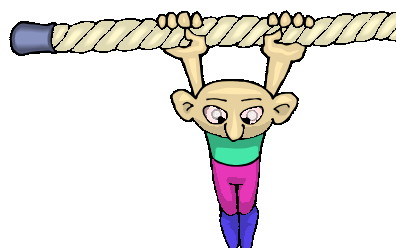


Survivor: Staying in the Indexing Game

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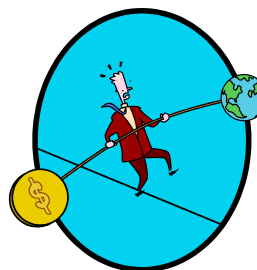
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Survivor: Staying in the Indexing Game

Welcome and Session Overview

Panelist/Moderator Opening Remarks:

- Indexing for how long?
- Number of indexes completed for pay to date
- Status: full-time, part-time by choice, part-time but want to be full-time
- Specialty areas in indexing ...
- Education, background, experiences before indexing and how they helped
- Specific training/education completed that is related to indexing (USDA, etc.)

Panelists Discuss:

- How I got my first job (and got over the hurdle of "no experience")
- What marketing techniques I've tried (and what's work for me)
- How I've managed to get repeat business from clients
- How I keep myself competitive (what I do to stay at the top of my field)
- My personal lists of do's and don'ts that keep me successful
- The importance of joining organizations (STC, ASI, etc.) — myth or fact
- How I set my rates (or do I?)
- My recommendations for people getting started (list of do's and don'ts)

Questions from Session Attendees

Five Fatal Myths of Indexing

by Sylvia Coates

“What is it you do? Indexing? Now, let me get this straight, people send you books to read, you can work your own hours and in your own home, and people pay you for this? Where do I sign up?”

Many people looking for a career change consider indexing to be a dream job. Not only does freelance indexing come with the luxury of working in your own home but it can have the potential of being quite lucrative. Yet, out of the many who actively pursue an indexing career only a very few manage to succeed. Why is this?

I believe that this high failure rate is connected to the five fatal myths of indexing. These indexing myths are as follows:

1. No special training is required to learn indexing.
2. Anyone can be a successful indexer.
3. Clients are easy to find with no need to market oneself.
4. It is not necessary to invest in appropriate equipment or to master technical applications.
5. One can make a living wage immediately.

Let us examine each of these myths.

No special training is required to learn indexing

Too many of those pursuing an indexing career assume that indexing does not require any special training or education. “I love to read, I bet I could index.” Laughable, but how many of us have heard this from someone interested in our profession?

To the prospective indexer I would say this: learn your craft. This means learning the correct conventions, rules, and parameters used in the indexing process. Prospective indexers sometimes think that they can learn to index by practicing and copying from already indexed books. However, this technique is invalid unless the correct conventions are being applied during these practice exercises.

There are several very good courses available which can provide a solid foundation for indexing. Probably the best known courses are the Basic and Applied Indexing USDA correspondence courses. Indexing courses may also be available through local library schools. These courses can be supplemented by the one or two day workshops available through ASI chapters. These workshops can be excellent additions to the courses already mentioned but are not adequate training by themselves.

Mentoring is another way to receive indexing training. There are some experienced indexers who are willing to take on the inexperienced and train them over a period of time. Mentoring relationships can be very rewarding and beneficial for both parties.

There are also freelance indexers who have received their training by working as in-house indexers. They are able to take their in-house training and experience and parlay it into a freelance career.

Anyone can index

Indexers share certain personality traits and work ethics. Test yourself. Can you work alone and isolated from other people? Can you work unsupervised or do you need someone to monitor your progress? Can you manage your time and work under deadline pressures? How comfortable would you be making countless indexing decisions without constant affirmation from colleagues or supervisors? In addition, there exist a myriad of indefinable characteristics making up a personality suited to indexing.

Honestly assess yourself. Does indexing, often accompanied by isolation and extreme time pressures, sound like something you would enjoy? Many experienced indexers do enjoy, even thrive, in this kind of environment, but it’s not for everyone.

