

Indexing

Before setting out to create your index, take time to look at indexes in books on topics similar to yours to get a feel for the conventions of the discipline. Because the index is a tool for the reader and not a summary of a book's content, put yourself in the reader's shoes and consider what is likely to be looked up.

Your Press editor will be able to assist with regard to the desired breadth and depth of your index and further, practical indexing resources can be found in *The Chicago Manual of Style*, Pat Booth's *Indexing: A Manual of Good Practice*, Nancy Mulvany's *Indexing Books*, and Beth Luey's *Handbook for Academic Authors*.

Before you submit the index, check that it is the length agreed between you and your editor. If the style and form of the index do not reach the standard required by the Press, we may have to return it to you for amendment.

In the mathematical sciences, a good rule of thumb is that the length of the index should be about 2% of the length of the book.

What to include in an index

A typical index entry is composed of the main heading (and page numbers), subheadings (and page numbers), as well as any cross-references.

Main headings (N.B. use nouns or noun phrases, not adjectives); for example:

1. Terms or concepts used throughout the book.
2. Names of authors whose work is quoted or discussed **at length**.
3. Important theorems, lemmas, etc.
4. Important examples or case studies.

Subheadings (N.B. consider creating a subentry when a main entry would contain more than six page numbers); for example:

1. Aspects or explanations of terms, concepts, and actions.
2. Subdivisions logically related to the main heading.

Cross-references

- “See” references are used to assist the reader in finding a subject or name that may appear in the text in more than one form – e.g. CTMC *see* Markov chains; DFR *see* decreasing failure rate; Cox model *see* proportional hazards model.
- “See also” references are used to direct the reader to topics linked to the topic entry – e.g. power series *see also* Taylor’s theorem.

What not to include in an index

Typically, an index should not contain references to the following sections of a book’s text:

1. Preface/Foreword
2. Table of Contents
3. Acknowledgments
4. Bibliography
5. Chapter titles

You should also avoid indexing the following:

6. Verbs or adjectives standing alone – e.g. peripheral; circular; global
7. Passing mentions (that do not give substantive, pertinent information about the topic or person)
8. Tables and illustrations should be indexed separately only if they provide information in addition to what is contained in the text.

Content

Keep the index simple. It is useful to put yourself in the position of your potential readers. A book on economics, for instance, might quote Mr Micawber’s well-known dictum on the importance of balancing annual expenditure with annual income, but readers would be unlikely to look for Micawber in the index.

However, it is better to start by over-indexing than by under-indexing: Superfluous entries can (and indeed must) be discarded later on, but it may be difficult to recover some name or topic passed over many pages earlier.

Similarly, footnotes and endnotes should be indexed only if they give additional information about a topic or person not mentioned elsewhere on that page. A reference to a note requires the note number as well as the assigned page number – e.g. Tukey, John 23 n.5

Illustrations should usually be indexed, with their page numbers printed in *italic*.

Choice of heading

Main headings should typically be nouns (qualified or unqualified) rather than adjectives or verbs on their own:

Markov chains, convergence of
not convergence of Markov chains

However, this practice should not be taken to extremes. ‘Brownian motion’ is clearly better than ‘motion, Brownian’! Be guided by what the reader is likely to look for.

How specific an entry should be depends very much on the subject of the book. In a book on semiparametric regression it would be unhelpful to have an entry under ‘regression’ because the entry would have to be so long and complicated that it would become unwieldy. It would be more practical to have entries on the topics about regression that are discussed in the book:

‘goodness of fit’, ‘standard error’, ‘degrees of freedom’, etc.

No entry should begin with ‘a’ or ‘the’ except in an index of first lines of poems.

Synonyms

Where there are two or more possible synonyms, use the one the reader is most likely to look up, and put all the relevant items in that entry. Under the synonym put a cross-reference ‘see [main heading]’.

Be careful not to have too many cross-references – your reader will be able to work out where most things are likely to be indexed.

Treat similar items in a similar fashion. In a book that discusses stochastic processes, for example, be

consistent:

Dirichlet process (main heading)
 generalized (subheading)

Poisson process (main heading)
 generalized (subheading)

not generalized Poisson process (main heading)

When to combine entries

If a word is used in both singular and plural forms in the text, only one form should be used in the index. This rule does not apply, of course, if the two forms have different meanings, e.g. damage, damages.

When a word has more than one meaning, there should be a separate entry for each meaning, with an explanatory phrase to show which meaning is intended.

Entries that merely share the same proper noun as first word should each have their own entry:

Brownian bridge

Brownian motion

not Brownian

 bridge (subheading)

 motion (subheading)

Page numbers

Avoid *passim* unless there are a large number of general references to a person or topic in one section of a book. Distinguish between a span (a continuous discussion of the topic) and two points (two separate mentions). Try to avoid indexing a whole chapter under a single entry, but if it is unavoidable, use a span.

Indexing in LaTeX

We recommend using *MakeIndex* to produce your LaTeX index. A guide to using *MakeIndex* is available here: <https://www.ctan.org/pkg/makeindex>.