

Guidelines for the Preparation of an Index

A well-prepared index can greatly enhance a book's usefulness to readers and researchers. An index should be considerably more than an outline or an expanded table of contents and considerably less than a concordance of words and phrases. A good index records every *pertinent* statement made within the body of the text.

Making an index consists of assembling, analyzing, and arranging into entries all items pointing to the page numbers in the book where detailed information on all aspects of the subject may be found. For further information about the process of indexing, see *The Chicago Manual of Style*. If you do not have access to *Chicago*, we will be happy to lend you an offprint of the chapter on indexing.

Please prepare your index on computer and send a copy on disk or by e-mail.

A note about software: The automated indexing feature that your word processor might contain will not create an index; it will create a concordance—a word list with page numbers that will not match the book's pagination without extra work on your part. Indexing software, designed for professional indexers, costs several hundred dollars and takes a long time to learn. Professional indexers use such software to improve consistency and to automate routine tasks, but the actual content of the index still requires the indexer's attention, analysis, and choices. In other words, even professional indexing software won't do much of the work of creating an index.

Basics

The unit of the index is the *entry*, which is a grouping of all page references to aspects of the subject for which the entry is made. The entry is made up of a heading followed by any necessary subordinate phrases (*subentries*) and page numbers. A page number or range of pages is a *locator*. A *cross reference* may be added to guide the reader to a different entry or to additional information under a related heading in the index.

General, significant discussions of a topic that do not fit under a subentry precede all subentries. Passing mentions should be omitted or grouped together under "mentioned" at the end of the entry.

In the following example, the entry is "Baptists"; general information about this topic appears on pages 7, 21, 66-68, 212 (four locators). Subentries are "democratic ideas of" (two locators) and "religious conduct of" (three locators). Passing mentions on pages 2 and 210 are noted after all topical subentries. The final phrase, "See also Anabaptists; New Light Baptists," provides two cross references.

Baptists, 7, 21, 66-68, 212; democratic ideas of, 40-41, 156; religious conduct of, 98, 148-51, 202-7; mentioned, 2, 210. See also Anabaptists; New Light Baptists

Mechanics

Please refer to the attached sample index as your guide. Note the following details:

- **Capitalization:** We prefer that you capitalize only those words that are capitalized in the text. Alternatively, you may choose to capitalize the initial word of each entry.
- **Paragraphing:** Please use hanging indent paragraph formatting. (If you do not know how to format paragraphs for hanging indent, consult your project editor.) Set the index in a single column.
- **Order of entries:** Put all subentries either in alphabetical order (ignore articles, conjunctions, and prepositions) or, less desirably, in chronological order (order of historical events, *not* order of mention in the book). Use one method throughout the index.
- **Indexing notes:** If a locator points to an *unnumbered* note or a *sole* note at the bottom of the page, add an "n" to the locator (e.g., "209n"). If a locator points to one of several numbered footnotes or to a note at the back of the book, include the note number (e.g., "209n27").
- **Punctuation:** If the initial entry is followed immediately by a locator, use a comma (education, higher, 16). If the initial entry is followed by a subentry, use a colon before the first subentry (education, higher: in Canada, 24-26; in the United States, 27-30, 45, 47-50).
- Use semicolons to separate subentries (education, higher: in Canada, 24-26; in the United States, 27-30, 45, 47-50).
- Use commas between locators.
- Use semicolons between cross references (See also Anabaptists; New Light Baptists).
- There is no final punctuation, except that a period precedes a cross reference.

What to Index (and What Not to Index)

The subject matter and purpose of the book determine which statements are pertinent and which are peripheral. Not everything in a book needs to be indexed. In general, *do not* index the following items:

- Authors and titles listed in the bibliography and notes.
- Names of people mentioned in acknowledgments and dedication.
- Unimportant mentions of subjects in the notes.
- Names of people, places, and things that are mentioned only as examples and not further discussed.
- Illustrations or captions if the book contains a list of illustrations.
- Illustrations or captions if the book has cross references in the text to figures—for example, "(see figure 3)" or "Figure 3 shows . . ." The index will send readers to the text, which in turn will refer them to the related figures.

In addition, be cautious about indexing the main topic of your book. A lengthy entry is difficult for readers to navigate. Most information that touches on the main topic should

appear elsewhere in the index if possible. For example, in a book about desegregation, the topic of court rulings could go in an entry such as “court rulings” rather than “desegregation: court rulings regarding.”

Headings

A heading is a noun or a noun phrase, starting with the word that is the key to the entry. The heading should be as specific as possible and should provide full identification, particularly in the case of proper names.

- Use surname plus given name or initials.
- If the complete name is not known, add an identifying word or phrase: “Street, [J. B.?” or “Street (lawyer).”
- Two subjects with the same name should be distinguished by dates, residence, title, or nickname.
- In a biography or work with a biographical component, family members may be identified: “Emerson, Charles (brother).”
- Under most circumstances, avoid using titles (Governor, President, General) as part of the proper name in an index entry. When titles are used with a full name, disregard them in alphabetizing.
- Spelling, capitalization, and the use of hyphens, italics, and quotation marks should follow usage in text.
- All proper names should be listed separately (North Carolina Chamber of Commerce *and* North Carolina State Legislature *should not be subentries under* North Carolina).

Poor headings (examples)

Desire of New Light Baptists for Anglican Communion

(COMMENT: The initial word, *desire*, is not the key. It should read “New Light Baptists, desire of, for Anglican communion” or “Anglican communion, desired by New Light Baptists.”)