Last, but definitely not least, is a particular mindset characteristic which enhances the indexing process. This mindset is the ability to conceptually understand text and to organize the information using the indexing process. This mindset is apparently an innate quality or talent, is distinct from intelligence, and cannot be easily taught. Several of the USDA instructors have commented to me that individuals with this mindset stand out among their students. It is evident that indexing is easier and possibly more proficient for those with this innate ability.

Clients are easy to find with no need to market oneself

Marketing is part of the business of indexing. Indexers with experience, and a proven track record, have an easier time finding new clients. However, for the inexperienced indexer the client market is quite different.

In the book production process the index is close to being the last completed item. If the index is late or needs to be redone, for whatever reason, the production can be thrown off schedule. This may

make an editor hesitate to use a new indexer. This Catch 22 reality makes it difficult to get those first jobs. Marketing, under these circumstances, becomes a particularly crucial issue for the new indexer.

Marketing is a constant necessity and should be considered part of the job for all indexers regardless of experience. ASI can serve as both a networking organization and a source of valuable marketing strategies and tips.

Again, you need to honestly assess yourself regarding the marketing aspect of indexing. Are you willing and able to market yourself? If not, you may need to reconsider an indexing career.

It is not necessary to invest in appropriate equipment and to master technical applications

Though an indexing business can be run with little overhead there are some pieces of equipment which must be purchased. You should purchase the best computer that you can afford. At a minimum your computer system should allow access to e-mail and the Internet. A good indexing software program should also be purchased and learned. Printed business cards and stationary will make your marketing look more professional. A message machine or message service is also a necessity.

Some equipment may be purchased as your business grows. A fax machine, though not a necessity, can be extremely useful and adds professionalism to your business. If possible, a second dedicated phone line should be added to your office. Many indexers are now adding Web sites as a part of their marketing strategy. Specific software applications and equipment can be added as your business needs expand.

There are some experienced indexers who continue to manage their business without e-mail or even computers. While this may work for an already established indexer it would not be advisable for the new indexer trying to break into the market.

One can make a living wage immediately

It is this myth which can be the most crucial impediment to a successful indexing business. There are too many prospective indexers who need to make money right away and assume that a new indexing business can produce a living wage immediately. This unreasonable expectation can quickly lead to bitter disappointment and disillusionment with indexing as a career. It is unrealistic to expect to make a living wage for the first and possibly the

second year of freelance indexing. It has been estimated that a freelance indexer needs to have eight to ten clients in order to be able to index full time. We define a client here as a source of repeat business and not just a one time indexing assignment. Building that kind of client base requires time.

So how have other indexers overcome this impediment to launching a successful freelance business? There are several ways this can be done. Some new indexers are fortunate enough to have someone able and willing to support them while they build up a client base. Other new indexers may have a source of independent means available, either substantial savings or a private income. There are some indexers who have kept a day job while taking on freelance assignments to build up a sufficient client base. I know of one indexer who worked in house for many years. She was able to go free lance by securing enough work almost immediately from her former colleagues.

Additional cash flow issues are late payments from clients, deadbeat publishers or authors, and slip schedules. Late payments from clients are a continuing problem and may severely impact on your cash flow. Deadbeat publishers or authors aren't a common problem but are always a possibility. And slip schedules, when the agreed upon indexing schedule is postponed by several days or weeks, will result in the payment also being postponed. Given these situations even a busy indexer may experience financial stress on occasion.

Each new indexer needs to assess their financial situation and resources. Again, an honest assessment is needed to make a realistic decision to pursue a freelance indexing career.

No doubt there have been successful indexers who have been exceptions to the rule for one or more of these five fatal myths of indexing. However, for the majority of prospective and new indexers counting on these myths will lead to disappointment.

The purpose here has not been to discourage prospective or new indexers. On the contrary, our profession is strengthened by the energy of newcomers. However, prospective and new indexers need to prepare themselves to insure a successful indexing business. Proper preparation, in this context, means researching accurate information, doing honest self-assessments, and making informed career decisions.

