

The Importance of Editing/Chynoweth

Editorial Expectations

INTRODUCTION

1. Pick your words – writing is not easy. The picture in your mind is not always the picture you share with your readers.
2. First Revision/Beta Readers/Editor

THE EDITING PROCESS

STEP ONE:

From “Once upon a time” to “The End” – the first time the book is completed is both the best and the worst.

- Finishing the story is a major accomplishment and should be celebrated.
- The real work begins with the first revision.
- Print a hard copy of the manuscript; get a cup of coffee or tea, send your family to the movies or on vacation, and read out loud.
- Read the story for its ‘readability’ first--as if you just got this off the shelf at Barnes & Noble.
- Get a pen with some colorful ink...red, bright blue, green, purple... whatever, and begin your markup.
- When you have finished, put the story away for a few days.
- When you return to it, read it again, and see what has surfaced.

STEP TWO:

BETA Readers – Begin to search for some beta readers.

- A BETA reader is NOT an editor.
- S/he is a volunteer
- Look for 4 – 5 BRs...you’ll get responses from 2 – 4. And that’s okay.
- Where do you find them? Libraries, writers’ organizations (ESWA), schools (English departments. Elementary school interns might be willing), reader groups, etc. Be creative and be willing to return the favor. Avoid the people you love!
- Prepare a list of questions...one page only (maybe 10 – 15 questions)...for them to answer. Try to avoid ‘yes’ or ‘no’ questions.
- Give them a deadline and follow up on that deadline.
- When you get their feedback, do not treat it like everything they say is “gospel.” It’s not. Do not throw out their feedback in case you want to refer to it later. Take what works for you and ignore what doesn’t.
- Pay attention if two or more people make the same observation...that’s a gem to hold onto.

STEP THREE:

- Revise the work with the best of the comments.
- (See Step One above!!!)

STEP FOUR:

Begin your search for an editor

Who your editor is:

- A professional book developer, mentor,
- Editor's background will include: Freelance Editor, published author, book indexer, book reviewer
- Freelance Editor, published author, book indexer, book reviewer, if you have a publisher then the editor may be on staff and assigned to you. Chances are...you do not have a publisher yet, so you will begin your search.
- Your friend and confidante – and yet, your unbiased chief critic.

Who your editor is not:

- Agent
- Publisher
- Publicist

Where do you find an editor?

- Editorial Freelancers Association
- Naiwe.com (National Association of Independent Writers and Editors)
- Online freelancers' sites
- LMP and Writers Digest Writer's Market
- Traditional houses; Independent publishers
- Aceseditors.org
- Writers Conferences (like this one!)

Cost

- Hour; page; word
 1. Fixed rate or formula
 2. Price range (wide or narrow)
 3. Add-ins (sample edits; reports; printing; mailing; etc.)
 4. Review guidelines handout
- Sample Contract (in handouts)
- Deadlines
- References

What do you need done?

- Copyediting, content editing, line editing, proof reading
- Electronic (Tracking Function) / Hardcopy (HANDOUT: Editing codes)
- Changes are suggestions – acceptance or rejection to be determined by the author

What not to do:

- Don't call the editor unless the deadline for completion has passed – most communication will be via e-mails.
- Don't rewrite your manuscript while the editor is working on it – wait for their feedback, edits and/or comments before you begin.

How to Prepare (Perfect as Much as Possible!) Your Manuscript for Submission to an Editor

Let's face it – you don't need an editor if your manuscript is already perfect – but the chances of that if you're a beginning or even advanced writer are pretty slim. Still, you want to make sure your book is **READY TO BE EDITED** by getting it to the point where it is as readable as it can possibly be. The less work that has to be done, the less an editing job will cost you – and the more chances you'll have of a really good editor accepting your work. (No editor wants to work on a book that is too rough to even read.) So...when you're all done writing and you've walked away and come back to do your first rewrite, here are the tools you'll need and the steps you'll need to take to make sure your book is written to the best of your ability and ready to face the scrutiny of a professional editor:

Self-Editing/Manuscript Preparation Tools & Tips:

- 1) Good Working Title
- 2) Synopsis (1-2 paragraphs on what your book is about)
- 3) Chapter Outline/Table of Contents
- 4) For All Works:
 - Chapter Organization
 - Chapter Hooks
 - Good Scenes/Paragraphs
 - Good Sentences
 - Good Style (action verbs, strong nouns, proper use of adjectives, adverbs, single vs. plural pronouns, tenses, etc.)
 - Good Description (Show not Tell)
 - Consistent Point of View
 - Consistent Voice
 - Main Take Away Message (What's in it for the Reader?)
- 5) For Fiction/Memoir/Children's:
 - Plot (Beginning, Middle, End) or Main Story with Timeline & Subplots (that stick to main plot)
 - Setting (place, time, mood)
 - Character Development (character arc, characters we care about, not too many, the right amount of attention given to big and small characters)
 - Good Dialogue
 - Pacing/Timing
- 6) Reading Materials (see handout)
- 7) Proper Formatting
- 8) Genre
- 9) Word/Page Count
- 10) Other Materials: Front Matter (Dedication, Acknowledgments, Preface, Introduction or Foreword etc.) and Back Matter (About the Author or Bio, Afterword, References/Footnotes, etc.)

