

## Editing FAQs

### What do editors do?

Professional editors help you say what you really mean to say; they structure (or restructure) your writing so that it flows. They polish your language and check your work carefully for consistency of style, tense, format and layout, references, character and physical appearances. Editors also perfect grammar, punctuation 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 main types of editing: structural editing and copyediting.

Structural editing involves a review of content, language, structure and style. 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 and layout. 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, not to mention a reader in a publishing house.

Your editor may do both structural editing and copyediting.

### What is the difference between copyediting and proofreading?

After your writing has been edited and the document placed into a design template, a final round of editing, known as proofreading, takes place. This may be done by your editor or by a proofreader.

Proofreaders look for the same issues that copyeditors work on, but they provide a final check that all typographical errors and inconsistencies have been attended to. They also look for awkward line breaks, widows and orphans (a single line left either at the bottom of a page or the top of a new page). Sometimes these issues will require the proofreader to apply copyfitting – suggesting changes to words or phrases to make the text fit more comfortably on the page (with your approval).

Your editor may also provide proofreading, but it is worth considering bringing in a new editor (a fresh set of eyes) to pick up errors or inconsistencies that the copyeditor might not – they also can become too close to the work. However, if a manuscript relies on specific knowledge or terminology that another editor might not be familiar with, it can be beneficial to employ the same editor.

The copyeditor may also be better able to conduct copyfitting.

## **When should I bring in an editor?**

If you have completed your manuscript, consider seeking comments from family and friends, and obtain feedback from beta readers, a supportive writers group or another critique circle. You might decide to seek a manuscript appraisal before conducting a further redraft (or self-edit) or contracting the appraiser or another editor to conduct a structural edit. Whether you do this or not, you have now reached the stage where you should bring in an editor.

You are too close to your creation to read it with the kind of detachment a literary agent or a reader in a publishing house will apply. An editor will check your work with the eyes of a detached reader, and they will work with you to help you write the book you meant to write in the first place and reach your intended audience.

## **What questions will the editor ask?**

A professional editor may ask you what the stimulus was for writing your manuscript. Where do you see it fitting into the market? What age group have you written for (for children's books and books for young adults)? Does your work fit into a particular genre? What method have you used to tell your story as a narrative – chronological or something else? Why did you decide on that method? Have you worked with an editor before? Exactly what services do you wish the editor to provide? How will you communicate? What form would you like the editor's feedback to take?

During your negotiations with the editor, they will explain the different types of services they offer. The editor would need to know your budget and your timeframe, and whether you plan to approach commercial publishers or self-publish.

## **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 [www.iped-editors.org/about-editing/editors-pay-rates](http://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.

And not all writing is created equal. 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's website has an Editors Directory ([www.iped-editors.org/find-an-editor](http://www.iped-editors.org/find-an-editor)) where Professional members can list their services; you can search the Directory for editors with expertise in particular genres and specialist skills. Then you need to contact the editor(s) you are interested in and decide for yourself after discussion of your manuscript whether you would be comfortable working with that person.