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If you would like this list emailed to you (with hot links), please send an email to melody@songbirdindex.com

Contact Info:

ORGANIZATIONS:

American Society of Indexers
<http://www.asindexing.org>
Australian Society of Indexers
<http://www.aussi.org>
Pacific Northwest Chapter of ASI
<http://www.indexw.com/pnwasi/>
Society of Indexers (UK)
<http://www.socind.demon.co.uk>
Society for Technical Communication Indexing
Special Interest Group
<http://www.stcsig.org/idx/index.html>
Business SIG – www.businessindexing.org
Culinary SIG – www.culinaryindexing.org
Gardening and Environmental Studies SIG
www.bioindexers.org
History/Archaeology SIG –
www.indextohistory-archaeology.org
Politics and International Relations SIG
www.wave.net/upg/pisig/index.htm

Science and Medicine SIG –
www.scimedindexers.org

Other ASI SIGS (no web site): Genealogy and
Transcription SIG; Sports/Fitness SIG; Web
Indexing SIG

ASI chapter websites:

Arizona: <http://aztec.asu.edu/azasi/>

Carolina: <http://ils.unc.edu/ncasi/>

Heartland:

<http://www.nonprofitpages.com/asiheartland/>

Massachusetts:

<http://www.marisol.com/maasi/>

South Central:

<http://www.greatgael.com/scc.htm>

Tennessee:

<http://members.aol.com/tennwords/>

WA DC: <http://www.indexing.com/dcasi/>

INSTRUCTORS/COURSES:

Kari Kells, Index West
PO Box 2748
Vashon Island, WA 98070
kkells@indexw.com

Sherry Smith
63505 Bridal Lane
Bend, OR 97701
541-382-6414
indexer@attglobal.net

USDA – <http://www.grad.usda.gov/>
look for Basic Indexing

BIPT (Book Indexing Postal Tutorials)
<http://www.lodge-moffat.co.uk/>

GENERAL INFORMATION SITES:

Suite 101: Lots of articles and helpful information: <http://www.suite101.com/links.cfm/1019>

Indexers and Indexing: Lots more articles:
<http://www.slais.ubc.ca/courses/arstlibr512/00-01-wt2/indexing.htm>

Indexers and Indexing More: Lots more articles: <http://www.slais.ubc.ca/resources/indexing/indexing.htm>

Index Students: Maintained by Dan Connolly, IndexStudents has exercises, an FAQ page, and a page where Indexers can list their web sites: <http://www.indexstudents.com>

An Indexer.com, Martin Tulic's site, where you can sign up for his Indexer Locator and also read some helpful information: <http://www.anindexer.com>

Kay Popp's Indexing Links: <http://users.wcnet.net/indexer/links1.htm>

Ilana Kingsley's Indexing Information: <http://www.indexpup.com/guidelines.html>

Kari Kells' Indexing Information: <http://www.indexw.com>

Lori Lathrop's Indexing Tips: <http://www.indexingskills.com/tips.html>

For those wondering what Indexing as a business looks like before they invest time or money, Martha Osgood's Novice Notes: <http://www.teleport.com/~index/NoviceNotes.html>

Editor's Proofreading Marks: <http://www.mhhe.com/info/authormanual/proofread.mhtml>

IEEE Press Book Index Guidelines: <http://ieeepress.org/organizations/pubs/press/indexguide.htm>

International Organization for Standardization: <http://www.iso.org>

Levenger furniture: <http://www.levenger.com/shop/furniture/>

Hobbit Name Generator site: <http://www.chriswetherell.com/hobbit/default.asp>

PUBLISHERS:

About Directory of Publishers – http://publishing.about.com/library/bl_azpub.htm

ACQWeb's Directory of Publishers and Vendors –

<http://acqweb.library.vanderbilt.edu/acqweb/pubr.html>

Consortium's Publishers – www.cbsd.com/pubs.cfm

Legal Publishers List – www.aallnet.org/committee/criv/resources/tools/list/

Publishers Marketing Association (PMA) – www.pma-online.org

RESOURCES:

