

Rest Stop 2: Editing Best Practices

Editing is not an exact science, but here are some things that other authors have found useful during the process. Take what you need and leave the rest!

Find your first readers.

Before working with an editor, it is well worth sharing your manuscript with other readers. Join a critique group, find a critique partner, or share with a friend or family member. Don't feel obligated to make every change these readers might suggest—finding first readers isn't necessarily about soliciting quality advice. Which is not to say you won't get quality advice! But the deeper benefit is that you'll be prepared for a more rigorous editing experience.

Hire a professional.

However good your first readers, if you are looking for a wider readership—and especially if you want people to purchase your book—you will want to hire a professional editor. Ideally, this should be someone experienced, and with some affinity for your genre. Ask for references! Good editing is about more than just loving books, and more than just catching technical errors. Good editors understand how to amplify your authorial voice, preserving its unique and compelling characteristics. They may point out strengths you didn't realize you had, and help you see where and how those strengths have been obscured.

Communicate with your editor.

The author-editor relationship functions best when both parties are comfortable with, and empowered by, honest dialogue. A good editor will know how to compassionately tell you when something isn't working in your manuscript. But a good editor will also be responsive to your feedback and

questions. If anything is confusing about an editor's query or comment, or if you don't understand a specific change they suggested, please ask!

Build from the ground up.

Before copyediting or proofreading, make sure the underlying story or argument is sound. That is, if you're going to invest time, effort, and money in an edit, have an editor attend to any big-picture issues before moving on to the specifics of spelling or grammar.

Familiarize yourself with track changes.

Track changes is a powerful editing tool that comes with most word processing software. It allows an editor to make a provisional change that an author can then approve or reject. These provisional changes can be viewed in a different color text (usually red or blue) or can be viewed in black. The latter lets you see what the changes would look like if they were incorporated in the final work. With track changes, you'll get very focused edits, and you'll no longer have to worry about deciphering an editor's bad handwriting!

Thank you for reading. Happy writing!



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