

# What to Look for In Choosing a Book Editor

## **Substantial and Verifiable Experience**

Academic credentials help to prove that the editor has the skills for the job. Another way is to ask about their experience in general. A lot of editors keep previous work on hand to show their new clients what they can do and how they do it. Many editors have testimonials and lists of published work on their websites. If not, ask. Also, find someone with experience in the genre you're writing, there's no point in hiring a brilliant science fiction editor if you write romance.

## **No Inflated Claims**

Any editor who promises or even implies that their editing will guarantee you being published, do not listen. No one can make that promise to anyone, and even if they could, there are many aspects other than editing that may not allow your book to become published. No reputable editor would make that promise to you anyway. The only thing that can be said is that your book will be better than it was and that you may learn something about writing you did not know before. Try to get a sample edit to see if their skills are up to the standard they are talking about.

## **R-E-S-P-E-C-T**

Look for an editor who jumps into your ideas and what you are trying to do with your work, do not let them impose their own ideas right off the back. Editors need to be frank to be effective, but they should not take over your project. You should feel like you learned something new and become motivated, not discouraged. Part of respect is also being honest. Sometimes criticism can hurt, but if it is too gentle with your feelings in mind, you are not getting your money's worth.

## **(Beside) Manner**

You need to pay close attention to an editor's manner and decide if the relationship is likely to be pleasant, professional, and productive. Is the editor overly curt or slow to respond to your emails? If the comments in the sample edit are too harsh, how will you make it through hundreds of pages of red-inked barbs? Beyond the financial expense, editing can be an intensely emotional journey; make sure that your editor will be a good travel companion.

## **Decide What Sort of Editing Help You Need**

Editing types range all the way from content/developmental edits, which will generally show you where your story is strong and where it is weak. On the other end of the scale, is proofreading, which only picks up obvious spelling and grammar mistakes. Between, you can get various forms of line and copyediting. Most editors will tell you what services they offer and the different prices they charge for each service. Some will offer a mix of styles.

## **Know Your Budget**

Know how much you will spend on an editor. Some prices are steep, and some are cheaper. Editing is important, but it does not sell books. The cover story and story are far more effective at this. Be careful, and do not pay too much for something that you feel should be less. Do your research and look at pricing and make comparisons on what the value of each service is, quality-wise.

## **Timeframe**

Know what your timeframe is. When searching for an editor, sometimes it gets hectic. Sometimes when you find one last minute and need a quick turnaround, most of the time, you will pay extra because of the average rate of deep editing being 3-5 pages per hour. It all depends on what you're looking for. You want to make sure that whoever you choose, that they are good on deadlines.

## **Business**

An edit is a business transaction. This means that money will exchange hands. Therefore, you need to approach the edit as both a writer and a businessperson (an increasingly common role in the age of self-publishing). Compare the deals you're offered. Editors with brand-name backgrounds might offer less user-friendly terms (such as hourly rates, which are less predictable than fixed contracts).

In contrast, less established professionals might offer discounts and extras (such as book formatting and publishing consulting). Don't be afraid to ask. Hiring an editor is a professional investment. A sample edit will allow you to estimate the value of the service, but never forget about the price.

## **Logistical details**

All editors work differently. You want to know:

1. What is your editing process?
2. How do they begin a project? What are the expectations on both sides? What do the milestones and deliverables look like? What are the metrics for completion? Which writing/editing software do they use?
3. What is your communication process?
4. Will you hear from them while they edit, or only when they're done? Do they prefer email, text, phone calls, or something else? (More on communication in prong #3 below.)
5. What is your availability?
6. Many editors book a few months out, so plan accordingly. Let them know if you have a quick turnaround but understand that good editing takes time—quality over speed.
7. What are your rates?
8. Independent editors set their own rates based on many factors, including their training, experience, familiarity with the topic, your timeline, and the needs of the manuscript.