Bible Concordances – <http://www.studylight.org/> OR

<http://www.biblestudytools.net/OnlineStudyBible/bible.cgi?section=5&showtools=0&version=rsv&word=joy&st=21&sd=0>

Biography Resources: www.ala.org/acrl/resjan02.html

Calendar, 10,000 year – <http://calendarhome.com/tyc/>

Dictionary, American Heritage - www.bartleby.com/61/

Dictionary, Business Words - <http://www.business-words.com/dictionary/index.html>

Dictionary, Composers – www.stevenestrella.com/composers

Dictionary, Merriam-Webster – www.m-w.com

Dictionaries, Specialty – www.yourdictionary.com/specialty.html

E-Nature.com (local wildlife guides) – www.enature.com/localguide/localguide_home.asp

How Stuff Works – www.howstuffworks.com

Indexers Favorite Links - www.chesco.com/~nanguent/

Librarians Index to the Internet: www.lii.org/

Names Around the World – www.eponym.org/hq.html

Names, African, How to Index: www.filebox.vt.edu/users/bertel/africana.html

Names, Guideline for Recording Names - www.huridocs.org/hsdaname.htm

Names, Rules for the Construction of Personal, Place and Corporate Names –

www.hmc.gov.uk/nca/rules2.htm

Reference Desk.com – www.refdesk.com

Thesaurus and Taxonomy Creation Management Software – www.termtree.com.au

Urban Legends References Pages – www.snopes.com

SOFTWARE, DEDICATED INDEXING:

Cindex – www.indexres.com/home.html

HTML Indexer – www.html-indexer.com

Macrex – www.macrex.com

Sky – www.sky-software.com

Index Estimator

Pages of text =	50-100	100-150	150-200	200-250	250-300	300-350	350-400	400-450	450-500
General non-fiction index = (2-4 index entries/page) -----	2-3 pages	3-5 pages	5-6 pages	6-8 pages	8-9 pages	9-11 pages	11-12 pages	12-14 pages	14-15 pages
Indexing time = -----	1-2 days	2 days	2-3 days	3 days	3-4 days	4 days	4-5 days	5-6 days	6-7 days
Editing time =	~ 1 day	~ 1 day	~ 1 day	1 day	1 day	1-2 days	2 days	2 days	2 days
Tech. trade book index = (3-6 index entries/page) -----	3-5 pages	4-7 pages	6-9 pages	8-11 pages	10-13 pages	12-15 pages	14-17 pages	16-19 pages	18-21 pages
Indexing time = -----	1-2 days	2-3 days	3-4 days	4-5 days	5-6 days	6-7 days	7-8 days	8-9 days	9-10 days
Editing time =	~ 1 day	~ 1 day	~ 1 day	1 day	1 day	1-2 days	2 days	2 days	2 days
Corp. technical docs index = (4-8 index entries/page) -----	3-8 pages	5-9 pages	7-11 pages	9-15 pages	11-18 pages	13-21 pages	15-24 pages	17-28 pages	20-35 pages
Indexing time = -----	1-2 days	2-3 days	3-4 days	4-5 days	5-6 days	6-7 days	7-8 days	8-9 days	9-10 days
Editing time =	~ 1 day	~ 1 day	1 day	1 day	1 day	1-2 days	2 days	2 days	2 days
Very scientific text index = (10-30 index entries/page) -----	8-20 pages	13-22 pages	17-27 pages	22-42 pages	27-45 pages	32-54 pages	44-60 pages	41-68 pages	50-80 pages
Indexing time = -----	2-3 days	3-5 days	4-6 days	5-7 days	6-8 days	7-10 days	8-11 days	10-13 days	12-15 days
Editing time =	1-2 days	1-2 days	1-2 days	2 days	2-3 days	2-3 days	2-3 days	3 days	3 days

NOTE: Page counts refer to published indexes. Estimates of indexing and editing times are based upon previous projects. If my workload allows, "RUSH" projects will be completed in less time.



