



# Finding, Hiring, and Working with a Freelance Editor

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This presentation assumes the audience is mostly emerging writers of fiction and narrative non-fiction. Might not be a bad idea to do a hands-up poll at the start to see who in the room

- Is a writer? Of fiction? Non-fiction? Anyone else write other things? (Freelance editors also work with business, government, science, etc.)



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## This presentation will cover

- ^ Why to work with an editor
- ^ How to know if you are ready to work with an editor
- ^ How to know what kind of editing you need
- ^ How to find the right editor for your project
- ^ How to negotiate a project contract
- ^ How to make the most of the editing process

- Why: We assume you already have reasons, but there are some basic ones
- Are you ready:
- How to find: where to look, what you need to know, and what you need to ask
- Contract: Why a contract benefits everyone, and what it should include
- Tips to make being edited as pleasant an experience is possible.



## Why work with an editor?



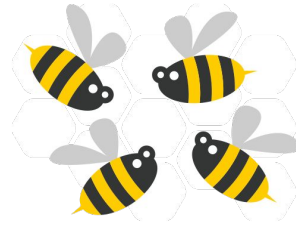
- ^ Submitting edited work shows professionalism
- ^ Edited work is more likely to get read
- ^ Work that gets read is more likely to succeed
- ^ Editors look at your work objectively
- ^ Editors are on your side!

- Editors are objective: After working months or years on your project, you are too close to see it. An editor brings fresh eyes and perspective, and can see things you have not noticed or have lost sight of.
- Editors want you to succeed: The best author–editor relationships are collaborations. The editor wants you and your project to succeed.
- Look professional: Agents and publishers are professionals, and writers need to be too. Most publishing houses don't have the staff or the budget to provide an extensive editing process, and are looking for first-time authors' drafts to be polished. Submitting edited work shows you take your work—and other people's time—seriously.
- More likely to get read: Whether you're submitting to agents and publishers, magazines and contests, or self-publishing your work, you need people to read your work. Readers have high standards and a low tolerance for typos or errors of fact or continuity. There is a lot of good writing out there, and people are busy. Readers will stop reading at the slightest provocation.
- More likely to sell: An agent who likes your work can pitch it to publishers. A publisher can pitch it to readers. Readers can pitch it to other readers. Whatever method of publishing you use, the idea is to sell your work.



## Is your manuscript ready for editing?

- ^ How many drafts have you written?
- ^ Has anyone else read it and given feedback?
- ^ What is your intended market?
- ^ How do you want to publish it?
- ^ Do you have a realistic deadline?
- ^ Do you have a realistic budget?



These are some of the questions freelancers may bring up when beginning a dialogue with a potential client. Some writers give little thought to these issues before seeking an editor, but these issues inform on the final product and must be taken into account from the beginning.

Number of drafts: More is better. Generally you want to be on at least your third before seeking an editor. The project should be as good as you can make it on your own before you start working with an editor.

Other feedback: Working with a professional editor costs money, so get as much free help as you can, before you invest your hard-earned cash. Get feedback from people who aren't related to you by blood or marriage, who know how to give constructive feedback, and whose honesty won't threaten their relationship with you. A writers group is ideal for this, as are trusted readers who know the genre you're writing in. Think about who you know, or who they know, that might be willing to help.

Intended market: Possibly the most important factor. To edit your work effectively, an editor must know exactly who is meant to read the work. If the writer is unsure, an editor can usually read the work and offer an opinion. You can run into trouble if the writer and the editor have differing opinions.

Mode of publication: Do you plan to self-publish for pleasure, self-publish for

profit, or publish traditionally?

Deadline: When do you need it by? Are you allowing enough time for the editor to do a good job?

Budget: Don't be afraid to let your editor know what your budget is. If your budget is tight—and whose isn't?—your editor can prioritize the work so you get the best bang for your buck.



## What kind of editing do you need?

- ^ Manuscript evaluation
- ^ Structural / substantive editing
- ^ Stylistic / line editing
- ^ Copy editing
- ^ Proofreading



There are different types of editing for fiction and non-fiction projects. Most manuscripts go through at least two or three rounds of editing before publication. In order of occurrence, these are...



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## Manuscript evaluation

- ^ Common for books, especially fiction and memoir
- ^ The editor offers advice on developing the plot, characters, and themes
- ^ The editor may also offer advice on the mode of publishing, how to market, etc.
- ^ A good way to get an overview of the manuscript's strengths and challenges

Manuscript evaluation: an editor reads your work and offers advice on developing the plot, characterization, and themes. Some editors can also offer advice on the mode of publishing, how to market, etc.



