QUEENSLAND WRITERS CENTRE

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QWC RESOURCE SHEET # 4

Editing and Proofreading

What is editing?

Editing involves polishing your manuscript until it is the best possible product that can be presented to a publisher, agent or reader.

There are two different types of editing:
Structural editing - A structural edit will look at the big picture and the author's voice, and won't worry particularly about small typos.

Copyediting - A copy editor corrects grammar and spelling but doesn't usually suggest major changes. Copy editors and proofreaders are sometimes interchangeable.

Do I need an editor?

An editor's role is to help your book reach its full potential. (This doesn't mean it will automatically be published – it just means that it's the best book it can be.) An editor doesn't have the right to change your work – they can suggest changes, but you are the writer and your decision is final.

Things to note:

- Never let your manuscript go to publication without being read by at least one editor and/or proofreader.
- Editors should be highly literate, skilled in grammar and punctuation and have empathy with the manuscript. If you're looking for an editor contact the Society of Editors in your state and ask your potential editor for referrals from past clients.

What is proofreading?

Proofreading is the process of reviewing a text and checking for typos and formatting errors, and may also include correcting errors in grammar and consistency.

Do I need to have my work professionally edited/proofread?

QWC suggests that, at the very least, you use your computer's spell check and grammar check before sending your manuscript to a publisher or agent.

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Professional editing on a full manuscript can be expensive, but it pays to have your manuscript in the best possible shape to be seen by industry professionals. Keep in mind that should a publisher decide to publish your work, there will be another stage of editing undertaken at the publisher's expense. If you are self-publishing and want your book to be read by a wide audience, then a professional edit is highly recommended.

How should I present my work?
Use white A4 paper with double line spacing and at least a 12 point font – use Courier or Times New Roman. Margins should be about 3cm all around – you need to leave plenty of clear space for the editor to write notes. Do not bind or staple your manuscript. Bulldogs clips are acceptable. **Always** keep a copy of your manuscript. Some editors are happy to work on an electronic file and will use the track changes function. Discuss this with your editor to make sure that you are working in a way that's comfortable for both of you.

Where can I find an editor/proofreader?
Refer to ***The Australian Writer's Marketplace*** (AWM). AWM includes editor listings in Writers' Services. AWM is sold at QWC for $43.95 Members/$49.95 Non-members. It can also be accessed at most libraries. Online subscriptions are available at www.awmonline.com.au.

QWC's members' directory lists a number of freelance editors who are also QWC members; find the directory at www.qwc.asn.au. The Society of Editors has a Queensland branch and their editor members are listed at www.editorsqld.com.

How do I choose an editor?
Find out first if the editor is available and interested, then send a sample of your work along with a project brief, detailing the word count, what you want to get out of the editing process and when it needs to be completed. It's best to get a quote for the full project rather than asking for their hourly rates as people work at different speeds. It may also be worth asking for a sample edit. You will have to pay for this, but you will see how the editor handles the work and how they communicate. Rapport between the editor and the author is essential.

What should I expect to pay for an editor/proofreader?
A proofreader will probably charge you around $40 per hour. Editors' fees are around $80 per hour. Bear in mind the difference in approach that an editor and a

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proofreader will take with your manuscript. Remember that hourly rates mean very little when you don't know how quickly people work. Once again, it’s far better to get a quote for the whole project rather than agreeing to pay by the hour with no certainty of how many hours the job will take.