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Lori Lathrop, a Past President of the American Society of Indexers, ASI's international representative, ASI's correspondent for **The Indexer**, and the author of **An Indexer's Guide to the Internet**, is a communications professional with degrees in Business Administration and Computer Science. She has held top information development positions with major corporations and managed documentation and training projects. Her experience includes more than 18 years as a technical writer, editor, and professional indexer. She provides indexing services for corporate clients, organizations, and publishing houses throughout the U.S. and Canada, and she delivers her two-day workshop, **Indexing Skills for Technical Communicators** for corporate clients and writers' organizations. ASI's Professional Development Workshops have offered two of Lori's workshops: **Indexing Skills for Technical Communicators** and **Editing an Index for Quality and Usability**. The Society for Technical Communication (STC) has also included Lori's **Indexing Skills for Technical Communicators** in its Seminar Series.

AREAS OF EXPERTISE: Computer science, technical communication, management, business technology, health and nutrition, medical sciences, engineering, quality programs, environmental science, information technology, telecommunications, agricultural science, language and literature, reference materials.

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Some Common Rates for Editorial Services

Common rates reported to us by our members fall within the ranges indicated below. They should be used only as a rough guideline; rates vary considerably depending on the nature of the work, the time frame of the assignment, the degree of special expertise required, and other factors.

<i>Type of Work</i>	<i>Estimated Pace of Work</i>	<i>Range of Fees</i>
Copyediting, basic	3–8 manuscript pages per hour	\$20–30 per hour
Copyediting, substantive	2–5 manuscript pages per hour	\$25–45 per hour
Desktop publishing	1–4 pages per hour (newsletters)	\$25–30 per printed page
	6–10 pages per hour (books)	\$35–60 per hour
Developmental/substantive editing	1–5 pages per hour	\$28–50 per hour
Illustrating	spot, ½–8 hours or more	\$30–75 per hour
		\$25–300 per spot
	full-page, 8 hours or more	\$250–1,000 per page
	cover art	\$1,500–5,000 per cover
Indexing	5–10 book pages per hour	\$25–60 per hour
		\$3.50–10 per indexable book page
Project management	not applicable	\$8.50–15 per printed page
		\$40–60 per hour
Proofreading	3–10 manuscript pages per hour	\$20–30 per hour
Translating	500–1,000 words per hour	\$80–140 per thousand words
Writing	1–3 manuscript pages per hour	\$30–100 per hour
		\$45–95 per book page

indexing_workflow.xls

1.0 Vet Package

1.1 Review cover letter

1.2 Review page proofs

- 1.2.1 Call client if missing pages
- 1.2.2 Call client for clarifications
- 1.2.3 Punch pages - fit into notebook

1.3 Send confirmation to client

- 1.3.1 Confirm special instructions
- 1.3.2 Confirm delivery date and method

2.0 Read/Mark Page Proofs

2.1 Read front matter to get "flavor"

2.2 Identify index entries (use different colored highlighters as desired):

- 2.2.1 Highlight chapter/section titles
- 2.2.2 Highlight subheadings
- 2.2.3 Highlight terms

- 2.2.4 Highlight concepts

- 2.2.5 Highlight proper names
- 2.2.6 Highlight titles of works

3.0 Input Entries

3.1 Input entries for each chapter/section

- 3.1.1 Input chapter title as main entry (include page spread for entire chapter)
[always put in chapter spreads; will always have a context for every entry later in the editing process]

- 3.1.2 Input subheadings as subentries (read paragraph to determine wording)
- 3.1.3 Input terms as subentries (read paragraph to determine wording)
- 3.1.4 Input concepts as subentries (read paragraph to determine wording)

- 3.1.5 Input proper names as main entry
- 3.1.6 Input titles of works as main entry

