

Advice on indexing

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Indexes

'An efficient index is one which meets the needs of persons who seek any of the information the work contains.' This uncompromising but accurate definition is given in the British Standard. So, for example, an index allows the reader to find out whether a book discusses some particular topic, and if it does to locate the discussion quickly. It enables a reader to find and reconsider something already read and perhaps imperfectly remembered. Insofar as it indicates the range and depth of the book, the index may also be useful to reviewers and to potential buyers.

Some indexes do more than this. For the reader researching some particular topic they may direct attention to related material in the book, offering useful links, suggesting associations of ideas that may be followed up or rejected as the reader pleases. They may also give certain additional information, such as dates and full names, provided this is appropriate to the scope of the book.

Using indexes

Some readers use indexes only occasionally, simply looking for a single entry, going directly to a specified page and beginning their reading. Others – students engaged in research, for instance – may be more rigorous, noting several entries and perhaps following up some cross-references. The way in which you expect the book and its index to be used should influence your choice of entries.

If the book is substantial and the index runs to several pages you, as both author and indexer, may like to exploit the index in educating the reader. You may choose to make within it comparisons or juxtapositions that do not occur in the text, perhaps stimulating a more fruitful enquiry than that first embarked upon.

Typography

In a typeset index use may be made of typographic variation – **bold**, *italics*, SMALL CAPITALS and so on. Normally decisions about these will be the responsibility of the publisher but if you would like to influence use please say so when you send your index to us.

One practice is to print text references in ordinary type, and references to tables or illustrations in either bold or italic.

Another course is to use ordinary type for all page references – or bold for principal ones and ordinary type for all the rest. The words '*see*', '*see under*', '*see also*', and '*compare*' in cross-references should be in italics.

poisons, **323–72**
barbiturates, 331
industrial gases, 329, **361**, 369
solvents, **338–9**
weedkillers, 334, 370
see also fungicides; insecticides; pesticides

Before beginning

Before you attempt to compile the index to your own book, look through the indexes in several other comparable books. Try to recall indexes you have found useful in your own work, and what you liked or disliked about them.

There is a British Standard for indexing (BS 3700, *Recommendations: the preparation of indexes to books, periodicals and other publications*, British Standards Institution, 1976). This should be obtainable through a library.

Planning an index

How many indexes to have

Many books have only one index, dealing with the material of the whole book. A few, though, have one or more small specialist indexes, each dealing exclusively with some principal aspect of the book. Thus a history book might list the names of people mentioned, and a book on war might have a simple index of battles. A legal text would almost certainly have a separate index of cases, and a poetry book would probably index poems by their first lines.

Unless there is a special reason for multiple indexes – as with the poetry book, for example – a single index serving all purposes seems preferable: it is simpler to locate and the reader need look through only one sequence of entries.

If you think there is a good reason for having more than one index in your book, discuss this with your commissioning editor or your production supplier *before you start indexing*. Otherwise, compile one index only.

When to prepare the index

You cannot complete an index until you know the numbers of the pages on which the entries will fall. But you can *start* to compile it as soon as you have finalised your typescript. At this stage you should at least begin to think about the kinds of entries your index will contain and the kinds of groupings that may help the reader. When you have page proofs you will know the final page numbers. Please see page 8 for guidance on use of indexing software at typescript and proof stages. If you want to compile your index automatically, when writing your book, please do so, and let your commissioning contact know, when you make final delivery of your book to them.

Your readers' needs

Try to put yourself in the position of your readers.

Who are they? Are they professionals? Postgraduates? Undergraduates? The complexity and language level of the index should match those of the book.

Why does your book need an index? In what way will it differ from the contents list? What level of detail will the reader want from it? A reference to the single page where Keynesian economics is actually defined? A note of all the pages where Simon de Montfort is mentioned? Or a list tracing the developing explanation of desertification, the countries it affects and the problems that it brings?

Will readers know what they're looking for? Will they know enough to seek details of 'work experience within CPVE', or will they try something much vaguer, like 'training'?

An understanding of the readers' needs will help you determine what to put in and what to leave out; and for the items that you do include, what words to use and what cross-references to add.

How many entries?

