

A person with long dark hair is sitting at a wooden desk, working on a laptop. Their hands are on the keyboard. In the foreground, there is a white notebook with handwritten notes and a black Pilot G-2 05 pen. A yellow sticky note is attached to the left side of the notebook. The background is slightly blurred, showing a desk lamp and other office items.

WHAT LEVEL OF EDITING DO I NEED?

BY

DENISE COWLE

www.denisecowleeditorial.com



ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Have you ever opened a book, looking forward to diving in and learning something new, but then been confused by a disorganised structure, stopped in your tracks by a stilted narrative or distracted by poor grammar and typos?

It's disappointing, isn't it? The book that you were so looking forward to reading has failed to live up to its promise.

Now that you're on the other side of the page as an author, you want to do everything you can to make sure you live up to your readers' hopes for your book.

These structural and textual problems can be resolved by editing. But what sort of editing do you need?

Knowing what the different levels of editing involve, and where your strengths and weaknesses as a writer (and self-editor) lie, you can decide what you're happy to manage yourself and when you'd benefit from handing over to a professional editor.

Denise

THE TRADITIONAL PUBLISHING PROCESS

FROM THE AUTHOR TO THE READER

Even when self-publishing, it's helpful to understand the traditional publishing process.

Knowing the best order to do things will help you to navigate the route to successful publication efficiently, without wasting time and money.

Just as a publishing house wouldn't typeset a book before it had been copy-edited, neither should you, regardless of whether you're going it alone or getting professional help.

Mimicking this process will ensure you get your book into the best shape it can be, before you share it with the world.





DEVELOPMENTAL EDITING

THE BIG PICTURE: SHAPING YOUR WRITING

This level of editing is also known as structural editing.

Your editor will help you with the overall structure and content of your writing, making sure that the focus is right and there are no gaps in the development of the theme or narrative.

Major changes can happen at this stage, so be prepared!

This is detailed, intensive work that takes time, so expect to pay in the order of several thousand pounds for a full-length book.

You can expect

An editorial report: a summary of the editor's assessment with suggestions for how to improve

Manuscript notes: highlighting examples of the issues raised in the report and showing how you can address them.

A person's hand holding a pen over a document with diagrams.

MANUSCRIPT CRITIQUE

BUDGET-FRIENDLY EVALUATION

This is also known as a manuscript evaluation, assessment or appraisal, and it can be an effective option when your budget doesn't stretch to a full developmental edit.

It addresses the same issues as a developmental edit, but without the developmental work on the manuscript, so you'll only get the editor's report.

The report can be anything from five to twenty-five pages long, and so the level of analysis and detail of suggestions will vary.

You can expect

An editorial report:

A summary of the editor's assessment with suggestions for how to improve.

Be sure you are clear on what you will get for your money before you engage your editor.



LINE EDITING

SMOOTHING OUT YOUR WRITING

This is the edit for you if your writing is in good shape overall but still rough around the edges.

Here your editor will be focusing on the sense and flow of your words.

Wordiness, repetition and stilted sentence structure make for a frustrating reading experience, so line editing will smooth out your writing and make sure the language style and tone are appropriate for your audience.

You can expect

Improvements to:

- sentence structure
- word choice
- style
- tone.

Correction of:

- spelling
- punctuation
- grammar.



COPY-EDITING

CORRECTION AND CONSISTENCY

The copy-editor removes any distractions caused by errors or inconsistencies.

They correct spelling, punctuation and grammar and impose consistency.

They also prepare your manuscript for typesetting by applying styles or coding and removing anything that would disrupt the flow of your document into the design software.

Some editors combine line-editing and copy-editing, so it's essential you discuss your requirements with your editor.

You can expect

Correction of:

- spelling
- punctuation
- grammar.

Consistency applied to:

- spelling
- capitalisation
- hyphenation
- use of numbers

To be provided with:

- edited copy with corrections
- clean edited copy
- a style sheet



PROOFREADING

THE FINAL POLISH

Proofreading is the last line of defence before publication.

It's the final quality control check to catch any remaining errors – either missed by previous rounds of editing or introduced during the typesetting and layout process.

The proofreader also checks the layout, headers, page numbers and cross references, and makes sure any illustrations, figures and tables are where they should be and correctly captioned and referenced.

A professional proofreader will guarantee excellence, but not perfection; a few errors will always slip through.

You can expect

Textual check for

- typos
- residual errors and omissions
- errors introduced in design process.

Structural check of

- layout
- running headers & footers

Cross checking of

- contents page
- chapter titles
- page numbers
- internal cross-references



ADDITIONAL OPTIONS

SPECIFIC HELP

In addition to the levels of editing outlined here, there are other options for getting feedback on your writing.

Some are free, others are specialised professional services.

You may opt for all or none of them, depending on your own experiences and the subject of your writing.

Every time you get feedback, no matter how hard it is to hear, you're a step closer to a well-produced book you can be proud of.

Other sources of feedback

- Writers' groups
- Beta readers
- Sensitivity readers
- Fact checking
- Legal review



GET IN TOUCH

READY FOR EDITING?

If you'd like to discuss having your book edited, please drop me a line.

Tell me:

- the subject of your book
- approximate word count
- how you're publishing
- approximate publication date



We can arrange a free discovery call to have a chat about your plans and what level of editing you need.

denise@denisecowleeditorial.com