



Archangel Ink

The Importance of Professional Editing

As authors prepare to publish their books, they are faced with the question of whether or not to pay a professional editor to help polish their manuscript. Since an author has not received any money for the time they've spent writing, and there are no guarantees that their book will be financially successful, it can seem like a good business decision to edit the manuscript yourself or ask a friend or family member to do it. And while it can be hard to fork over the dough in those circumstances, it is almost always worth it. It doesn't take very many bad reviews at Amazon about grammar mistakes and typos to get readers to pass on a book they might have found interesting. And while you and your friends will have the best intentions as you sit down to edit, it is much harder for you to provide a professional-level edit than you might think. Here are some reasons why:

- 1) You are too close to your book:** The human brain has a way of filling in the gaps when it sees an error so that we can keep on reading. If a word has a minor misspelling or there is a missing "the" before a noun, your brain will say, "Oh, I know what you meant" and move on without raising any red flags. While this is true of editors' brains, too (we're human, too; I swear), the problem is compounded when you're already familiar with the work. You already know what you meant to say, so it's even easier for your brain to jump right over those errors.

The same is true for errors of a higher order. Your description of the spaceship makes perfect sense to you because you know all of the details you didn't supply to readers. You've been thinking about this spaceship for months and know everything about it, so it will be very difficult for you to know whether your description will make sense to someone coming at it cold.

- 2) You are not objective:** A good edit requires an objective eye, and let's face it, we are not always the best judges of how well we've accomplished something. All you have to do is watch an *American Idol* audition to realize that we sometimes think we're better at something than we actually are. Some of this comes back to an author being too close to the work. Sure the plot seems seamless to you—you know exactly what's supposed to happen. But someone reading it for the first time won't have all that background information and might find things to be more confusing than you intended. Also, none of us knows what we don't know. Especially if you're new to writing, there may be all sorts of things related to the organization of your book or the craft of writing that you're still learning. It will be hard for you to pick out problems that you aren't even aware exist! Lastly, you've probably spent months, maybe even years, writing your book, so you have

a lot invested in it being ready to publish. It can be hard under those circumstances to admit that there is still work to be done. An editor won't have that problem.

- 3) Your friends and family don't have the training:** So, now you understand why you can't edit your own book, but you may still be thinking that a friend or family member could do the job. Unfortunately, this is rarely the case. While a friend could certainly read the book and give broad feedback such as, "I really liked it!" or "I found the book a little confusing," they don't have the training to take it farther than that. They won't be able to say, "Here are some ways to fix the confusion." When it comes to the more nitty-gritty work of a copy edit, they probably don't have the grammar and punctuation knowledge that an editor does. I don't know many non-editors who will curl up by the fire with a good grammar book. Professional editors are constantly polishing their skills and learning new things to apply to your edit. They also have numerous software programs that help them find inconsistencies in your work. Your average Joe probably isn't going to pay \$100 for the latest version of PerfectIt so he can catch those hyphen inconsistencies in your book.
- 4) Your friends and family won't want to hurt your feelings:** Even if a friend or family member didn't have the limitations mentioned above, it would still be harder for them to provide you with all the feedback you need for one reason: they like you and want you to keep liking them. While a professional editor will always provide feedback in a friendly and supportive way, an edit still frequently involves telling an author that there is still work to do. That work may be minor (simple grammar or punctuation errors) or it may be major (a complete reorganization of the book), but either way, an editor must feel free to say, "You're not there yet." A friend will want to support you. They will want you to feel good about what you've accomplished. They will want to still be friends with you once the edit is done, so they may hold back on the criticism. Even if you've specifically told them to give it to you straight, they may find that really hard to do. An editor is more invested in helping you put out the best book you can than in being your BFF. We'll be nice, but we'll be honest.

Editing is a skill that requires training and knowledge, and it takes a good bit of time, so it won't be inexpensive. But if your goal is to be a serious writer with a real chance of being successful, it is a worthwhile investment in yourself and in your book.

Levels of Editing Archangel Ink Offers

Developmental Editing

Developmental editing is big-picture editing that looks at content and structure. This applies to both fiction and nonfiction, but the issues that are discussed will be different between the two types of writing.

