subplots. Children should be the heroes of the story and solve the problems/conflicts, not adults. Books are limited to three or four main characters. Chapter books may still include illustrations but focus much more heavily on the written story. In the print version, text should be slightly larger with shorter paragraphs to give children a chance to absorb and retain what they've read. (4,000 to 15,000 words)

Middle Grade Chapter Books are written for readers between the ages of eight and twelve (fifth through seventh grade). While this is an age-based categorization that can apply to any genre, it's important to note the hallmarks of a middle grade book. The protagonist should be slightly older than the target audience — approximately ten to thirteen (sixth through ninth grade)—and react to what happens to them, not so much on self reflection. Subplots can be introduced. Romance is limited to first kisses or crushes. Profanity and graphic violence are not used. (30,000 to 50,000 words)

Content 1. Appeal. The book...

1. Appeals to children who can read on their own.
2. Might appeal to children who can read on their own.
3. Might not entice children to finish the book.
4. Will not appeal to children or their parents might not approve.
5. Has content that is inappropriate for this age level.

Content 2. Organization/Length. The book is...

1. Well organized and easy for the targeted age group to follow. The length is approximately 4,000 to 15,000 words for early chapter books and 30,000 to 50,000 words for a middle grade chapter book. Chapters are short enough to absorb in a single session (usually 3 to 5 pages for early chapter books).
2. Mostly well organized and easy to follow but might be too long or too short to adequately tell the story.
3. Sometimes hard to follow due to poor organization. It may be confusing because of jumping around in the timeline, OR unnecessary side stories/details/extra characters take the book outside expected length.
4. Generally disorganized and difficult to follow AND too many facts are thrown in that aren't needed to move the story along.
5. Nearly impossible to follow or finish, due to lack of organization OR the book is too long for the intended readers.

Content 3. Plot/Story Arc. The book...

1. Has a single plot line for early chapter books/ two to three subplots for middle grade. It addresses conflicts or emotions appropriate for the grade level and moves forward at a pace consistent with the age group's ability.
2. Is somewhat interesting and understandable, but the story line has a few inconsistencies that the reader will pick up on OR may have too many subplots for the targeted age group.
3. Has enough holes/inconsistencies that the reader may become distracted OR is too simple or too complex for the reader.
4. Has enough holes/inconsistencies to distract the reader too frequently to enjoy it OR addresses topics that are inappropriate for the grade level.
5. Is too complex, has many inconsistencies, and is inappropriate for the grade level.

Content 4. Characters. The characters...

1. Seem familiar and are endearing to children of this age. Protagonists are approximately first through fourth grade for early chapter books and fifth through seventh grade for middle grade chapter books. Adult roles are minimal.
2. Aren't developed enough but are interesting OR are too young OR adults play too much of a role.
3. Are sufficient to carry the story to a satisfying conclusion, but the reader won't care much about them.
4. Are not relatable to children of this age OR adults are the hero of the story.
5. Are not relatable at all.

Content 5. Value/Impact/Conclusion. The book...

1. Is entertaining or educational and memorable for this age. The targeted age group will be satisfied and appreciate the story. If it has a lesson, it is not too blatant.
2. Tells a story appropriate for this age. The targeted age group will understand but may have questions.
3. Tells an important story but misses target age group interests, but something is missing and the targeted age group may not be satisfied.
4. Is uninteresting but has some merit. It leaves more questions than answers but presents a good topic for discussion.
5. Overall, has little or no impact or is unsatisfying, frustrating, or confusing.

Style

Young Adult Content

While young adult books are considered by many to be a marketing tool and not an actual genre, MWSA separates it from adult categories. The young adult book targets high school readers (14 to 18 years old). It should have a teenage protagonist within this age range or slightly older and focuses on themes common to teens. It can be assessed by the same standards as adult fiction (fantasy, sci-fi, historical, mystery, etc.) or nonfiction (history, reference, how to, etc.), keeping in mind the age-appropriate themes, conflicts, and information. (50,000 to 100,000 words)

[Click here](#) to review the industry-standard content elements that we apply to all genres of adult books. Once you've clicked on the link, you'll need to open the scoresheet for the applicable fiction or nonfiction subcategory from our regular scoring forms.

