What is the difference between proofreading and copy-editing?

**Copy-editing** is the process of preparing text (a document, report, book etc) for publication, especially by making corrections or alterations.

**Proofreading** is the process of reading and marking text (a document, report, book etc) for correction.

We’ve set out some text below to show some of the differences.

**EXAMPLE**

Here is the unedited text of the details of our Welcome to Proofreading course on 4 March 2015

Welcome to Proofreading Wednesday 4/3/2015. 9.30am to 4.30pm. Scott House, Edinburgh

No previous knowledge is required for this one-day introduction to proofreading. Through practical exercises using a variety of accessible texts, the course aims to teach students the basic proofreading skills and to help them feel comfortable with the methods of ensuring that a document is correct in both content and layout.

Discussion will include: The art of proofreading; Proofreading and reading - what’s the difference?; The British Standard proofreading symbols - how to mark them, and the importance of doing so neatly!; Colour coding; Style sheets; A methodical approach to checking for consistency; Carrying over information or queries; What can go wrong.

Practical exercises on the day will cover: Accuracy - developing error-spotting techniques; Marking errors and omissions; Changing the appearance of the text; Correcting problems with spacing and alignment; Ensuring consistency in layout and sequencing; Checking that the content makes sense!

Who should attend? People who write material and/or check written documents and want to improve their proofreading skills. The course is suitable for those with no previous formal experience or who have responsibility for the presentation of documents and wish to develop their skills in a more formal way.

The copy-editor’s job is to look at it and decide whether it needs to be changed in any way: eg to make it easier to understand, to correct errors and inconsistencies, or to comply with the company’s house style.
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Here is the proofread version. The proofreader has read it and marked some errors. Sometimes proofreaders mark or write up queries rather than marking changes as there may be inconsistencies etc that the copy-editor will need to make decisions on.

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The proofreader noticed:
- that there was an extra space between ‘and’ and ‘the’
- that one of the headings was italic instead of bold AND should have been followed by a colon
- that ‘responsibility’ was spelt incorrectly
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Another version of the proofread version showing what the proofreader noticed: