Order of pages in a non-fiction book

Contents

Parts of a book

There are three main sections in a book.

1. the preliminary matter (or front matter)
2. the main text (or body)
3. the end matter (or back matter).

Page numbers

All pages have a number, but not all numbers are printed on the page.

The recto (right-hand page) always has an odd page number.

The verso (left-hand page) always has an even page number.

The preliminary pages are numbered in lowercase Roman numerals (i, ii, iii, etc.), but these numbers are not shown on the half-title and its verso, the title page and its verso, the dedication and epigraph and any part-title page.

The main text and end matter are numbered in Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3, etc.). The main text always starts on the recto and is numbered page 1.

Page numbers are not shown on pages with illustrations or tables that take up more space than the text. Some publishers may vary on which page they start showing numbers.

Preliminary matter (front matter)

Half-title page

Traditionally, this page shows the title only. If space is limited on the cover, some publishers also include a blurb on the author. It is always on the recto. Not all books have a half-title page.

Series title page

This page is for listing all previous works by the same author or other books in the series. These are usually listed chronologically from first to most recent. This page is usually on the verso but can be on the recto following the half-title.

Frontispiece

This is an illustration page facing the title page. It is always on the verso.

Title page

The title page contains the title, subtitle, the author(s), and the publisher's name and logo. It is always on the recto.

Copyright page

This page contains the publisher information, the copyright notice, the year of publication and the ISBN (International Standard Book Number). There is usually a template for this page. It is usually found on the verso of the title page but can sometimes be found on the very last page, especially in e-books. If it is at the back, it is called an edition notice or colophon.

Dedication

A dedication is placed on a recto with a blank verso. For space reasons, it can be placed on a blank verso in a prominent position.

Foreword or preface

A foreword or preface are usually only included in non-fiction books. It is recto if possible.

A foreword is a statement about the book and is written by someone other than the author. The foreword writer's name should appear under the heading or at the end of the page. It starts on a recto.

A preface is a personal note written by the author. It might include the reason the author wrote the book, their research methods, the author's qualifications or expertise, and some acknowledgements if they haven't been included under the 'Acknowledgements' heading.

Acknowledgements

The acknowledgements include notes of thanks to people who have helped the author in the writing process. It can also include sources of copyright material if specified by the copyright owner. These can also be under a separate heading 'Copyright acknowledgements'. If the acknowledgements are overly long, they can be placed in the end matter.

Contents

The contents page lists the chapter titles and their page numbers. It is more common in non-fiction books than fiction, unless the chapters are named. It always starts on a recto. Chapters in the Contents list must have the exact wording of the chapter heading in the main text. It should be headed 'Contents' not 'Table of Contents'. The Contents should include all pages following the Contents page.

List of illustrations, figures and maps

If your illustrations or figures contain key information, then you should include a list of Illustrations, titled simply 'Illustrations'. If your illustrations are just for humour or aesthetic purposes, you won't need to list them.

List of Tables

As with illustrations, only include a list if the tables are likely to be looked up independently of the text.

List of abbreviations

If there are many abbreviations used, list these on a verso. List items alphabetically by the abbreviation, not the spelled-out form.

Epigraph

This is a quote from another source and usually relates to the entire book. The source is ranged right under the quotation and should only include the author's name and the title and date of the work.

Other items

These may include a conversion table, a chronology, a genealogy, or any other useful information.

Main text (body)

Introduction

The introduction is the start of the main text. It introduces the book's content and outlines things the reader should know before starting to read the main text. The introduction does not introduce the author (which should be done in the preface).

Chapters

Fiction book chapters usually have a number only and are not listed in a table of contents. In non-fiction books, chapters may have a title and number.

End matter (back matter)

The end matter consists of all the sections after the main text.

Appendix

This includes any additional information that may clarify the text but would have disrupted the main text. These can include tables, reports, and references. The main heading is 'Appendices', with each appendix under its own numbered heading.

Notes (or endnotes)

These are used in place of footnotes for extra information which would enhance the text but is not essential.

Glossary

An alphabetical list of unusual or foreign words and their definitions.

Bibliography or references

A reference list lists all the books referred to in the text. A bibliography lists all the references as well as other books that are relevant to the content. There are different styles for how to format the references.

Index

The index is always last and typically only in non-fiction books. It lists all topics and terms used in the text in alphabetical order. This is usually prepared by a professional indexer.

About the author

Some fiction books have a short author bio. It can also include a link to the author's website or social media platforms. In non-fiction books, this can come before the index.

What next?

If you have written a book and don't know what the next step is or this all sounds too overwhelming, I can help.

I am a copy-editor and proofreader based in New Zealand. My business, Clearlingo Editing and Proofreading, caters to all writers of non-fiction books. I can discuss with you where your book is at and what you need to do next.

For more information on how I can help you make your book shine, please contact me on: www.clearlingo.co.nz/contact.

I would love to hear from you.

Sources:

Butcher, J., Drake, C., & Leach, M. (2006). *Butcher's Copy-editing: The Cambridge Handbook for Editors, Copy-editors and Proofreaders* (4th ed.)*.* Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.

Oxford University Press (2016). *New Oxford Style Manual*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press.