



## 6 (REALLY) GOOD REASONS TO HIRE AN EDITOR

The question on every author's mind is, "Do I really need an editor?"

In a word, "YES." All literary authors need an editor—even those writers who are successful and famous. A very well known, six-figure-earning author, whose name I won't repeat, once admitted that his manuscript had no less than 12 editors who worked on it before going to press! Of course, his publisher provided this service.

*"Every writer needs an editor, and anyone who says he doesn't has a fool for a muse. A great editor is honest – no saying one thing and meaning the other. A great editor has a deft touch, the ability to hack and slice and make it seem like minor surgery. They channel your voice, rather than grafting theirs onto your piece. But whether it's a book editor or a newspaper one, the greatest share this quality: They ask the right question. Genius starts with, "What if...?"* Tim Egan, Op-Ed columnist *NY Times*

I love the unintentional irony that the above quote is missing the letter "t" from the word "no." It should read "...*not* saying one thing and meaning another." So without further ado, here are 6 (really) good reasons to hire an editor.

**1. Literary Legitimacy:** You may have stellar content, but if it is peppered with spelling mistakes, typos, or punctuation snafus, readers will be distracted and miss the full benefit of your message. Or, you may be a crackerjack speller and grammarian, but have a fondness for the word "impact" (for example) and not notice that you've used it one- hundred and thirty-five times in the first half of the book. A well-written book doesn't have to rigidly adhere to the rules of writing, however; I tend to ascribe to the Dalai Lama's advice (although said in a different context) that we should "learn the rules so we know how to break them properly." That's the editor's job—to know how to properly break the rules.

**2. Clear Communication:** All writers understand that no matter how well we write or how intelligent we are, we are too close to our work: we've written, revised, read, and re-read so many times that we've lost objectivity or clarity. Consequently, we miss awkward transitions, repetitions, inconsistencies, and other literary vagrancies. In addition, an editor's fresh, professional perspective will provide valuable feedback about the overall strengths and weaknesses, and suggestions for improvement.



**3. Credibility:** A publisher, printing service, agent, or publicist will require a professionally edited manuscript, and this includes query letters and proposals as well. Even if your publication is intended to be an e-book, your reader and reviewer audience wants to believe in you and your credibility: a polished product facilitates their confidence.

**4. Stand Out:** In this age of information overload there is a great deal of competition for readership: an editor will help your book to stand out, or at least put your book on a level playing field with the more “serious” writers.

**5. Cost-Saving:** An experienced literary editor can advise and/or manage the publishing process, liaison with industry professionals on your behalf, and save you costly printing, executive, or technical errors.

**6. You’re Worth It:** Most of all, authors need an editor because after the considerable time and effort invested in the writing—your creation—it deserves to be seen in its best light. Quality editing will encourage, affirm, inspire, and invigorate your creative process.

**Yours in Service,**

**Julie Clayton**

**P. S. Read on for clarification about different types of editing....**



## TYPES of EDITING

Literary editors generally fall into one of three categories: copy editors, substantive editors, and proofreaders. There are also degrees of editing ranging from “light,” to “basic,” and “heavy.” While there is invariably some overlap, editors often specialize in a particular “type” of editing.

***Copyediting*** – Copyediting looks at the manuscript as a whole, checking for flow, consistency, voice, syntax, formatting, and giving guidance for tightening up and polishing, based primarily on the “rules” of writing. Simultaneously, a copyeditor will also check each line for errors and inconsistencies. (In other fields, such as news journalism, this line-by-line editing is a differentiated style and is known as line editing.)

***Substantive/Developmental*** – Taking an active role in initiating changes, a substantive/developmental editor rolls up their sleeves and dives into the message and its delivery, probing for clarity and organization, and guiding the author to find their voice and refine their concepts, style, and design. They may suggest rearranging of the material, introduce new elements, ask for new writing (good editors will offer examples of rewriting) and collaborate on the best ways to improve the content.

***Proofreading*** – In the mainstream publishing industry, a proofreader checks the post-design layout galley, comparing it to the previous version, before the manuscript goes to print. More commonly though, an editor who proofs will perform “quality control:” correcting those ubiquitous typos, spelling, grammatical or punctuation mistakes, line spacing, consistency in headings/subheadings, matching the table of contents with the actual chapter titles, etcetera. A manuscript may be (should be!) proofed numerous times, however proofing is *always* the final pass through a manuscript before it goes to the next phase of publication.

***\*Did you know?*** Our brains are so sophisticated that if we see the first and last letter of a word, our brain fills in the rest for us. This is a handy feature when reading, however it explains why we can go through our manuscript multiple times and not “see” that pesky typo... editors are practiced in overriding this default mechanism, however, not infallible. Hence the reasoning behind multiple people, and passes, to proof a manuscript.

Editors aren’t exclusive to literary works, and can specialize in coaching, formatting, indexing, manuscript critiques, market consulting, ghostwriting, genre, scriptwriting, or any number of concentrated services, and virtually every written communication requires editing—or at the very least, proofing. In addition to the written word, any format that produces audio, visual, or film media relies on editors to tighten and refine the material.



If you are one of the fortunate authors who have contracted with a large publishing house, then your manuscript is already sitting in an editor's inbox. For everyone else, it's up to you to find your own editor. Look no further!