Common Mistakes Writers Make

- Taking too long to grab the reader – start with the first sentence - hook the reader on the first page.
- Still not “showing” vs. telling. (See “Description” in *Writing Fiction* pg. 105)
- Inconsistent Point of View (See *Writing Fiction* pg. 77) – Can your characters see themselves in the mirror?
- Inconsistent Plural vs. Singular pronouns
- Inconsistent Tenses
- Overuse of “!”, big or stuffy words (nevertheless, however, therefore, thus), filler or vague words (somewhat, somehow, sometimes, a little bit), clutter (See *On Writing Well* pg. 15), weak verbs, double or triple nouns, useless adverbs and adjectives
- Not enough similes or metaphors – too many clichés
- Meandering Plot (unclear Beginning, Middle, End, never answers the “Big Question” – See *Writing Fiction* pg. 53) Good examples: *Pride and Prejudice*, *Lord of the Flies*
- Undeveloped Setting (place, time, mood) Read *Edgar Allen Poe*, *Wild*, *Out of Africa*
- Poor Character Development (no character arc, too many characters, inconsistencies, etc.) Use a timeline; see “Description” above; Use Good Dialogue (Read *Gone with the Wind*, *The Kite Runner*, for dialect read *The Help*)

Tips on Editing Process

- Write from the heart – rewrite from the brain
- You need to get it as close to perfect as you can- no more handing in a bad first draft
- Walk away for awhile
- Print it out and read it aloud
- Have a few “beta” readers or critique group read it and give you feedback
- Hire a professional editor – trust them - but hold your ground if necessary
- Learn “Track Changes”
- Edit at first for “main components” and then at least a second time for grammar, punctuation, word choices, clutter, etc.
- Edit again – proof (and get at least one other experienced proofer to do so for you also)
- How many drafts/edits – as many as it takes!
- Research: Go beyond Google! Other sources can include the library, talking to experts on a subject, visiting people and places to authenticate, etc.

Formatting Recommendations

NOTE: Self-pub: You upload exactly how you want it – they will notify you of any errors and make suggestions through “Interior Reviewer” but will not fix it

- Use Microsoft Word/12 pt. Times New Roman
- Double spacing, indented para.; extra spacing only between scenes with #
- Title Page – Title of Book, your name
- Headers and footers (page #s, your name and book title)
- Chapter Title ¼ way down pg. in 14-18 pt.
- Decide on use of artwork, fleurons, etc.
- Forward/Backward Material: Other Books, Testimonials, Introduction or Foreword, Dedication Acknowledgements, About the Author, etc.

Copy Editing versus Content Editing

There is often confusion between the terms copy editing and content editing. At times one is taken to mean the other, and at other times they are taken to mean one and the same thing. While the fact is, they are two different things. True, they are both editing, but the difference is significant. So, what is this difference?

Copy editing (sometimes written as one word – copyediting), is checking a copy for spelling, capitalization, punctuation, verb tenses and other grammatical errors. It also involves checking for continuity, sentence structure, paragraph lengths, word choices, missed words, and the like. In other words, copy editing involves correcting the language of the text.

But what good is copy written in perfect English, if the content isn't right? This is where the content editor comes in.

Content editing (also called developmental editing or substantive editing), as the name implies, involves checking the content. It checks the content for factual errors, contradictions, and inconsistencies. If the content is fictional, it checks for discrepancies in the plot, character, or dialogue. It checks whether the theme has been developed (hence developmental editing) properly, or whether the sub-plots have been well integrated into the story line. In other words, content editing evaluates the content in detail.

In the publishing industry, a manuscript first goes to a content editor who evaluates the content, and if there is the need, suggests changes to the writer. The writer, with the help of the content editor, then re-writes the parts that need change. Once the content editor is satisfied and sure that the text will grab the attention of the reader, the manuscript goes to the copy editor. Sometimes the same person does both the content editing and the copy editing, but in either case, copyediting is the final stage before the manuscript goes to print.

Michele Chynoweth

Author/Speaker/Book Coach

Phone: 410-937-9801

Email: Michele@michelechynoweth.com

www.michelechynoweth.com