

CHAPTER 6

Be motivated and be successful!

Let's imagine your first set of proofs has actually arrived by first-class post. You may have to sign for them if they have been sent by special delivery. Of course, you will already have been in contact by phone, fax or email with an editor. He/she will have described the nature of the book, its subject, length, and then asked if you are free to work on it.

Assuming you have agreed, you will have some idea of what to expect. With the proofs will be the corrected manuscript (in reality a typescript), which you must refer to in the course of proofreading. You may have been asked specifically to read against copy, that is, to follow word for word from the typescript. When you are starting out, this is absolutely essential, but more experienced proofreaders will not always need to read against copy. They will still turn over each page of the typescript as they read the proofs and a quick glance will alert them to any special instructions given by the copy-editor, so that they can make sure the typesetter has followed them. The more experienced proofreader will thus have to refer only to the manuscript for guidance or where he/she is uncertain of any foreign words, spelling or terminology and wishes to check 'against copy'.

In many cases, you will be proofreading ‘blind’, that is without an edited typescript or manuscript. (This also applies to on-screen editing as nowadays fewer proofreaders work with ‘hard copy’.) If this is the case, you need to be that little bit more careful.

Let’s hope the first set of proofs is interesting. You could be reading just about anything. Here’s a list of a number of books worked on by the author (and editor) of *The Pocket Book of Proofreading* over several months.

<i>Inside Third World Cities</i>	<i>Track Record</i>
<i>Hampshire Cricketers</i>	<i>Managerial Finance</i>
<i>Occupation Nazi-Hunter</i>	<i>Warriors of Rome</i>
<i>In the Footsteps of Hannibal</i>	<i>Origins of England</i>
<i>Flash Gordon</i>	<i>Santorini</i>
<i>The Competitive Woman</i>	<i>Travels with a 2CV</i>
<i>Natural History Verse</i>	<i>Sepulchre</i>
<i>Guns and Goshawks</i>	<i>Safer Driving</i>
<i>Whirlwind</i>	<i>Caspian Caviar</i>
<i>Professional Services</i>	<i>IT</i>
<i>The Dancing Queen (Lola Montez)</i>	<i>The Breed Woman</i>
<i>Successful Sea Trout Angling</i>	<i>The Bachman Books</i>
<i>Victoria’s Enemies (Military campaigns in the 19th century)</i>	<i>Stock Answers</i>
<i>Whose Health is it Anyway?</i>	<i>Life of Madam Teresa</i>
<i>The Natural History of Badgers</i>	<i>Heatherlands</i>
<i>The Search for Extra-terrestrial Intelligence</i>	<i>Cloey: a True Story</i>
	<i>Greek Cities</i>
	<i>Finn’s Travels</i>

Is there something in this diverse list that may have interested YOU? No special knowledge was needed for proofreading any of these titles. Over 30 titles from various publishers for which the lowest fee charged was £125, the highest £575, based on an average hourly rate (some years ago now) of between £12 to £15. This should give you the incentive to learn how it can be done. (Copy-editors can charge up to £20.00 [just a