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# Editors: Friend or Foe?

**'No author dislikes to be edited as much as he dislikes not to be published.'**

J Russell Lynes

*There is a lot of discussion in Facebook groups and the like about whether writers really need editors. Sentiments like 'Editors are expensive and they're just waiting to rip your carefully crafted words to shreds' are not uncommon. However, in an environment where more and more writers are choosing to self-publish - whether online, in print or both - it's becoming increasingly vital to produce a professional product to have any chance of attracting readers. If you're a writer wondering whether working with an editor is worth the time, effort and money, here are 10 reasons you should consider making the investment.*

## **We're more than just a spell check**

Some writers think editors are just an expensive spell check or are paid to move the commas around. But we are keenly focused on your story arc, character development, voice, flow, sense, cultural appropriateness and structure. We stop your character from having blue eyes in Chapter 1 and hazel eyes in Chapter 8. Think of us as your safety net.

## **We're on your side**

A lot of writers are a bit nervous about working with an editor. They worry that an editor is going to destroy the work they've poured their heart and soul into. But we want your work to be the best it can be. We want you to be wildly famous and published everywhere – we need the employment.

## **Editing is a team sport**

An editor will work with you to achieve the best possible outcome. There is no 'us' and 'them'. You're also in control. You can choose what your editor focusses on (structure, copyediting, proofreading), what sort of changes they make (don't be afraid of using a good old 'stet') and how you want to work with them. We love a good brief.

## **You don't know what you don't know**

Everyone has their blind spots and this is equally true for writers. Whether it's occasionally misusing your/you're, being caught by dangling modifiers ('Walking down the hall, the painting's eyes seemed to follow him.') or over-reliance on certain phrases, we see the things you don't.

## **You're too close to your work**

An editor views your work from a professional point of view, not an emotional one. You may be horrified at the thought of cutting an entire section you've slaved over, but we're not. We can see how it's cluttering up the narrative and distracting readers from the core of what you want to say. We will hold your hand while you take a deep breath and hit delete.

## **Editors know their market**

If you're working with an editor who's experienced in the genre you're writing in (and if you're not, you should be), they will have a keen sense of the market and of the audience who is likely to read your work. They'll know if your content is hitting the mark, and can gently steer you in another direction if it isn't.

## **An editor can help you grow as a writer**

An editor will offer suggestions that you may never have thought of before. Working with an editor is a great opportunity to not only strengthen your work, but improve your writing skills. Think of it as bonus professional development.

## **We'll save you from embarrassment**

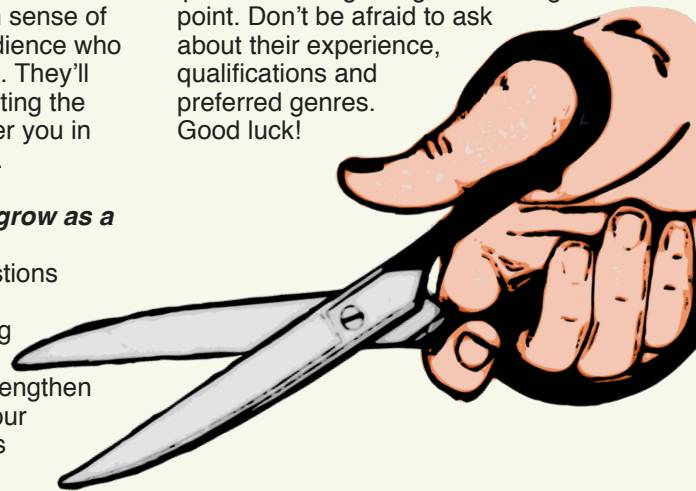
Any writer who has worked with an editor will remember that one time they referenced something only to be gently prompted by their editor because that place/reference/amazing fact doesn't actually exist. We check these things.

## **We make you sound good**

Editing is a silent profession. When a book gets a bad review, it's often cited as being poorly edited. I've never read a review that praised the editing. Our best work is done when no one knows we were there and your writing shines. We really should be called editing ninjas.

## **It's important to find a good fit**

You'll get the most out of your editor if you shop around and find someone who suits your writing and working style. The freelance editor register at [iped-editors.org](http://iped-editors.org) is a good starting point. Don't be afraid to ask about their experience, qualifications and preferred genres. Good luck!



*Melanie Dankel is an ambassador for the SA branch of the Institute of Professional Editors (IPEd). IPEd is the national professional association for Australian and New Zealand editors. It exists to advance the profession of editing and to support and promote Australian and New Zealand editors. More information about Iped (including a database of editors) is available on their website [iped-editors.org](http://iped-editors.org)*