Fiction: This is where we look at the story itself—the plot, the characters, the setting, the voice—as well as the organization of your book. Are the first two chapters of your book backstory? Maybe your book should really start at Chapter 3. Are your characters behaving in believable ways? Are there plot holes or loose ends you forgot to wrap up? Are there any issues with your story’s timeline? Are you maintaining a consistent point of view throughout the book? These are the types of questions we will work together to answer in a developmental edit. You will receive a revision letter outlining the major issues in the manuscript in detail. I may also leave comments in the manuscript itself pointing out specific areas where these issues occur. I will offer suggestions for restructuring and rewriting, as necessary.

Nonfiction: For a nonfiction manuscript, we will be making sure that the information you are providing is clear and presented in the most efficient way. Do you effectively back up your claims? Is the information presented in the best order? Is the voice appropriate for the audience? Does the pace of the book keep readers interested? You will receive a revision letter outlining the major issues in the manuscript. I may also leave comments in the manuscript itself pointing out specific areas where these issues occur. I will offer suggestions for restructuring and rewriting, as necessary.

Manuscript Review

If you are looking for general feedback about your book but aren’t ready for a full developmental edit, this is the place to start. This is a great option for someone who has just finished their first draft and wants some guidance before beginning a rewrite or someone who doesn't have the budget for a full developmental edit. I will provide a letter outlining the major strengths and weaknesses in your manuscript. All of the major topics of a developmental edit will be discussed but in less detail. No comments will be made in the manuscript itself.

Line Editing

Line editing focuses on diction, clarity, and readability. This is where we make sure you are using the best words to express your meaning; that your sentences are smooth and clear; that every paragraph, line, and word are necessary to the telling of your story; and that there is nothing to pull your readers from the wonderful experience of reading your book. I will point out any grammar, punctuation, or spelling issues I notice, but this will not be the focus of my edit. A line edit is about the craft of writing. The nitty-gritty error sleuthing comes in a copy edit. (Fiction or nonfiction.)

Copy Editing

Your story is tight, your characters are authentic and consistent, and your sentences sing! Now it's time to root out the pesky errors that remain. I will look for grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors, of course, making sure the main character in your novel hasn't ordered "bagel's and cream cheese" (it should be "bagels") or that you haven't used "effect" when you meant "affect" (don't worry; everyone gets that one wrong). I will also be looking for mechanical errors, ensuring that there is consistency throughout your manuscript. Did you spell out the word California on page 5, but use the abbreviation CA on page 52? Does one of your characters buy "two" boxes of cookies in Chapter 3, but "3" boxes in Chapter 5? (And how do they get away with eating so many cookies?!) Inconsistencies are distracting, and I will look for them and correct them. Suggestions for minor rewriting of sentences may occur, but if your manuscript needs a lot of smoothing, it isn't ready for a copyedit. In this case, a line edit would be more appropriate. (Fiction or nonfiction.)

Line Edit Plus

Line editing and copy editing services rolled into one! I will make three passes through your manuscript, with author review between each one. The first pass will be a line edit, focusing on the words and sentences (though I will fix spelling and punctuation errors as I see them because they will drive me crazy if I don't!). The second pass will clean up any remaining "line" issues, including review of any rewrites you undertook after the first pass, as well as begin some serious copy editing. The final pass will be a pure copy editing pass, hunting down the remaining grammar, punctuation, and spelling errors. If you know you will want both line editing and copy editing, purchasing the Line Edit Plus package will save you money over purchasing them separately! (Fiction or nonfiction.)

Proof & Polish

With our full service or in-house edited projects, this will be the final read through by another editor on our staff to give it a fresh set of eyes to catch and correct any grammatical or spelling errors that might have slipped through (and some always do), and check that the story line and formatting structure are consistent throughout the text (no missing bullet points, incorrect numbering etc.).

Common Questions

Will my manuscript be error-free when you are done with it?

No manuscript will ever be error-free. Even traditionally published books, which typically go through multiple rounds of editing and proofreading, still manage to have a few errors in them. An editor could do pass after pass after pass looking for those last errors, but that would get expensive quickly and wouldn't be cost-effective for you. So...we can't promise perfection, but we can promise to deliver a clean, polished manuscript that you will be proud to self-publish or send to an agent or publisher.