

# TIME FOR AN EDITOR

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## 3. Specialized Help Some Editors May Offer

### **Personalized tutoring and coaching:**

If you need personalized tutoring and coaching to improve your writing and/or self-editing, look for editors who are recognized for their excellent workshops, one-on-one tutoring related to writing and publishing, or for writing books, blogs and other helpful material for writers. An editor with these kinds of skills might be an ideal helper to provide personalized coaching to improve your writing and self-editing skills as well as provide quality editing.

### **When you want traditional publishing:**

When you're sending out queries to have your book traditionally published, you may need some extra help to make a critically good impression, especially when querying publishers or agents who are highly regarded. Look for an editor who has had experience in the publishing industry, has good connections, and can provide excellent advice.

### **Help with query letters, synopses, proposals, and other publishing-related documents:**

If you need professional help to create publishing-related documents, look for an editor who can help you create and/or improve a query letter, synopsis, proposal, cover letter, blurb, elevator speech, or other important document, besides providing editing. An editor who has worked in the publishing industry might be especially knowledgeable about these documents, though other editors may also have these skills.

### **Making your manuscript great instead of just good:**

When you've done the best writing and self-editing you can, with the help of your writing and self-editing team, and you truly feel that your manuscript is "good enough," an editor can pick up on nuanced things you've missed. By paying attention to your editor's advice, and using it to do more self-editing, you'll improve your writing and self-editing skills—and of course, improve your manuscript so it's "great" instead of just good enough.

**When you sense something is wrong but can't figure out what it is:**

When your story just doesn't seem to work, but you can't put your finger on why, a manuscript critique (aka a manuscript evaluation or a mini-edit) from a developmental editor can help you figure out where the problem is, and can tell you if your concept is strong enough to support a full-length book. Then, before a formal edit, you can make adjustments through self-editing, take writing courses that focus on your issues, and/or get help from your critique team or writers' group.

**Trying out a new genre or writing format:**

If this is the first time you've written in a particular format (fiction, nonfiction, academic, etc.) or genre (such as romance, mystery, or historical fiction), a short/mini substantive edit can help you with things like learning the ropes of fiction narrative technique and/or the expectations for your genre. Find an editor who specializes in your format and/or genre.

**Help with story-telling techniques:**

If you're not so sure about your story-telling abilities, though you know you have good technical writing ability (grammar, etc.), a developmental or substantive editor can do a read-through of your manuscript (rather than a line-by-line edit) and point out narrative elements you need to work on. Think of this editor as a story-telling coach.

**When you're in doubt about advice you've received from your team:**

If you're not sure about the advice from your volunteer self-editing critique team, who usually are non-professionals, a good editor can check over your work and your team's advice, and can recommend what advice to follow and what to set aside. Sometimes volunteers might give advice that really just introduces new issues into your writing. Pay attention to your gut feelings about advice you receive, but if in doubt, check with an editor.

**Plagiarism:**

Some editors specialize in detecting plagiarism that a writer may not even realize is there; these editors can spot changes in voice or style. They (and/or you, the writer) can also use editing software tools that have plagiarism detection as one of their services.

**Academic assignments:**

Academic assignment editors can analyze if you, as a student, have understood and met the requirements of an assignment, if you have used the correct style guide format accurately, and if the essay or other document has a strong thesis and compelling points supported by evidence. These editors can also provide guidance and tutoring to students who need help with academic writing problems.

**Sensitivity editors**

If you are tackling a story or topic that you haven't personally experienced, especially related to a particular age group, gender, race, culture, sexual orientation, religion, political position, cultural appropriation, and other potentially controversial topics, consider hiring a "sensitivity editor" who, ideally, has personally experienced the issue and is a good editor as well.

If you can't find an editor who fits both qualifications, then be sure to interview several people involved with the issue so you really understand it; then have a good editor help you work on the manuscript. Finally, have the people you interviewed read your manuscript to ensure you have dealt with the issue sensitively. Another alternative in this situation is to find a co-writer who knows the issues and has experienced them.

**Don't forget** to place this exercise in your binder or Duotang.

And now go on to part 4 in this series: What Does Professional Editing Cost?