Often there is no definite limit and the length is up to you, but please consult your commissioning editor if your index will take up more than about 5% of the number of pages in the main text of your book. You might like to look at indexes in comparable books. In practice each index seems to have a natural length, but if you want advice consult your editor or your production supplier, perhaps when you have prepared a draft. He or she will tell you if the index seems too sparse or too cumbersome.

A rough idea of the number of typeset pages your draft index will consume can be gained by looking at an index in another book of a similar physical shape to yours, and working out how the content of your index will translate into typeset index lines (and thus pages).

Preparing an index

If you expect to compile several indexes over a period of years it may be worthwhile developing an indexing method that suits you. You could start by referring to some books on the subject. But probably you expect to make few indexes, perhaps just this one, and do not wish to invest a great deal of time in technique. It is encouraging, then, that though professional indexers may be practised in technique and have a fund of experience, they still rely on two basic principles: being methodical and using common sense. And as the author *you* have the added advantage that you are already familiar with the book's aims and content, and with the needs of your readers.

Below are a few simple recommendations.

Collecting possible entries

Record references in the right form

If a topic is discussed continually over two or more pages, record the reference as a range: '34–5'. If it merely receives isolated mentions, record individual pages, even if they are consecutive: '34, 35'.

Think about meanings, not just the words you see

A good index includes not just the terms, events and people in the book but the concepts, ideas and relationships. Some words in the index may not appear in the body of the text at all.

Don't record every mention

In general, **include references only to those pages where there is a fairly substantial treatment of the subject**. Omit casual and irrelevant mentions – for instance, a phrase such as 'towns the size of Manchester' would probably not merit a reference under 'Manchester'.

Record doubtful entries

Always record doubtful entries for later consideration. It doesn't matter at the outset if you have too many entries – too many is better than too few. You can always leave some out later but you cannot easily go back and look for something you decided against and then regretted.

Don't worry about the final structure

At this stage keep a fairly open mind about the final organisation and grouping of the entries. Early decisions about the structure of the final index may interfere with your selection of entries. You may find it easier to divide references into sub-headings even at this stage,

but be prepared to change the groupings or to split main entries if they become too big.

Selecting entries

The main basis for the inclusion or omission of possible entries must be common sense and your own understanding of the needs of your readers. As the British Standard says: 'The indexer should attempt to match the amount of detail ... likely to be sought by the reader for whom the work has been written.'

So, sift through the possible entries you've assembled and contemplate them: will they help the reader? One useful guide is evenness: whether the book is indexed lightly or heavily, coverage of different topics and parts of the book should be at about the same level.

Structuring entries

As the British Standard advises, 'Indexes should be constructed according to a logical, balanced and consistent pattern, easily recognisable by prospective users in the field concerned.'

By this stage you will probably find that a natural pattern has emerged. You may already have begun to see which words to use as main entries and which as sub-entries. Only occasionally is it appropriate to have sub-sub-entries. In grouping entries, as in selecting them, evenness and consistency are good guides. Is this to be an analytic index, with many short individual entries, or a synthetic index, with groupings chosen to show associations or make comparisons?

analytic	synthetic
archery, 56–7	sports, 11–19
bowls, 45–6	archery, 56–7
croquet, 62	bowls, 45–6
...	croquet, 62
sports, 11–19	...
<i>see under individual sports</i>	

If any one entry or sub-entry seems disproportionately long (more than five or six references, perhaps) consider dividing it into smaller parts. In the case of long entries it might be wise to promote the sub-entries to main entries in their own right.

Wording of entries

Keep trying to put yourself in the place of your readers. What will they want to find? How will they look for it, what words will they try?

The possibilities may seem endless, and you can't include all of them. But often there are good guides. The obvious first try for an ecologist interested in recycling is under 'recycling', but 'energy conservation' or 'conservation of energy' are reasonable alternatives. A philosopher researching the writings of Ludwig Wittgenstein is quite likely to try 'Wittgenstein, Ludwig' or an individual title, such as '*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*'; so both should be included. A photographer may well look for 'photograph' but may also try 'image'. A geneticist is more likely to look for *Drosophila melanogaster* than for 'fruit-fly', because it is customary and more precise; but to allow for the reader forgetting the species name the index could usefully include 'fruit-fly, *see Drosophila melanogaster*'.

You are the author of this book: the subject is your own. Trust your instinct.

