5 Simple Tips To Minimize Edits To Your Book Chapter

Editing is an essential part of writing, but let's be honest – it's often extremely time-consuming and can be frustrating when time is often a limited resource for busy academics, researchers, or clinicians. Because most STM professionals tend to write fewer book chapters than journal articles, many are unfamiliar with submission and formatting specifications, which can lead to numerous, preventable edits you just don't have the time to make. Thankfully, these edits can be easily avoided if you know which elements to pay close attention to when writing a first draft. Here's our cheat sheet:

1. **Follow the guidelines given to you**

   Your Editorial Project Manager will send you a document called the "Author's Guidelines" at the start of every book project. This is a list of all the formatting specifications for your chapter that will help you avoid the missteps that are the #1 cause of unnecessary and time-consuming edits. Here are the most essential specifications to look for and follow:

   - Word Count
   - Reference format
   - Reference limit
   - Figure resolution

   Also, make sure you include these essential elements in your chapter:

   - Keywords and abstract
   - Figure legends
   - Authors' full names and affiliations
   - Mini table of contents

2. **Get Permission**

   You can use previously published figures or tables in your manuscript, but you **must** have permission from the copyright holder (usually the publisher) and give credit to the original source in the figure legend. Not obtaining proper permission for material is highly unethical and can lead to the complete exclusion of your work from the project.

Obtaining permission is usually quick-and-easy thanks to online help centers like Rightslink.com, but in some cases it can take several weeks to go through the process. So, start sourcing and obtaining permissions for figures early so you'll be good to go when you submit your chapter. If you supply a previously-published figure that does not have permission, we will ask you to remove and resupply a new image, which will take more of your time, may require you to rewrite sections surrounding the images, and will *still* require you to secure permissions. More time wasted!

The Author's Guidelines has information on obtaining permission to reuse previously published material. If you need additional assistance, contact your editorial project manager or the permissions helpdesk (permissionshelpdesk@elsevier.com) with any questions.

3. **Have your chapter reviewed by a native English speaker**

   Even if you are a native English speaker, it's always helpful to have someone else look over your paper for clarity and flow. For non-native English speakers, this step is essential. Before you submit your chapter, you should have a native English speaker review your work and clean up any issues with language or syntax to help ensure that your exact meaning will be clear and will prevent time spent clarifying issues, misunderstandings, or misinterpretations with the editor.

4. **Identify overlap**

   Before you start your chapter, speak with the editor and review the table of contents to make sure you fully understand the expected scope of your contribution to avoid adding material that will be covered in another chapter. Overlap can force you to rewrite major sections of your chapter in the 2nd draft, which can take almost as much time as writing an entirely new chapter. When in doubt, check with the editor for clarification on your chapter's content.

5. **Working with co-contributors? Make sure your sections flow**

   Having multiple co-authors on a chapter can help strengthen the content and distribute the workload in a more manageable way. However, there can often be dramatic differences in style and formatting between authors that will need to be fixed before the chapter can be published. Appoint one person, usually the senior author, to make sure the entire chapter reads clearly and consistently from top to bottom, and make sure all co-authors receive the

Author's Guidelines so they know how to properly format their work from the start.

A Final Wrap Up

While editing is just another part of the busy academic, researcher, or clinician's life, minimizing *preventable* edits will keep you from spending time away from the other things that demand your attention. You've got enough to do without having to reformat references or create a higher-resolution figure!