3.2 Double-post subentries as main entries

- 3.2.1 Input subheads as main entries [scan index for main entries with subentries]
- 3.2.2 Input terms as main entries [duplicate main entry; find duplicated records]
- 3.2.3 Input concepts as main entries [delete main level, subentries will move up a level]
[edit new main entries as required - prepositions]
[delete unwanted new main entries]
[edit/propagate command; copy entry with subentries; delete main entry; all subentries move up one level]

3.3 Input cross-references as you think of them

3.4 Input inverted terms as you think of them (copy, then edit)

3.5 Backup periodically

4.0 Edit Index

4.1 Review index for waffles (switching terms for same thing)

- 4.1.1 Identify waffles from knowledge of subject matter (edit main entry; putting waffle in parens)
[edit other main entry, putting waffle in parens]
[FIND, restricted to main entries, either waffle term; duplicate records, create index subset]
[double-posting waffles will duplicate and combine page references from both waffles]
[keep both words, because the reader may not find the term on that page but the waffle term will be there]
[last action - delete original record with undifferentiated page references]

4.2 Double-post acronyms/abbreviations

- 4.2.1 Scan index for main entry with acronym/abbreviation, a spell-out, and subentries (FIND using "(")
[type See reference: spell-out to acronym/abbreviation or vice versa]

- 4.2.2. Scan index for main entry with acronym/abbreviation, a spell-out, but no subentries
[input main entry with spell-out followed by acronym/abbreviation in parens or vice versa]

4.3 Review consistency/parallel construction of similar entries

- [probably only time you go back to page proofs]
- [double-post new subentries]

4.4 Review main entries for too many subentries

- [create main entries from subentries; edit/proogate - then remove subentries from original if overindexed]
- [- or - break main entry into new main entries - with See *a/so* from original entry]

4.5 Collect scattered information

- 4.5.1 Scan index for main entries that sort near each other and may be combined
[determine if main entries should be combined]
- 4.5.2 Scan index for main entries that have combined page numbers (from double-posting of subentries)
[scan index for every occurrence of term as a subentry]
[determine if combined page numbers should be used in each subentry]
[edit page numbers for subentries]
[use FIND command to define subset; think the info through and see if all occurrences fit all entries or only some]
- 4.5.3 Scan index for entries that should be combined under a new main entry
[scan on common phrases/words in scattered entries - use the FIND command]
[create a new main entry from common word/phrase with new subentries from previous scattered main entries]

4.6 Clarify undifferentiated main entries

- [to find cross-references - use FIND command restricted to page number]
- [don't modify original records; just scan screen for occurrences]
- [FIND command - restrict to main entries with pattern of four or five commas]
- [FIND command again - use term that might appear in entries]
- [create subset - flip subentry to main and main to subentry]
- [or add new subentry using the chapter spread for wording]

4.7 Review entries for clarity and conciseness

4.8 Review main entries for too few subentries

- [combine subentries into main entry as needed]

indexing_workflow.xls

4.0 Edit Index (continued)

4.9 Verify cross-references

- 4.9.1 Verify cross-references refer reader to an existing entry
[scan index for *See/See also* cross-references; locate target of cross-references; edit if necessary]
- 4.9.2 Verify cross-reference is not circular
[scan index for *See/See also* cross-references; locate target of cross-references; edit if necessary]
- 4.9.3 Verify *See* cross-references are from entries with NO page references (vocabulary control)
[determine if *See* entry has page reference; edit if necessary]
- 4.9.4 Verify *See also* references are from entries WITH page references (additional information)
[determine if *See also* entry has page references; edit if necessary]
- 4.9.5 Verify cross-references are to more than TWO/THREE references (otherwise just double-post)

4.10 Spell-check index

- 4.10.1 Look up unknown words in page proofs [spell-check in page sort order; reduces back-and-forth]
- 4.10.2 Add unknown words to dictionary OR edit spelling of unknown words OR ignore unknown words

4.11 Check accuracy of page references

- [check page numbers on screen while inputting]
- [put index in single records, in entry order, scan page field on screen for anomalies]