Wording of headings

In general, prefer specific concrete headings (such as 'inflation rate, rise in') to abstract general ones (such as 'rise in inflation rate'). Aim to begin with nouns ('clothing, protective') rather than adjectives ('protective clothing'). Avoid adjectives, including nouns used as adjectives, as headings – if necessary, repeat the word:

avoid	use
safety	safety belt
belt	safety curtain
curtain	safety match
match	

Headings often work better when in the plural. Thus in the following entry 'trees' seems preferable to 'tree':

trees
 age of
 deciduous
 diseases of
 evergreen
see also under individual names

Wording of sub-headings

Adjectives may make useful sub-headings. You may like to include words such as 'of', 'and' or 'for' in sub-entries. If you do, do so consistently:

lifting	lifting
of patient with spinal injury	blanket
on to a stretcher	spinal injury
with a blanket	stretcher
with webbing bands	webbing bands

Split entries

Avoid having two entries for the same topic, such as for 'angling' and for 'fishing', with overlapping references. Collate all the references under one heading, and if necessary direct the reader to this heading from the other.

Double entries

If you list the same references under two headings,

make sure that the lists are identical. It is easy to overlook anomalies such as this:

Brunel, Isambard Kingdom (1806–59)
SS Great Britain, 82, 93

ships, development of
SS Great Britain, 82, 87

Clearly both entries should read:

SS Great Britain, 82, 87, 93

Cross-references

Will the home plumber with a blocked pipe try under 'plumbing' or 'pipes' or 'central-heating system' or 'blockages'? Faced with a problem such as this, one solution is to cater for all contingencies by means of cross-references. These can be extremely useful to the reader – but be sparing with them, especially if the book and index are short.

'See'

Suppose you decide for the example above that the best heading is 'plumbing'. You could list the appropriate pages, perhaps with sub-entries:

plumbing, 26–41
 blockages, 38
 lagging, 29
 pipes, material of, 27

And you could provide cross-references to this entry, such as:

blockages, *see* plumbing
 pipes, *see* plumbing

'See' can also assist when the book uses precise terms to make distinctions new to the reader. So a book on cybernetics might speak of the operating part of a computer as 'the processor', whereas the reader, not realising this, might think of it simply as 'the computer'. Again the index can help: pages may be listed under the more formal word, 'processor', and a cross-reference under 'computer' can be used to make this clear:

computer, *see* backing store; operating system; processor

'See under'

You may wish to redirect the reader not just to one entry but to a *range* of entries scattered through the index. This will happen if you have indexed topics at a more detailed level. For this '*see under*' may be preferable. Thus in a book about mountaineering you would not want to collect under 'mountain' a single list of all the pages that mention mountains:

mountains, *see under individual names*

'See also' and 'compare'

Bearing in mind the length and complexity of your book and the way it is likely to be used, consider the pros and

cons of using the index to make links between topics in the book. Would such cross-references be genuinely useful or quite superfluous?

For example, the indexer may draw attention to related aspects of the same subject. So the index of a book on politics might contain an entry such as

elections
see also electoral reform

Or the indexer may suggest contrasts, especially where the related term is not an obvious one. So in a biochemistry text you might put

oxidation
compare reduction

Repeated entries

In some circumstances index entries may be virtual duplicates of each other. Consider an entry such as this:

public transport
buses, 7, 22, 34–8, 63
railways, 7, 22, 41–55, 64, 66, 92
taxis, 7, 23, 67
see also self-drive hire cars

Each of the sub-entries – ‘buses’, ‘railways’ and ‘taxis’ – may need to be indexed in its own right. Is it better to list all the references once only, against the one main entry (‘public transport’), and to direct the reader to this composite list; or to repeat the relevant page numbers against the sub-headings (such as ‘railways’) where these are given as main headings?

The best guide is often the length of the list. If it is long, it is probably wise to put it in one place only and refer the reader to this:

railways, see public transport

But if it is short – only two or three page numbers – it is usually kinder to repeat it:

taxis, 7, 23, 67

The reader may otherwise be irritated at having to leaf through the index to find the second entry, then to discover that it cites perhaps one page number only.