Content 1. Appeal.

Fiction: The book..

1. Appeals to readers in high school and is entertaining or valuable: totally engrossing and engages the imagination.
2. Might appeal to readers in high school and is a fairly strong story, but it's missing some key elements for the typical reader of the subcategory.
3. Might not excite readers in high school. It's an interesting story but told in a less than interesting way.
4. Will not appeal to readers in high school and has too many plot holes in the storyline; doesn't allow the reader to progress with the protagonist.
5. It's hard to know who the audience should be. It's not a good storyline and not told in a way that keeps the reader's attention.

Nonfiction: The book...

1. Appeals to readers in high school interested in the particular nonfiction topic.
2. Might appeal to readers in high school interested in this topic.
3. Might not engage readers in high school interested in this topic but is a worthy story.
4. Will not appeal to readers in high school but has some merit.
5. Lacks appeal to any teen audience.

Content 2. Organization/Length.

Fiction: The book is...

1. Well organized and easy to follow. The length can range from 50,000 words to 100,000 words. If longer than expected, all parts are necessary to tell the story.
2. Mostly well organized and easy to follow. It could have been edited more succinctly to get within the word count range.
3. Sometimes hard to follow due to poor organization. It may be confusing because of jumping around in the timeline. The book is too long because unnecessary side stories take the book outside the expected length.
4. Generally disorganized and difficult to follow. Too many or too few details are included to move the story along.
5. Nearly impossible to follow or finish due to lack of organization and/or the book length is completely inappropriate.

Nonfiction: The book is...

1. Well organized, and information is delivered in an orderly way, including a table of contents, footnotes, or endnotes, indices, appendices, and bibliography, if appropriate. There is no specific word count for nonfiction.
2. Organized but lacking some structures that would support research and conclusions, like footnotes or endnotes, indices, appendices, bibliography, etc.
3. Hard to follow, and supporting materials are inadequate.

4. Easy enough to follow, but supporting materials conflict with the author's conclusions.
5. A confusing and unsatisfactory read, with little or no supporting materials.

Content 3. Setting/Plot OR Research

Fiction: Setting/plot. The book's...

1. Setting is well drawn with a solid story/plot. There are no holes, and all the pieces fit together.
2. Setting is fairly well drawn, but the story/plot/arc may have a few small holes or inconsistencies. However, everything holds together well.
3. Setting is fairly well drawn, but the story/plot/arc has enough holes or inconsistencies that the reader may become distracted.
4. Setting is poorly drawn or the story/plot/arc has enough holes or inconsistencies to distract the reader too frequently to enjoy it.
5. A confusing, unsatisfactory or unbelievable read.

Nonfiction: Research. The book...

1. Is well researched with supporting data and contains thoughtful analysis.
2. Is somewhat well researched but focuses primarily on events without much analysis.
3. Shows some research and focuses on an important aspect, but there are several inaccuracies.
4. Lacks proof of adequate research and covers unimportant events but has some historical merit.
5. Is based on inadequate or challenged research AND adds no analysis.

Content 4. Fiction Characters OR Nonfiction Clarity of Information

Fiction: The characters...

1. Are well developed and believable for the setting created by the author. The reader will be able to visualize them and distinguish between them in actions and speech.
2. Are mostly well developed, believable, and appropriate for the setting created by the author. The reader will be able to visualize the characters, but some act/talk/look too similar, making them hard to distinguish.
3. Are interesting but not dynamic enough to drive the plot. They may not be consistent in their behavior OR they are too good or too bad.
4. Are often NOT well developed or believable or are written as a cliché that is inappropriate for the genre. The reader will probably not empathize with them, care about their outcome, or consider them real/appropriate.
5. Are mostly shallow, clichéd, unbelievable, or uninteresting. Whatever the genre, these characters aren't worthy of a reader's attention.

Nonfiction: Clarity of Information. The book... (whether the information is new or pre-existing)

1. Contains information that is consistently useful, clear, and engaging.
2. Contains information to be mostly useful, clear, and engaging.
3. Contains information sometimes useful, clear, and engaging.
4. Contains information that is incomplete or often not useful, clear, and engaging.
5. Contains very little information that is useful, clear, or engaging.

Content 5. Conclusion/Impact/Credibility.