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## Structural / substantive editing

- ^ Working at the chapter/scene level
- ^ Clarifying or reorganizing content for structure
- ^ Ensuring the plot and character arcs work
- ^ Strengthening characterization
- ^ Developing themes and imagery

Structural editing: Working at the chapter/scene level. In fiction, it's ensuring the plot and character arcs and works, reorganizing scenes, fleshing out or removing characters, and developing themes and imagery.





## Stylistic / line editing

- ^ Working at the line level
- ^ Clarifying meaning
- ^ Ensuring consistent and appropriate tone
- ^ Eliminating jargon
- ^ Polishing language

Often done at the same time as structural editing

Can also involve making sure the tone and voice are consistent throughout. Eg not very casual in some areas, then suddenly very formal (unless part of the character/plan)

Stylistic editing: Working at the line level. In fiction, it's about clarifying meaning, whether it's dialogue, narrative or exposition.



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## Copy editing

- ^ Working at the line level
- ^ Editing for correctness, accuracy, consistency, and completeness
- ^ Addresses grammar, usage, spelling, punctuation, mechanics of style, facts, and details
- ^ Looks at consistency in characters, settings, world building, and internal story logic

Copy editing: Working at the line level. This is the type of editing most people are familiar with, and it's often mistakenly called proofreading. It includes correcting grammar, spelling, usage, and all the other mechanics of style.



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## Proofreading

- ^ Catches mistakes that may have been created during the layout and formatting process
- ^ Checking proofs for adherence to design specs and to correct any remaining mechanical errors
- ^ Usually done just before the book goes to print



## Other editorial services

- ^ Literary coaching
- ^ Developmental editing
- ^ Writing / rewriting
- ^ Research / fact checking
- ^ Project management
- ^ Indexing
- ^ Picture research
- ^ Permissions
- ^ Formatting (digital publishing)

Some eggs of other things editors do, if requested. These services are NOT included in the basic 3 stages of editing (structural, stylistic and copy editing) unless that has been clearly agreed upon by both parties (as we'll see later when we talk about rates and contracts)



# Finding the right editor



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## How do you find a good editor?

- ^ Recommendations from other writers
- ^ Word of mouth within your network
- ^ Directories of professional associations such as Editors Canada

Editing is like writing: there is no barrier to entry. Anyone can set up a website and call themselves an editor. The best way to find a trained, qualified, skilled professional is to start with a professional association.



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## How Editors Canada can help

- ^ Online directory — [findaneditor.ca](http://findaneditor.ca)
- ^ National job board
- ^ Local branch hotline

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## Online directory – findaneditor.ca

### ^ Search by:

- ^ Location
- ^ Skill
- ^ Genre
- ^ Subject
- ^ Language
- ^ Keyword
- ^ Name



ODE: A listing of EAC members who are actively looking for freelance work. It's searchable in a number of different ways.

Functions: Writers can search for whatever is most important to them: location, skill set, knowledge of a particular genre or subject, languages spoken, etc. And of course, they can use all at once, to zoom in on that perfect editor.

Click any name in the search results to see the full profile, including contact information





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## Editors Canada National Job Board

- ^ At [editors.ca/hire](https://editors.ca/hire)
- ^ Write a thorough and specific description of your project and what you need—more information will help editors know if your project is right for them
- ^ Interested and available editors will contact you

The national job board is visible only to Editors Canada members. Ads can be any length. Providing thorough and specific information about your project, the genre, your timeline, and so on can help you find the right editor for you, anywhere in Canada.



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## Branch hotlines

- ^ Each branch has its own hotline service
- ^ Email the hotline coordinator (e.g., [bchotline@editors.ca](mailto:bchotline@editors.ca))
- ^ Give thorough and specific information
- ^ The coordinator will forward your request to branch members
- ^ Interested and available editors will contact you

The hotline: requests sent to the hotline are emailed out to the branch's entire membership, ensuring your request is widely broadcast. The BC branch has more than 200 members.



## Screen your candidates

- ^ You want someone
  - ^ with professional qualifications
  - ^ with experience
  - ^ who knows and respects your genre
  - ^ who shares your vision for your work
  - ^ you can get along with
  - ^ who is available when you are ready

Qualifications: There is no barrier to entry to editing. Anyone can call themselves an editor. So do your research. Google them, and read their website, their social media. You can find out a lot about someone just from how they present themselves in public.

Experience: Not every good editor has decades of experience. New people come into the field all the time, so don't dismiss the idea of hiring students or new grads; chances are they have relevant experience.

Genre: This is crucial! The surest way to misery as an author is to work with someone who doesn't like, respect, or understand the kind of writing you do. If you write romance, sci-fi, or steampunk vampire novels, find an editor who knows the genre and loves it as much as you do. There's an editor out there for everyone. Be choosy!

Vision: Be prepared to discuss your vision of your project with your editor, so they can understand it and work toward helping you achieve it. It's normal for editors to ask questions and even make suggestions you hadn't considered, but the final decision rests with you; it's your book.