As author-indexer you may want your reader to see ‘taxis’ in the context of the whole ‘public transport’ list. You can force this by putting a ‘see’ reference, irrespective of the number of references:

taxis, see public transport

or invite it with a ‘see also’:

taxis, 7, 23, 67
see also public transport

Note of explanation

It is helpful to the reader to include a note explaining any conventions adopted in the index – for example, that references to illustrations rather than text are printed in bold:

plate tectonics, 67, 69, **69**, 81

You may need to call attention to points of typography or structure or layout. The British Standard recommends the inclusion of a note such as this at the head of the index and, if necessary, at the head of a complicated major entry.

Revising the index

As a last stage, leave the index for a day and then return to it fresh. Read through the index as if you were a user of the book rather than its author. Bear the following in mind:

- Are all the entries really necessary? (If you remove some, be sure that there are no cross-references to the deleted entries.)
- Are all the major themes covered?
- Is the wording right?
- Are any entries or sub-entries too long?
- If there are duplicate entries, are the lists of page references under the corresponding headings identical?
- Should you add or delete any cross-references?
- Are the entries in alphabetical order?

When someone else indexes your work

An advantage of having a professional indexer work on your book is the ‘fresh eye’ that someone else can bring in trying to devise a set of signposts to its major themes and topics. No matter how experienced the indexer, however, the process is not without pitfalls. In outlining the indexing process and its assumptions, these brief notes are intended to help you avoid these pitfalls (and ultimately save you time and frustration).

If you have agreed with your commissioning contact that you will produce your own index and then find you cannot for any reason, we need to know swiftly, please, to avoid delay in the book’s production schedule while waiting for a suitable professional indexer to be available.

What an indexer will do

Most indexers will skim-read the text first to get a sense of how it is best approached; often the outline of your approach/thesis in the Preface or Introduction will be key to their analysis. A more detailed reading follows, during which the indexer pulls out a list of headwords and sub-entries as a separate list (sometimes on computer, sometimes on paper). During this read-through, the indexer will stop and review the index as

it takes shape, making adjustments to the coverage of the index and his/her approach as necessary. The result is usually a document much longer and less structured than the printed index will be, and so the final stage is for the indexer to edit down the entries, elide similar themes, create 'patterns' of similar structure among similar entries, break out any additional sub-entries, add in any further cross-references that will orient the reader, and check alphabetization. The draft will then be sent to you for approval.

What you can do to help the indexer before (s)he starts

The purpose of the description above is twofold: to emphasize the 'human' aspect of indexing (that no two indexers will or could produce the same index) and to indicate that, even when your index is prepared by a freelancer, you can expect to devote time to checking it. There are ways, though, that you can minimize your time commitment at this final stage. Even when a freelance indexer is involved in the publishing process, we encourage authors to provide an initial brief by way of guidance. After all, no one knows the important themes of the book – and how potential readers will expect to find them listed and broken down in an index – better than a book's author. We ask that you supply to your production supplier a list of key topics by the time the first proofs are due (which is usually when the indexer will begin work).

Some other things to consider in your indexing brief:

- Do you expect notes, prelims/frontmatter, figures, tables, and boxes to be included in the index? By default, most indexers will focus primarily on the main text (starting at page 1).
- Are different terms used synonymously throughout the text for the same concept and should they be collected together under one heading in the index, with cross-references from the synonymous terms?
- By convention, only significant mentions of a term are indexed, so the indexer will not list the page number for every reference in the text. By extension, not every person or place mentioned will end up in the index by default. So if there are some topics or categories of entry that you would like to see more exhaustively listed, please say.

What you will need to do after the index is complete

You will probably need to set aside at least a day to work on the indexer's draft index, to ensure that all the major themes are covered and to check for any misinterpretations of a complex argument or technical language. As well as adding in any missing terms or references, you will likely also want to remove some entries at this stage if you judge them to be less important than the indexer supposed.

Cost

If you have agreed in your contract with Palgrave Macmillan that you will provide your own index and for any reason you do not, the professional indexer's fee will be your responsibility. You will need to agree with your commissioning contact how you will make payment. Our preferred route is to send you an invoice, but sometimes it's possible to deduct the cost from your royalties. A typical cost would be approximately £1.50 per text page of your book, so roughly £450 (plus VAT if you are an EU citizen) for a 300-page book. (Prices as at March 2007.)