Fiction: Conclusion/Impact

1. The ending tied together loose ends, felt appropriate and left me stunned, fully satisfied, impressed, and wanting more.
2. The ending tied together most loose ends, felt mostly appropriate, and left me mostly satisfied and/or ready for more.
3. By the end of the book, most questions were answered, but something was missing, or I wasn't sure I wanted more.
4. By the end of the book, I had more questions than answers and wasn't sure if it was worth the effort.

5. Little or no impact, unsatisfying, frustrating, confusing... generally not worth the effort

Nonfiction: Credibility/Conclusions. The author...

1. Is credible and offers information and conclusions that are logical and well developed.
2. Seems credible, and the conclusions are mostly logical and well developed.
3. Is mostly credible and successfully argues controversial material.
4. Is somewhat credible or the conclusions are often not well developed.
5. Lacks credibility, and the information/conclusions are questionable.

Style

Style: Children's Picture Book

These criteria evaluate readability, redundancy, language, balance, and the use of active vs passive sentences.

Style 1. Readability. The book's writing style is...

1. Easy to understand and engaging. It will hold the attention of a young reader.
2. Mostly easy to understand. It may have too many words on a page to keep the attention of a young reader.
3. At times not age appropriate. The details are sometimes not conveyed in a way that interests a young reader.
4. Frequently not age appropriate. There is too much information or it's too complex for the young reader to absorb.
5. Difficult to understand, and most readers will not make it to the end.

Style 2. Rhythm, Repetition, and Page Turns. The author...

1. Uses intentional repetition of short phrases or words for effect only. If rhyming, the book uses rhymes/rhythms that are clever and not forced. If not rhyming, the story has an enjoyable rhythm to read out loud. Children will want to turn the page to see what comes next.
2. Occasionally uses the same word when another word could have been used for variety OR a couple of the rhymes are forced. Children may want to turn the page to see what comes next.
3. Uses unintentional and monotonous repetition, frequent rhymes/rhythms that are forced, or page endings that don't stir the child's curiosity for what comes next.
4. Overuses the same word or phrase for convenience rather than using more creativity OR many of the rhymes or rhythms are forced. Children won't be interested enough to turn the page to see what happens.
5. Completely overdoes repetition and awkward rhymes/rhythms to the point of boring the child, who won't care to finish the book.

Style 3. Language/Diction. The author uses...

1. Vocabulary and dialogue appropriate to the preschoolers through second grade. There are no complex sentences or punctuation marks (semicolons, quotes within quotes, etc).
2. Occasional vocabulary or dialogue that is awkward or confusing because it isn't natural for this age group.
3. A few sentences that are too long OR several vocabulary words that are too sophisticated for this age group OR several instances of complex punctuation.
4. More than a few sentences that are too long OR vocabulary words that are too sophisticated for this age group OR many instances of complex punctuation.
5. Language or concepts that are inappropriate for the intended age level.

Style 4. Balance of Description, Narration, and Dialogue. The author...

1. Uses words that don't contradict illustrations for the characters' actions and thoughts and allows the pictures to describe people, places, and things. Uses a blend of narration and dialogue.
2. Sometimes uses excessive narration or writes descriptions when the illustrations suffice.
3. Often uses excessive description so that the words unnecessarily repeat what is shown in the picture (Sara's dress was blue and she had blonde hair.).
4. Consistently describes unimportant people, places, and things in great detail.
5. Overuses narration, description, or preaching, severely detracting from the book. Characters seldom speak for themselves.

Style 5. Point of View/Passive Voice.

Point of View: Books generally have one point of view, whether first person or third person omniscient. This consistency is maintained in tone, perspective, and level of knowledge throughout the book. Lack of a consistent point of view is often called head hopping, which can confuse the reader.

Active vs Passive Voice Sentences: Active voice sentences are those in which the subject performs the action (The dog chewed the bone). Passive voice sentences are those in which the subject is acted upon (The bone was eaten by the dog). Active voice provides clearer meaning, while passive voice sentences can become overly complicated, dry, and unengaging.

The book...