4.12 Check formatting

- 4.12.1 Print index in final form
- 4.12.2 Review each entry for 4.1 through 4.7
- 4.12.3 Check formatting specifics:
 - style of index
 - entries capitalization, style, indentation
 - turn-over lines
 - alpha heads
 - cross-references
 - pages references style and compression
 - page layout for printing
 - sorting specifics
- 4.12.4 Confirm conformance with special instructions
- 4.12.5 Edit as required
- 4.12.6 Spell-check to catch latest changes
- 4.12.7 Verify cross-references to catch latest changes
- 4.12.8 Backup index

5.0 Deliver/Package Index

- 5.1 Edit index in word processor if necessary
- 5.2 Add Introductory Note if necessary
- 5.3 Print index in final form
- 5.4 Create electronic file in final form
- 5.5 Print and mail delivery letter with list of typos found [postit note each page/circle typo - combine at end]
- 5.6 Print and mail invoice (include extra business cards)
- 5.7 FedEx/UPS package to client (call for FedEx number)

indexing_workflow.xls

6.0 File Project Material

- 6.1 Print index in final format (for my records)
- 6.2 Print delivery letter with list of typos found
- 6.3 Print invoice
- 6.4 Collect client correspondence
- 6.5 Create customer folder (keep style sheet on inside of customer folder along with contact info)
- 6.6 Record formatting specifics and exceptions in folder
- 6.7 Record delivery instructions in folder
- 6.8 Record hours spent on each indexing workflow step
- 6.9 Organize folder by how I keep track: Client, then project -- separate tracking for invoices due; when paid, go into client fldr
- 6.10 Build project folders as materials are completed - don't wait to end
- 6.11 File immediately - NO to-be-filed folders



ten Common Mistakes in Indexing

Are you making any of these common indexing mistakes?

1. Creating entries that begin with the same word

Combine entries that begin with the same word to make the index easy for users to scan. If several entries begin with the same word, users may only see the first entry. This is especially true when the first entry contains subentries.

When second-level entries begin with the same word, create one second-level entry for that repeated word and create a third-level entry for each unique word.

Incorrect: page elements footers headers margins numbers titles page layout, checking at production edit page sizes, international pages, creating pages, printing	Correct: pages creating elements footers headers margins numbers titles layout, checking at production edit printing sizes, international
Incorrect: topic keywords topic titles, changing topic titles, creating topics creating text, changing text, copying text, deleting	Correct: topics creating keywords text changing copying deleting titles changing creating

2. Not creating both general and specific entries

Create entries for both beginning and advanced users.

Beginning users know only the task they want to perform. Advanced users know the system's terminology for the task they want to perform.

Create both implicit and explicit entries. Sometimes when a page discusses a general concept but does not mention more detailed items, you can create specific entries. (See the first example in the next column.) Create general entries to summarize the concepts on pages that mention only specific terms. (See the second example in the next column.)

2. Not creating both general and specific entries (continued)

Incorrect: applications, testing <i>(An application contains algorithms, context matching rules, plans, scripts, and strategies.)</i>	Correct: algorithms, testing applications, testing context matching rules, testing plans, testing scripts, testing strategies, testing
Incorrect: em dashes en dashes	Correct: dashes em dashes en dashes

3. Not including synonyms

For each entry you add to the index, think of synonyms.

Users will find your index more usable if you anticipate any word or phrase they might type to find a topic.

One way to identify synonyms is to ask the marketing department, customers, technical support staff, and product developers for synonyms of words in your index. Another way to create synonyms is to rearrange the order of words in your index. (See the third example below.)

Incorrect: interfaces, designing	Correct: graphical user interfaces (GUIs), designing interfaces, designing screens, designing software screens, designing user interfaces, designing windows, designing
Incorrect: <i>(You may not need to create entries for the recipe titles below. Few people will look up recipes by title. Most people will look up "cakes" or the type of cake.)</i> Carrie's Favorite Carrot Cake Heavenly Chocolate Cake Ripe Apple Cake	Correct: apple cake cakes apple carrot chocolate carrot cake chocolate cake
Incorrect: context matching rules	Correct: context matching rules matching rules rules, context matching

4. Placing unimportant words first

Place concepts (often nouns) first in entries and subentries to stress their importance. This allows users to quickly scan entries and subentries for important concepts instead of first wading through a lot of verbs.