Get along:

Schedule: good editors are often booked up months in advance. Don't be surprised if their first available opening isn't for a few months.



## Finding the right fit

- ^ Try to get to know them a little
- ^ Check references and testimonials
- ^ Ask for a sample edit
- ^ Get an estimate
- ^ Communicate!

There's no patented way to find the "right" editor, but that these things will help.

Writer-editor relationship: the perfect writer-editor relationship arises when the editor has an especially keen eye for the kinds of things the writer happens to be blind to in her own writing, and when the editor has experience editing and reading extensively in the same genre. When an editor enjoys the genre, it's much more likely that they'll take a personal interest in making it shine, and will understand all the quirks inherent to the genre that other editors may misunderstand.

Before hiring: try to find someone with experience in your genre. Read their testimonials: you know your own temperament, if they sound like someone you might butt heads with, move on. Check their references: this is another good way to hear what they're like to work with. How do they communicate with you? Are emails clear, prompt but not rushed, thoughtful? Do they support your vision for your work? Is their manner professional and personable? Do you enjoy exchanging emails or phone calls with them? Think about what you want and trust your instincts.

After hiring: if you've signed a contract (suggested), make the best of the process. If you like them, great. If you weren't impressed, don't give them

repeat business.

I also mentioned the importance of communication after hiring (although this is mentioned later) ie sharing concerns, frustrations, expectations so that they can be resolved. The editor is trying to please but may be unaware of how the author feels.



# Hiring an editor



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## Evaluate your budget

- ^ Professional editors charge from \$35 to \$100 per hour
- ^ Fees reflect the editor's qualifications and may vary by the type of editing
- ^ Generally, the more the editor has to do, the more the edit will cost

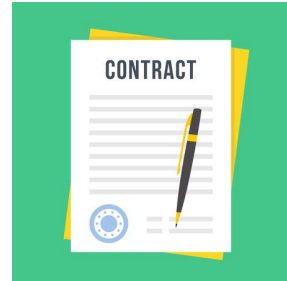
This slide is intended to prevent sticker-shock when receiving an estimate from a freelance editor. It's also meant to establish why such fees are merited.

The information doesn't need much elaboration. It's there purely to inform. Feel free to include a warning along the lines of "you get what you pay for," and that an editor who charges \$15 or even \$20 per hour may be taking your money and running a spell-checker.



## Negotiate a contract

- ^ Protects you and your editor
- ^ Sets out expectations
  - ^ Editorial tasks and scope of work
  - ^ Delivery method and schedule
  - ^ Fees and payment schedule
- ^ Ask questions and discuss any concerns before signing



This slide is intended to establish the editorial contract as standard and useful (which it is).

Protects you: you know exactly what services the editor is going to provide. You will not get surprise edits and surprise fees.

Protects your editor: your editor knows she will be paid for the work she's done.





## What makes a good contract?

- ^ A written
  - ^ Terms provided by the editor
  - ^ A verbal or written agreement
  - ^ An email exchange with explicit acceptance of terms by both parties
  - ^ A customizable template, e.g., Editors Canada's *Standard Freelance Editorial Agreement*

Even emails can be considered contractual in court, so it's therefore better to have a contract that is very specific, and not open to interpretation.

Generally, it is the editor who provides the contract, not the writer. However, the writer can negotiate the contents of the contract.

Boilerplate: many editors provide a contract that's tailored to their own niche in the market.

SFEA: the EAC offers a standard freelance editorial agreement that can be tailored to almost every project. (Have this as a handout)

Agreement: you can always work without a contract, but it can leave the amount and type of work open to interpretation. Many editors (and writers) are happy to work this way with clients they have worked with before.



# Working with your editor



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## Working with your editor

- ^ Send your complete manuscript and any supplemental materials
- ^ Stop working on it! (Start writing your next project!)
- ^ Respond to your editor's queries as they arise
- ^ Review the edited manuscript and editorial notes when you receive them
- ^ Ask questions and discuss any concerns



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## Make the most of the experience

- ^ Being edited can be uncomfortable
- ^ It can also help you learn and grow as a writer
- ^ Communication is key
- ^ A good author/editor relationship is a collaboration
- ^ Remember that your editor is an advocate for readers, too



**Thank you!**



# Questions

This slide is intended to end the seminar on a light, positive note. These suggestions are not meant to be treated as a lesson in etiquette, but as a bit of a joke. Play it how you will.



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## Contact us

^ [editors.ca](http://editors.ca)

^ [findaneditor.ca](http://findaneditor.ca)

^ BC branch email: [bc@editors.ca](mailto:bc@editors.ca)

^ BC branch hotline: [bchotline@editors.ca](mailto:bchotline@editors.ca)

^ Susan: [sfitzg@telus.net](mailto:sfitzg@telus.net)

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