1. Is written from only one character's point of view AND uses mostly action verbs
2. Is written from only one character's point of view but could use more action verbs in place of "began to" or "to be" verbs (Sara was running versus Sara ran).
3. Is written from more than one person's point of view OR has frequent examples of "to be" verbs when they should be action verbs.
4. Often lacks a consistent voice or point of view OR overuses passive voice sentences.
5. Makes little attempt to use action verbs to keep the reader's interest, and it's hard to tell who is narrating.

[Picture Book Visual](#)

Style: Chapter and Young Adult Books

These criteria evaluate readability, redundancy, language, balance, and the use of active vs passive sentences.

Style 1. Readability. The book is...

1. Easy to understand and engaging. Details are specific, concrete, and vivid.
2. Mostly easy to understand and engaging. Details are mostly specific, concrete, and vivid.
3. Sometimes pedestrian, ponderous or not age appropriate. Details are sometimes lost or not well conveyed.
4. Lost in the details or muddled. The prose detracted from the read.
5. Is difficult to finish, and most readers will not make it to the end.

Style 2. Redundancy/Repetition/Cliché. The book...

1. Contains no redundancies in information (whether it is plot, dialogue, setting, research, or conclusions), and the copy is clean and free of repetitious words, phrases, or sentences, with the exception of repetition for effect.
2. Contains repetitious words or phrases but generally avoids informational redundancies and overdone words or phrases.
3. Uses clichés, the same word multiple times in the same paragraph, or repeats the same phrases throughout the book, along with informational redundancies.
4. Repeats scenes, multiple presentations of the same information, clichés abound, and repeats the same words and phrases throughout the book.
5. Is rife with repetition of information, words, phrases, and overblown clichés.

Style 3. Language/Diction. The author uses...

1. Sentence length, vocabulary, and dialogue appropriate to the age of the intended audience: easy to understand language that does not stray into melodramatic, flowery, or ornate writing with excessive emotion, strained metaphors, or an abundance of clichés.
2. Occasional sentences that are too long or vocabulary that is too sophisticated for this age group: complex sentence structures or unexplained words. These elements sometimes slow the read, but the meaning is clear.
3. More than a few sentences and/or unexplained language that would be confusing to the intended age group, detracting from the story/message.
4. Long complex sentences and vocabulary consistently throughout the book, frequently enough that it obscures the story/message.
5. Sentence structure and vocabulary that is completely inappropriate for the intended age level.

Style 4. Balance.

Fiction. The author...

1. Uses interesting ways to describe people, places, and things. There is a good blend of narration for action, description for setting, and dialogue that allows characters to explain their thoughts and actions.
2. Sometimes uses excessive narration, preaching, or description when dialogue would be more effective OR uses too much dialogue when narration or description would be more effective.
3. Often uses excessive narration or description, but the characters interact (or vice versa).
4. Consistently describes unimportant people, places, and things in great detail or is too preachy.
5. Overuses narration, description, or preaching, severely detracting from the book. Characters seldom speak for themselves.

Nonfiction. The author...

1. Balances text with pictures, maps, diagrams, charts, and tables as needed to get the information across.
2. Sometimes uses excessive text when a map, picture, diagram, chart, or table would be more effective (or vice versa).
3. Often uses excessive text when a map, picture, diagram, chart, or table would be more effective (or vice versa).

4. Consistently over describes details when a map, picture, diagram, chart, or table would be more effective.
5. Completely ignores any requirement for balance in the approach to getting information across.

Style 5. Point of View/Passive Voice.

Point of View: Books for this age range generally have one point of view, whether first person or third person omniscient. This consistency is maintained in tone, perspective, and level of knowledge throughout the book. Lack of a consistent point of view is often called head hopping, which can confuse the reader.

Active vs Passive Voice Sentences: Active voice sentences are those in which the subject performs the action (The dog chewed the bone). Passive voice sentences are those in which the subject is acted upon (The bone was eaten by the dog). Active voice provides clearer meaning, while passive voice sentences can become overly complicated, dry, and unengaging.

The book...

1. Uses a consistent discernible tone and point of view AND active voice sentences appropriately dominate. There is no head hopping,
2. Mostly uses a consistent discernible tone and point of view AND uses mostly active voice sentences. There are a few instances of head hopping
3. Sometimes lacks a consistent discernible tone and point of view but active versus passive voice sentences are mostly balanced. OR head hops regularly
4. Often lacks a consistent discernible tone or point of view OR overuses passive voice sentences.
5. Consistently lacks a distinct discernible point of view so that it is hard to tell who is narrating OR uses excessive passive voice sentences.