Indexing software

Software such as Word and Acrobat (Professional) often offers an indexing option. Using this option can be a quick way to produce an index of your book's text, but please bear the following in mind:

- The index content will be functional and potentially not as useful to the reader as an index produced by a human, so it will probably be necessary for you to improve the content by merging entries into concepts and introducing sub-entries and cross-references.
- Once the typesetter has styled the content of your book and made 'real' book pages, page breaks will not be the same as those in your typescript, so the page numbers collected by an auto-index of your Word document will not correspond to the 'real' pages. There is no automatic way for a typesetter to translate your Word page numbers into 'real' page numbers. Conversely, there is no automatic way for a typesetter to convert their 'real' pages into a Word file containing the same page breaks. But see the note below about using PDF to extract text and copy it into Word.

Typesetters can provide a PDF of the 'real' book pages at proof stage, to make your search for index references easier or, if you have Acrobat Professional, to allow you to use that to compile your index. Please ask your production supplier at the earliest possible stage if you would like a PDF of the proof pages. If you don't have 'Professional' you can still use Acrobat's search facility to find the page numbers on which words or phrases you want to index occur, in just one file or across all files in a specified folder. Acrobat will then report the location of each occurrence of the word or phrase. It is also possible to extract text from a PDF file by using the Select All command, copying and then pasting into Word. However, the pagination of the proof pages will not be retained, while all header and footer text (e.g. running heads) will, so you will need to insert page breaks matching the proof pages exactly and delete headers/footers so the words within them aren't indexed by Word.

Presenting an index

Order of entries

Index entries are usually arranged in alphabetical order. This can be letter-by-letter or word-by-word:

letter-by-letter	word-by-word
grey	grey
Grey, Lady Jane	Grey, Lady Jane
grey area	grey area
greybeard	grey matter
greylag goose	grey wolf
grey matter	greybeard
greywacke	greylag goose
grey wolf	greywacke

The letter-by-letter form is recommended. If you use the word-by-word form, treat hyphens (-) and solidi (/) as spaces. Whichever system you choose, be consistent.

If two headings differ *only* in that one has an initial capital – as 'grey' and 'Grey' in the example above – put the capitalised form second.

Examples

Here are some examples of entries that you might find in the indexes of different books, but here collated as a guide to style. Below are some notes on particular aspects of ordering entries.

BAOR (British Army of the Rhine), 56
Becket, St Thomas à, *see* St Thomas à Becket
Beveridge, Sir William, Chairman of Inter-Departmental Committee on Social Insurance (Beveridge Committee, 1941), 207–8, 210–13
Bevin, Ernest
 Foreign Minister (1945), 392, 393
 Minister of Labour (1940–5), 319–24
déjà vu, 217–19
de la Mare, Walter (John) (1873–1956), 179–84
Education (Handicapped Children) Act 1970, 45
Escherichia coli, 224–47
Heisenberg uncertainty principle, 63, 64
 α -helix structure of protein, 73, 85
Macbeth (d. 1057), 106
Maugham, W(illiam) Somers(et) (1874–1965), 76, 97–9
Maupassant, (Henri René Albert) Guy de (1850–93), 244–7
McGonagall, William (1830–?1902), 33
Mount St Helens volcano, 56
Origin of Species, On the (1859), 62
sailfish (*Istiophorus* spp.), 134
St Paul's Cathedral, 72

St Thomas à Becket (1118–70), 99–100, 102, 105–7, 121, 143
SLR, *see* single-lens reflex
staccato, 27
Tennyson, Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809–92), 156–62
Thomas à Becket, St, *see* St Thomas à Becket
Times, The, 34–7, 83
Vaughan Williams, Ralph (1872–1958), 361–86
Victory, HMS, 43–4
William II (?1056–1100), 37–9

First letter for alphabetisation

In establishing the order of entries it may be appropriate to ignore a prefix, as in the case of ' α -helix' above, which is positioned as 'helix'. (The ' α ' would be relevant if there was also an entry for ' γ -helix'.)

In sub-entries, disregard words such as 'of' and base the order on the 'significant' words.

preferred order	strict alphabetical order
education	education
laws governing	by parents
by parents	laws governing
'special'	of under-fives
of under-fives	'special'

Names of people

Give names in full. You may like to provide further information such as dates of birth and death, titles, and posts held, if these are helpful to the reader.