Quakers attend Anglican service at Thompson's Creek to ridicule Woodmason, 114-20

(COMMENT: This heading attempts to say too much. It should be focused and condensed or, if appropriate, divided into separate subentries: Quakers: attend Anglican services, 114-19; ridicule Woodmason, 118-20.)

Subentries

Make subentries succinct, but retain prepositions and conjunctions for clarity.

Subentries are not always necessary: If the heading word is mentioned only a handful of times, simply list the locators (page numbers and ranges). A long list of locators (more than five or six) or a range covering a lot of pages (e.g., 87-109) indicates that subentries are needed. If the topic has only been mentioned—not substantially discussed—it may not need to be indexed; if desired, a “mentioned” subentry may be created and placed at the end of the subentries.

Locators

Be sure to record page numbers accurately and clearly.

- Give comprehensive page numbers for continuous treatment of the subject (166-69, *not* 166ff).
- Do not use comprehensive page numbers for *separate* occurrences of the subject; in that case, record each page (166, 167, 168).
- If a topic is mentioned on a number of pages in close proximity (20, 22, 23, 24, 25, 28, 30, 31, 33, 35), the form “20-35 *passim*” is acceptable. *Passim* should be used only sparingly and always with a specific page range.
- Page numbers for matter found in endnotes should be recorded like so: “206n27”; for unnumbered or solitary footnotes, use this format: “23n, 46n.” If the entry appears in the text and in a footnote on the same page, “n” is not necessary (“23,” *not* “23n” or “23, 23n”).
- Page ranges should match the style in the rest of the book (for example, 211-12 or 211-212).

Analysis of Items

After you have selected and recorded items, arrange the headings in alphabetical order. Then study the headings and subentries to see whether some might be combined.

- Examine subentries for synonymous, equivalent, and closely related items. Many of these can be combined into a single subentry (but keep in mind the principle of avoiding long strings of locators).
- Check for entries with only a single locator. Consider whether the term or the concept it represents is significant to your book. If you use another word for the same concept elsewhere, consider combining entries. If the topic gets only passing mention, consider deleting the entry.
- If a subject is referred to by more than one name, one entry can be analyzed in detail (with subentries) and the other can carry a cross reference.
- In the case of pseudonyms, the subentries should appear with the actual name unless the pseudonym is better known.
- For handling of entries for nobility, see *The Chicago Manual of Style* or consult your project editor.
- If a name has variant spellings, use the form that appears in the text.

Cross References

The cross reference is a space saver and serves to prevent duplication. However, it is not worthwhile to use a cross reference if the length of the cross reference takes *more* space than listing (repeating) the page numbers. Here duplication is permissible.

- In making a cross reference, be sure the exact words of the referenced heading are used. Also make sure there is such an entry. Follow the capitalization style you have used for index entries (“See also education” if common-noun entries are lowercase, “See also Education” if all entries are capitalized).

- See follows an entry with no locators—it simply refers the reader to another part of the index. See also follows an entry with locators; it refers the reader to additional information in another entry. See also under refers to the reader to a subentry under certain circumstances. See *The Chicago Manual of Style* for more information.
- See, See also, and See also under should be underlined unless preceding an underlined (italic) cross reference, in which case use roman (“See also education” but “See also Souls of Black Folk, The”).
- Separate cross references with semicolons.

Arrangement of the Index

After you have grouped and arranged all subentries and cross references in a logical order under each heading, alphabetize the headings (entries). Consult *The Chicago Manual of Style* for specific questions about alphabetization.

Indexing from Manuscript

Although it is possible to construct a preliminary index based on the final, edited manuscript, doing so does not greatly reduce the amount of work required at the page proof stage. A better choice may be to reread your manuscript with the index in mind and make preliminary decisions about what entries and cross references you would like to include, what entries will need subentries, and so on, without bothering with page numbers.

If you choose to construct a full preliminary index from manuscript,

- Index just as you normally would using page proof but use manuscript page numbers (e.g., ms38).
- Highlight subjects on the manuscript page so they are easily seen. Remember to note multiple occurrences of the same subject on one manuscript page; when the book is paginated they may fall on different pages. You might use t, m, and b to indicate whether the reference falls at the top, middle, or bottom (e.g., ms38t).
- When you receive page proof, mark your indexed manuscript (or break up your electronic file) with the book’s page breaks. Note the beginning and end of each book page and write in the appropriate book page number. For each entry, go to each manuscript page indicated, find out which book page corresponds, and, in your index file, replace the manuscript page number with the correct book page number. When you finish this substitution process, alphabetize and proofread your index.

SAMPLE INDEX ENTRIES

Davis, Jefferson, 77, 99, 108, 209n [for a solitary or unnumbered note at the bottom of the page*]; proclaims day of prayer, 149-50; visits city, 96-97, 129

Day, James, 141, 231

Day, General Stephen B., 75

destruction: by fire during siege, 179; by gunboats, 108-37 passim; of homes, 164; of printing office, 158

diphtheria. See under epidemics

Drenna, William, 180, 194, 296n22 [for a note at the back of the book*]

Dye, Nathan, 203

Eaton, John, 212

economy: influence of, on politics, 25; and manufacturers, 21; presiege, 20; products of, 21; slave, 42

epidemics, 216-18; diphtheria, 37, 145, 152, 219, 221, 227; malaria, 145, 152, 218-20; treatments for, 218-19; yellow fever, 145, 219. See also vaccinations

* Most books will have one placement or the other for notes, so these two types of locators are not likely to occur within the same index.