[Visual](#)

Visual: Children's Picture Book

These criteria evaluate cover art and layout, cover design and font, interior layout, front and back matter inclusions, and use of artistic elements.

Visual 1. Cover: Art, Layout, and Content.

All elements are properly aligned, and the color scheme relates to the content and carries through the spine and back cover. Images are high resolution and placed so that the title is easily read. The title and author's name are easily distinguishable from background art. The back cover text is free of errors and hooks the reader without too much or too little detail. Text is legible (not so "cute" that it's difficult to read) and large enough to see at thumbnail size (like on our website's season page). The cover should have no more than two different fonts. Note: The back cover content does not have to be blocked. It can be left justified or centered.

The book's cover...

1. Is artfully done, attention grabbing, and error free. It relates to the contents of the book.
2. Is attractive but does not relate to the contents OR is somewhat unappealing but relates to the contents.
3. Is pedestrian or run of the mill OR contains elements that are difficult to read or don't grab attention OR include a text error OR blurb explains too much or too little.
4. Is unappealing or distracting. It may have misplaced spine text, narrow margins on back cover content, clashing colors, OR background artwork that's so busy that text can't be read.
5. Is so poorly done that the book is destined to remain shelved. The artwork is unattractive AND does not relate to the contents of the book, OR the blurb has no hook to capture the reader's attention.

Visual 2. Illustrations/Relevance. The book uses illustrations or photographs that...

1. Are wonderful, eye-catching, beg to be explored, and agree with the story and characters. Illustrations should supplement and tell more than the words, not just repeat the text information.
2. Are attractive but don't complement the theme or characters.
3. Are unremarkable or don't tell the story well OR only repeat the words of the story rather than supplementing it.
4. Are unattractive and the colors are muddy.
5. Will not entice children, readers, or buyers.

Visual 3. Illustrations' Technical Quality. The book uses illustrations or photographs that...

1. Are clean, colorful, sharp, and not too busy. No important piece is lost in the fold.
2. May not be of the highest resolution OR one picture is too busy for the young reader and detracts from the story OR important items are too near the fold.
3. Are somewhat blurry OR important elements are lost in the fold OR more than one picture is too busy for the young reader and detracts from the story.
4. Are poorly depicted and hard for the young reader to make out.
5. Are blurry or too confusing for the young reader to understand.

Visual 4. Interior Layout.

Note: Text does not have to be blocked or follow a particular layout (indented, space between paragraphs, or even straight lines), but it must be readable.

This book ...

1. Allows words to sit nicely on the page and flow across the space in an easy way from one illustration to the next (left to right/top to bottom). The book has approximately 30 to 40 words per page.
2. Crowds the illustrations with too many words or leaves too much blank space without words or illustrations.
3. Places text on at least one page that is difficult to read. It doesn't stand out enough from the background or doesn't flow left to right/top to bottom.
4. Has many layout errors, but the book is readable. Font color OR size is hard to read.
5. Has so many layout errors that they distract from the content.

Visual 5. Interior Font. The book...

1. Uses an attractive font that is easy to read and normally larger than adults' books.

2. Uses more than one font (unless using a different font for effect like ZOOM) OR uses an attractive font but it is either too large or too small for young readers.
3. Is difficult to read but is the appropriate size.
4. Uses an unattractive font AND it is too small.
5. Uses a font that is blurred, complex, small, or otherwise inappropriate.

Technical

Visual: Chapter Books and Young Adult

These criteria evaluate cover art and layout, cover design and font, interior layout, front and back matter inclusions, and use of artistic elements. Please note that there are e-book break-out selections that are different from print copy versions.

Visual 1. Cover: Art and Layout

All elements are properly aligned, and the color scheme relates to the content and carries through the spine and back cover. Images are high resolution and placed so that the title is easily read. If displayed on a shelf, the book will attract readers, and the title will be easily seen. The title and author's name are easily distinguishable from background art. Note: The back cover content does not have to be blocked. It can be left justified or centered.

