

TIME FOR AN EDITOR

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8. Specialty Editors and Other Publishing Professionals

Some editors work on very specific aspects of the editing and publishing process.

Magazine, newspaper, website and similar editors: These editors help you, the writer, edit your submitted piece to match the standards of the company or organization. If you submit a piece, either as a query or completed and on-speculation (make sure you know what the publication requires), you will want to self-edit it carefully. If it is a complex piece or you are not sure of your self-editing skills, you may want a freelance editor to help you with it first.

Magazine or journal editors will make sure your piece lines up with the content, vision, grammatical, and design requirements of their publication, but they expect it to be already in good shape when it arrives. Before you write for a magazine, read multiple issues and study the website to understand their requirements. As magazines often start preparing an issue months ahead of time, it is important you submit well ahead, especially for seasonal items or for a subject for which they have indicated a deadline for submissions. If your submission needs a lot of work, the publication may return it to you for more self-editing if there is time, or they may simply decide not to use it after all.

Newspaper editors operate on a tight timeline (especially for daily papers), so they will expect you to have done most of the editing yourself, and they'll likely just give it a quick glance over. Thus, it may end up being published with spelling and grammatical errors that you could have easily prevented with a bit more self-editing. If your piece has your by-line with it (your name), poorly edited work will reflect negatively on you as a writer. With newspaper costs rising and income declining because of more and more readers going to on-line sources, the newspaper may not edit your piece at all except for a quick check to ensure you haven't written something offensive or totally unsuitable.

Nonfiction specialist editors help you, the writer, organize the manuscript for impact, clarity, and readability, as well as flow and rhythm. They ensure you have supported your conclusions well with details and examples. These editors know the topic and can suggest anecdotes and other methods to make the writing more interesting. Nonfiction editors understand layouts

used in nonfiction writing and will watch for the use of technical elements, such as data and fact verification, correct citations, and index accuracy. They will ensure the style of presentation suits the subject and that language and sentence construction are suited to the age and other characteristics of your target audience.

Fiction specialist editors look especially at story/narrative issues such as plot holes or inconsistencies and dangling plot threads; development, variety, voices, and motivation of characters; the narrator's voice; pace and logic; entertainment value; genre expectations; setting; dialogue issues such as overuse or incorrect use of tags; balance between action and exposition (showing and telling); scene transitions; hooks at the beginning of chapters; transitions to the next chapter or scene; point of view; clarity of writing; and use of senses and imagery; and they will ensure the resolution solves the story's problem/conflict and is satisfying and suitable.

Genre or subject-area specialists may specialize in particular fiction genres such as science fiction or romance. Some nonfiction editors specialize in a particular subject area, such as history or technology.

Poetry editors: Poetry has its own highly specialized writing requirements, and poets will want to hire editors who are trained and experienced in poetry editing, and who, ideally, are poets themselves.

Ghostwriters do the writing of a manuscript, based on the author's notes and guidance related to the story or nonfiction information and research. Unlike a co-author, a ghostwriter's name is usually not included in the author information.

Business document editors can check to see if your message is clear and if will appeal to the target audience, if your language is at a suitable reading level, and if the document accurately represents the product or service.

Rewriting editors create a new manuscript, or additional parts of a manuscript, based on content and research supplied by the author. Rewriting, unlike ghostwriting, may include some research and writing of original material not supplied by the author.

Co-authors are not strictly editors. Instead, they write a book (or other format) together with an author, and they are both listed as authors. Though they generally work through the manuscript together, it is possible that one author has stronger self-editing skills than the partner and may take on more of an editing role while the other does more of the original writing.

Academic assignment editors will know the requirements of an assignment, be familiar with the correct style guide, and will help the writer produce a strong thesis with important points supported by evidence. These editors may also be willing to provide tutoring to students on how to write academic papers.

Designers differ from editors as they have a specialized function: to format the piece properly and make it attractive to readers, as well as to make it fit the expectations of the particular genre or subject area. Some designers specialize in design elements of the book's interior (page size, margin widths, fonts for titles and headings, Table of Contents layout, etc.), while others focus on front and back cover design (illustrations, title font and size, spine design, and more). Some do both—and there are a few editors who also have design training and experience. Design is very important, as it is the first thing readers usually notice when they glance at a book. So, it is important for self-published authors to hire someone who has strong design skills directly related to book design. Just because someone is a painter, photographer, or graphic designer doesn't necessarily mean they are good at book design, which involves very particular skills. Ask for references and to see examples of their previous work.

Marketability evaluation editors claim they can tell you how successful you will be in marketing (publishing and selling) your book. These people are often of limited value because there are so many variables involved, such as the personal tastes of agents and/or publishers; the needs of publishers and readers at any point in time; what kinds of books are popular (which changes frequently); how much marketing effort you are willing or able to put into the process; and whether you'll be self- or traditionally publishing.

In-house editors have specific jobs at a publishing company. These tasks may be related to editing the writing, or to the final publishing and touch-up. An *acquisitions editor* decides what manuscripts the publishing company will consider publishing. This editor, or possibly another one, will note aspects of the manuscript which need to be improved or which the publishing company wants changed (especially with non-fiction works) to suit the company's vision for the book. In-house editors may work with you, the writer (either directly, or via your agent), to have you do more self-editing to reach the company's requirements.

If you are planning to use the help of a self-publishing company, you may want to focus on self-editing with the help of your team, and bypass the freelance editor stage, as many self-publishing companies include full editing in their quoted package price. If you decide to do this, research objective reviews carefully and, if possible, check books that company has published to be sure their editors do a quality job. Remember that they, too, will usually expect you to do further self-editing as part of the process with the editor.

Specialist editors at large traditional publishing companies:

The following editors are specialists who may be employed by large traditional publishing companies, especially those which focus on non-fiction works. Some freelance specialists may also be qualified to do these tasks. For self-published authors, a good designer and/or a typesetter/printer may do some of these jobs:

Fact and reference checking editor: checks accuracy of facts and quotations, by referring to the original sources used by the author and possibly also checking other sources to make sure the author's original source was accurate.

Indexing editor: creates an index, an alphabetical list of names, places, subjects, and concepts in the book, to assist readers in locating particular information.

Mark-up or Coding editor: aids the designer in writing specifications for the typesetter.

Mock-up or Rough Paste-up Editor: produces a mock-up of the book from proofs. This editor's work may include copyfitting and/or marking colour breaks.

Production editor: coordinates typesetting and design in the mock-up and assembly stages, including integrating design and content. The work may include proofing, mock-up, mark-up, indexing, and checking colour mats.

Picture research editor: locates suitable photos and/or artwork. This editor may prepare descriptions or working sketches; provide artist references for illustrations, maps, and diagrams; supervise production of final artwork; obtain permissions for illustrations or quotations; and prepare labels and captions.

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

And now go on to part 9 in this series: Writing Coaches, Ghost Writers, and Co-Authors