

Below is a list of the most common marks, based on BS 5261 Part 2, used in proofreading to indicate problems in a text and to suggest solutions. Marks come in two varieties, abbreviations and abstract symbols. These are usually handwritten on the paper containing the text. Symbols are interleaved in the text, while abbreviations may be placed in a margin with an arrow pointing to the problematic text.

Proof Correction Marks

Instruction	Textual mark	Margin mark	Comment
No corrections on this page	[None]		Mark indicates that the page has been looked at.
Leave unchanged ('stet')	InterColor consortium		Often added to cancel an instruction wrongly requested.
Remove unwanted marks	under no circumstances		May be applied to blemishes in reprographics
Refer to appropriate authority	InterColor consortium		For use when the proofreader is unsure, or where a style guide can be referred to
Insert new matter	The red hen	little	
Insert additional matter	required. However, as		Additional matter is supplied on a separate sheet marked with reference letter.
Delete	See the table on page 5.		(In practice, these are usually the same in modern type-setting: 'close up' can be inferred from context.)
Delete & close up	See the table on page 5.		
Substitute character	The little red hy	e	
Substitute string of characters e.g. word	The little red hen	black	Vertical marks at end of line help to indicate boundaries.
Wrong type font used; replace with correct font	Too many cooks		(May also need to refer to style guide or give type specifications.)
Insert a full point	This sentence must end		(The encircling ring helps to identify the character, which might otherwise be mistaken for a spot on the proof.)
Insert a colon	This clause has a point		
Insert a semi-colon	This is wrong. I should	;	(In this example, a semi-colon is being substituted rather than inserted.)
Insert a comma	Fish chips and peas	, or	(As a comma is so small, to circle it might be wise.)
Insert single quotes	The liberated territory	' '	
Insert double quotes	The liberated territory	' '	The additional mark under the punctuation helps to indicate the superscript positioning
Insert apostrophe	The child's pajamas	'	
Substitute character in superscript or subscript position	23,500 m ³ of lumber		
	An escape of CO ₂ gas		

Instruction	Textual mark	Margin mark	Comment
Set in or change to italics	An incredible fortune		
Set in or change to bold	An incredible fortune		
Set in or change to bold italics	An incredible fortune		
Set in or change to capitals	When in Rome, do as		
Set in or change to small capitals	When in Rome, do as		(Some typefaces have a complementary 'expert set' containing small capitals.)
Capitals for initials; rest in small capitals	When in Rome, do as		
Change capitals to lower case	FAILURE is seen		
Change small capitals to lower case	FAILURE is seen		
Change italic to roman	An incredible fortune		
Start new paragraph	are confirmed. The new name for the company is		
No new paragraph; run on	are confirmed. The new name for the		
Insert space between characters/words	This typeface is called	Y or #	# is typographer's shorthand for 'space'.
Close space between characters/words	This typeface is called		
Indent text by amount indicated	are confirmed. The new name for the company	1 em	(An em is a space equal to the body size of the type; other units of measure could also be used e.g. millimetres.)
Cancel indent	are confirmed. The new name for the company		
Transpose characters	Accidents happen		
Transpose words	This fat full cheese		
Take over to new line	Cider apples have been a major source of income		
Take back to preceding line	Cider apples have been a major source of income		