The book's cover...

1. Is aesthetically attractive and relates to the contents of the book.
2. Is attractive but does not relate to the contents or is unattractive but relevant.
3. Has misplaced spine text, narrow margins on the back cover content, clashing colors, low-resolution imagery, etc.
4. Has background artwork that's so busy or bright that the copy can't be read OR blurry images.
5. Is unattractive AND does not relate to the contents of the book.

Visual 2. Cover: Font and Content

Cover Font: should be appropriate for the genre of the book (e.g., flowery cursive for romance, but not for a thriller). Legible (not so "cute" so as to be difficult to read) and large enough to see at thumbnail size (like on our website's season page). The cover should have no more than two different fonts.

Cover Content: back cover text should be free of errors and hook the reader without too much or too little detail (whether a blurb, author bio, or testimonials).

Note: If you have received an e-book, go to the Amazon page and click on the paperback version to evaluate the back cover. Click on the thumbnail for the back cover, located directly under the front cover. While fiction books generally include a blurb on the back cover, nonfiction books often only have endorsements by professionals in the field.

Referencing the evaluation areas listed above, the book's cover font and content are...

1. Artfully done, definitely attention grabbing, and error free.
2. Reasonably well executed and somewhat likely to attract attention on a bookshelf or when listed online.
3. Pedestrian or run of the mill OR contains elements that are difficult to read or don't grab attention OR include a text error.
4. Problematic, contains noticeable errors, not likely to attract attention.
5. So poorly done that the book is destined to remain shelved or unclicked online.

Visual 3. Interior: Front and Back Matter

Fiction books require a cover, inside title page, copyright page, and ISBN. Optional front and back matter inclusions are endorsements, epigraphs, dedications, acknowledgements, author bios, contents page in print copies, and notes. In e-books, a content page with links is required.

Nonfiction books require a cover, inside title page, copyright page and ISBN, and contents page. Optional front and back matter inclusions are prefaces, introductions, forewords, and author bios. Depending on the content, the nonfiction book may need appendices, notes, footnotes or endnotes, indices, maps, illustrations, or glossaries.

Paper version...

1. Contains a title page on the right, copyright information on the left, and ISBN. Chapter listings are not required for fiction.

2. Provides complete front matter, but out of order or on the wrong side.
3. Includes title page, but some items required on the copyright page (author, city, state, copyright year, ISBN, publisher if there is one) are missing.
4. Missing some front and back matter.
5. Fails to provide basic information about the book.

E-book version...

1. Contains a title page, copyright information, ISBN, and hyperlinked chapter listings. It is not uncommon for the copyright page to be in the back of an e-book.
2. Provides complete front matter, but items run together because they are not separated by hard page breaks.
3. Includes cover and title page, but items such as chapter titles with hyperlinks are missing or broken.
4. Is missing some required front matter.
5. Fails to provide basic information about the book.

Visual 4. Interior: Layout. This book...

Paper

1. Has margins that are no less than ½ inch and uses serif font of sufficient size. Page numbers are on the outside edge or center (never at the gutter). Odd pages are ALWAYS on the right side. Chapter beginnings generally start ⅓ to ½ way down the page.
2. Contains minor errors, such as indenting the first paragraph in a chapter or inconsistent line or character spacing, but has adequate margins. OR uses sans serif but it's still large enough or appropriate in style for the content and easy to read.
3. Has margins that are too narrow, words that are difficult to read in the gutter, or not enough white space (text is too dense) OR page numbers are near the gutter. Odd pages on the left side
4. Is NOT blocked/justified OR has many layout errors, but the book is still readable.
5. Has so many layout errors that they distract from the content OR uses a typeface too complex or "cute" to be read comfortably.

E-book

1. Has reflowable text, page separations for front matter and chapters, AND table of contents with appropriate links to chapter headings, front matter, and back matter
2. Contains minor errors, such as indenting the first paragraph in a chapter, using both extra line spacing and indentation for paragraph separation, or inconsistent chapter layout elements.
3. Contains distracting or confusing elements (such as misplaced page numbers carried over from print or hard page breaks in the middle of text) OR the book contains occasional junk characters (such as HTML tags, soft hyphens in the middle of a line, or unsupported characters such as a boxed question mark).
4. Cannot be adjusted to reader preferences (font size, spacing, etc.) without a loss of quality
5. Has so many layout errors that they distract from the content.