Incorrect: text applying styles changing colors formatting as expanding hotspots	Correct: text colors, changing expanding hotspots, formatting as styles, applying to
Incorrect: how to add folders	Correct: folders, creating

5. Using general verbs or gerunds as main entries

Limit the number of verbs and gerunds that you include as main entries. Users typically look up concepts instead of actions. In addition, when you use verbs as main entries, the list of subentries can become very long.

When you use mostly nouns in the index, users can see related information grouped. Also, this reduces the scrolling that users must do through long lists of subentries.

Incorrect: changing books text editing books text modifying books text	Correct: cutting books text deleting books text removing books text	Incorrect: creating aliases bookmarks books browse sequences build tags context-sensitive help folders forms framesets indents JavaHelp projects keywords map files marquees projects styles tables of contents topics windows	Correct: books changing deleting text changing deleting aliases, creating bookmarks, creating books, creating browse sequences, creating build tags, creating context-sensitive help, creating folders, creating forms, creating framesets, creating indents, creating JavaHelp projects, creating keywords, creating map files, creating marquees, creating projects, creating styles, creating tables of contents, creating topics, creating windows, creating
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(Notice how long an entry can get when you use a gerund as the main entry.)

6. Using adjectives as main entries

Do not use adjectives as main entries. They are too general. Users usually look up concepts (nouns) instead of adjectives. In addition, when you use adjectives as main entries, the list of subentries can become very long.

Incorrect: automatic browse sequence creation indexing numbering selection of HTML editors table of contents creation	Correct: browse sequences, creating automatically HTML editors, selecting automatically indexing, automatically pages, numbering automatically table of contents, creating automatically
Incorrect: blue boxes tape yellow boxes tape	Correct: boxes blue yellow tape blue yellow

7. Using variations of the same word

Be consistent in the way you use a word in the index. When several indexers work on an index, you sometimes find entries for the same word in both singular and plural forms, lowercased and capitalized, as both a single and two words, and hyphenated and not hyphenated. This is a problem because users will probably only look up one version of the word, which means they might miss any topics that you associate with another version of the word.

Incorrect: pattern High Cohesion Polymorphism Singleton State patterns Law of Demeter Low Coupling	Correct: patterns High Cohesion Law of Demeter Low Coupling Polymorphism Singleton State
Incorrect: subsystems Subsystems sub-systems	Correct: subsystems

8. Using only one subentry

When an entry contains only one subentry, place the subentry on the same line as the main entry. Using two lines for each entry that has only one subentry makes the index unnecessarily long.

Incorrect: glossaries creating	Correct: glossaries, creating
Incorrect: objects persistent	Correct: objects, persistent
Incorrect: locking definition	Correct: locking

9. Indexing passing references

Only index significant references to a word. Index a page only if users will find on that page information they need to understand a concept or perform a task. If you index every reference of a word, your index will resemble a full-text search.

Incorrect: <i>(Creating the following entry for a page that mentions Notepad as one example of a text editor that you can use to open a file:)</i> Notepad, opening files in
Incorrect: <i>(Creating the following entry for a page that says you can add background images to HTML pages but that does not state how to do that:)</i> background images, adding

10. Creating similar subentries

To make your index more concise, combine similar subentries. Indexers sometimes create separate subentries that vary slightly in wording. This makes the index long and may cause users to miss some information.

Incorrect: topics changing modifying previewing viewing	Correct: topics changing viewing
Incorrect: build tags builds, creating custom projects, customizing topics, removing from topics, unassigning from	Correct: build tags about topics, removing from
<i>(The “builds, creating custom” and “projects, customizing” subentries point to the “About build tags” page. The “topics, removing from” and “topics, unassigning from” subentries point to the “Unassigning build tags from topics” page.)</i>	

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