

Editing FAQs

What do editors do?

Professional editors help you say what you really mean to say; they structure (or restructure) your manuscript so that it flows. They polish your language and check your work carefully for consistency of style, format and layout, and references. Editors perfect grammar and syntax.

They may also manage your project, including coordination of the work of author, designer, electronic publishing specialist or printer, and advise you on the best format and design for your work.

What is the difference between structural editing and copyediting?

Editors carry out two types of editing: structural editing and copyediting.

Structural editing involves a review of content, language, structure and style. This is not allowable for thesis editing. At this stage editors may suggest rearranging paragraphs or sentences to make your work more accessible to readers, clearer and more cohesive, and suggest some rewording. They may also assess or suggest concepts for design, illustration and format.

Copyeditors check your manuscript carefully, line by line, to ensure clarity of meaning, consistency of style, layout and the kind of details noted under structural editing. They correct spelling, grammar and punctuation; they also check illustrations, tables, links and sequences in your work. Their focus is the removal of mistakes or inconsistencies that could confuse or turn off your intended audience.

Your editor is likely to be able to do both structural editing and copyediting, and it is important to be clear about which level of service is needed and allowed.

What is the difference between copyediting and proofreading?

Editors also carry out proofreading, usually after your manuscript has been edited and placed into a design template. The main difference between copyediting and proofreading is the extent of changes – copyediting may involve many changes on each page, whereas proofreading should require only a few changes per page.

Proofreaders look for some of the issues that copyeditors work on (e.g., grammar, spelling) but provide a final check that all typographical errors and inconsistencies have been attended to. They also look at problems with format, consistency and layout of your document.

Your editor is likely to be able to do both copyediting and proofreading, and again it is important to be clear about which level of service is needed. If your document has been copyedited, it is worth considering bringing in a new editor ('a fresh set of eyes') to pick up any remaining errors or inconsistencies introduced by your revisions after the copyedit. However, for a manuscript involving specific knowledge or terminology, it can be beneficial to employ the same person who performed the copyedit.

How much will I have to pay?

You should expect to pay a minimum of \$60–\$80 per hour, up to \$160 per hour or more, depending on what that particular editor charges (IPEd has published a guide to editing rates at <https://www.iped-editors.org/about-editing/editors-pay-rates/>). Editors' rates usually depend on their training, skill and experience, and sometimes what the editor contracts to do. For example, you may pay at the higher end of the scale for a combination of structural editing, copyediting and project management.

Some manuscripts will need more work than others, often depending on how much work the writer has already invested in their manuscript through multiple drafts and self-editing.

Regardless of the rate an editor may charge, the total cost will depend on your own budget, the services you want and the level of work required.

How will I pay – by the hour or the page?

That depends on the editor/s you contact; editors use both methods to calculate their fees. In any case, your editor will want to read at least a sample of your manuscript before giving you an estimate or quote. The editor may give you an estimate based on hours or an overall quote, based on consideration of your manuscript and the exact work they would be undertaking.

How should I choose an editor?

IPEd has an Editors Directory where Professional members can list their services on its website at <https://www.iped-editors.org/find-an-editor/>; you can search the directory for editors with expertise in particular genres and specialist skills. Then you need to contact the editor you are interested in and decide for yourself after discussion of your manuscript whether you would be comfortable working with that person.