Visual 5. Interior: Artistic Elements. The book uses...

1. Clean, clear, captioned, and appropriate maps, photographs, and illustrations, if needed. The layout includes consistent use of scene dividers, optional drop caps, and optional chapter-starting artwork or motifs.
2. Maps, photographs, and illustrations, if needed, that are not of the highest resolution but are captioned and appropriate. Other elements are mostly consistent throughout.
3. Maps, photographs, and illustrations, if needed, that are low resolution and not properly captioned. Other elements are sometimes not consistent.
4. Maps, photographs, and illustrations, if needed, that are poorly depicted and unidentified but still add to the content of the book. Other elements are inconsistent throughout.
5. Maps, photographs, and illustrations, if needed, that are blurry, undefined, and add nothing to the book. Other elements are haphazard or missing.

Technical

These criteria evaluate spelling, word usage, punctuation, capitalization, sentence structure, verb tense, and noun-verb agreement. NOTE: Questions 1-4 require you to count errors. Errors allowable will be different depending on word count. A 100,000-word book is allowed more errors than a 50,000-word book. Use the table supplied to determine which answer to select.

Allowable Error Scoring by Word Count					
	Score				
Word Count	1	2	3	4	5
120,000	0-6	7-12	13-18	19-24	>24
100,000	0-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	>20
80,000	0-4	5-8	9-12	13-16	>16
60,000	0-3	4-6	7-9	10-12	>12
40,000	0-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	>8
20,000	0-1	2	3	4	>4
10,000	0	1	2	3	>3

Technical 1. Spelling/Typos/Wrong Word

See the table above for an allowable number of errors. Count noticeable misspellings, typos, extra or missing words, but don't go on a witch hunt looking for them. (their/they're/there, its/it's, horse/hoarse, cavalry/Calvary etc.)

Technical 2. Punctuation/Hyphenation

See the table above for the allowable number of errors. Count missing or extra punctuation marks. Commas are tricky, so the major ones would be missing comma of direct address, missing comma between two independent clauses, and missing commas after long introductory dependent phrases. Hyphenation should be consistent throughout, including em dashes that indicate an interruption in dialogue or harder break than commas in sentences.

Technical 3. Capitalization/Italics

See the table above for the allowable number of errors. English requires proper nouns to be capitalized (e.g. Pizza Hut, but the library). Military rank is capitalized when accompanied by a name (General Smith, but the general). Sir/ma'am are not capitalized (yes, sir; no ma'am; but Sir Lancelot). Italics are used for ship names (but not USS) and for internal dialogue. Overuse of italics for emphasis is to be discouraged, as it micromanages the reader. Large portions in italics are more difficult to read.

Technical 4. Sentence Structure/Syntax

See the table above for the allowable number of errors. Count sentence sprawls, run-on sentences, awkwardly worded sentences, and long sentence fragments that go nowhere. Generally, count an error if the sentence requires re-reading to make sense to the target audience.

Technical 5. Verb form/noun-verb agreement

1. Uses the simplest verb form (preferably simple past or present tense) and has consistent noun-verb agreement.
2. Occasionally uses an inappropriate tense but strives for simplicity—or several noun-verb disagreements
3. Uses complicated/inappropriate tense forms on a regular basis throughout the book (even if used correctly) or has noun-verb agreement problems.
4. Uses complicated/inappropriate tenses throughout the book—sometimes incorrectly or regularly messes up verb conjugation or noun-verb agreement.

5. Uses complicated/inappropriate tenses throughout the book AND regularly messes up noun-verb agreement.

Tech comments (required).

Do not comment on your interpretation of the editing (e.g., “best editing I have ever seen,” or “really needs an editor”). Instead, use objective language to note the errors you saw. If you did not notice errors, simply say you did not note any tech errors. However, if you lower a tech score, you must list enough of the errors you noted to vindicate lowering your score. Spelling errors can be noted individually (discrete s/b discreet). Others can be noted in greater detail, but we do not want to “edit” the whole book. List enough errors to give the author some guidelines for where he went wrong.

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Current as of 12/6/2023