The position of the entry in the index is determined by the surname (as with 'Ernest Bevin' in the list above), and then by the forename if two or more entries share the surname. More unusual names are positioned according to usage: thus in 'W. Somerset Maugham' the surname is 'Maugham', whereas in 'Ralph Vaughan Williams' it is 'Vaughan Williams'. 'Walter de la Mare' is treated as 'de la Mare'; 'Guy de Maupassant' as 'Maupassant'. Names beginning 'Mac' or 'Mc' are positioned according to the spelling: if the two groups are widely separated it may be helpful to add a cross-reference, such as 'Mac-, *see also* Mc-'.

Titles of publications

Cite and position titles according to the first 'significant' word, as with '*The Times*' in the list above.

Saint

If 'Saint' is abbreviated to 'St' in the text follow this convention in the index. Position names as if 'Saint' were spelt out in full. If you think it necessary, add a cross-reference under 'St'.

Accents

Treat accented and unaccented letters as equivalent – collate 'è' with 'e', 'ü' with 'u', and so on.

Cross-references

Any cross-reference should be the last item in an entry, and all words other than quoted index headings (as 'presidents' below) should be printed in italic:

prime ministers
 appointment of, 91
 constitutional function of, 89
compare presidents; *see also* under *individual names*

Layout of entries

Please present your index double-spaced, in the following style.

Initials

Each entry and sub-entry should have a lower-case initial unless the word is a proper noun:

industrial archaeology
industrial relations
Industrial Revolution

Indentation

Begin each entry and each sub-entry on a fresh line, and indent the sub-entries by *three* spaces:

Bach, Johann Sebastian (1685–1750), 43–67
 compositions of, 51–65
 instruments played by, 48–9
 posts held by, 44–6

If you have sub-sub-entries, run these on from the sub-entry, following a colon and separated by semicolons:

Bach, Johann Sebastian (1685–1750), 43–67
 sons: Wilhelm Friedmann, 72–3; Karl (or Carl)
 Philipp Emanuel, 73–5; Johann Christoph
 Friedrich, 76; Johann Christian, 77–9

In this example the sub-sub-entries are not alphabetised but are listed in order of age.

Turnovers

If an entry or sub-entry does not fit on one line, indent each subsequent line to make it clear the new line is a continuation. If possible, please help our typesetters by using Word formatting to make lines that turn over 'hang'. In the 'format' menu choose 'paragraph' and then within 'indentation' choose 'hanging' – sometimes found in a 'special' sub menu. Lines that turn over will then automatically indent.

Punctuation

The use of colons and semicolons is illustrated above. Commas are used as shown in the examples: between the heading and the first page number, and between successive page numbers. Spaces rather than commas may follow the heading if you prefer them, but commas are recommended:

commas	spaces
enthalpy, 42	enthalpy 42
entropy, 47, 51–3	entropy 47, 51–3

If you want spaces, please insert *two* word spaces when you type.

Page numbers

Use the fewest possible digits: '32–3', '124–7', '132–48', '160–3', '200–5'. The '1' is repeated in '-teen' numbers: '14–15', '113–14'.

Italics

The words '*see*', '*see under*', '*see also*' and '*compare*' will be printed in italic, as will all words other than the actual headings and subheadings. Titles of publications also will be in italic. Please underline the relevant words in the typescript.

paper-folding, *see* origami

Alphabetical groups

There should be a two-line space between alphabetical groupings.

Where to send your index

Please supply a Word file to your production supplier.

Index

Entries in this index are arranged in letter-by-letter order.

The index illustrates some of the points made in the booklet. As you use it, notice what you like or dislike about it and bear these observations in mind as you compile your own index.

- abbreviations, 9
- abstract v. concrete
 - headings, 6
- accents, 9, 10
- Acts of Parliament, 9
- adjectives
 - in headings, 6
 - in sub-headings, 6
- alphabetisation, 9–10
- analytic indexes, 5, 7
- authors as indexers, 5, 6, 7

- bold type, 3, 7
 - see also typography
- British Standard (BS 3700), 3, 5, 7
- buyers, potential, 3

- capitalisation, 9, 10
- colons, 10
- commas, 10
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