

Editing's a funny old occupation. It covers so many things.

There are film editors, sound editors, tv and radio editors and newspaper editors as well as editors who work generally with words. Basically, anyone who chops stuff up, changes it and works with the originator can be called an editor. And terminology varies in different countries. It can all be very confusing.

Let's concentrate on editors in the publishing industry.

What type of editor do you need?

Acquisitions editors

I expect that most people, when they hear the word 'editor', think of the person who is seen wining and dining authors, being there at press conferences and swanning around publishing houses throwing around million dollar deals. These are **acquisitions editors**, and the job isn't as glamorous as it seems (well not usually). The job varies with each publishing house, but these editors tend to be the ones who keep an eye on the market, figure out future trends and what will sell now, and look for books to acquire. They work with authors and maintain a portfolio, working on numerous books at the same time. They commission, develop and project manage, negotiate contracts and work with teams within the publishing house.

Developmental or substantive editor

The **developmental or substantive editor** tends to get stuck in and helps the author by carrying out all the heavy-duty stuff that a manuscript may need. They re-shape, mould and form a book, chopping and changing as needed. They will help the author re-write where necessary, change chapters and paragraphs around, and make sure the plot and characters hold up to scrutiny. They ensure that Timmy with the blonde hair and blue eyes doesn't morph into Jimmy with the brown hair and green eyes halfway through the book (unless it's a sci-fi book and he's undergone some alien morphing experiment). The non-fiction developmental editor will check that everything is in the right order, makes sense, is factually correct and will stand up to a peer-review.

Developmental editing is an in-depth process and is something that should be done once you have written your book and you need help to make it publishable. Here the big picture is looked at, not the nitty gritty small stuff.

Copy-editor

Once you have the book sorted, the plot has no holes, it reads well (or, if it's non-fiction, you think all of its headings are in the right places, it's factually correct and is a joy to read) and you think it's ready to go... STOP! Now is the time to hire a **copy-editor**. This editor will look at the structure and content, the style and consistency, make sure the language is suitable for the intended audience, see that illustrations and tables are in the right places and captioned correctly, and will check grammar, spelling, formatting and fact-check where needed. The copy-editor (often called a **line editor** in the US) goes through the manuscript line-by-line and fixes all those things that an author can become blind to after spending too much time with his own writing. They often work to house styles if the publisher has one, or can help you create one. This means that everything throughout the document is consistent. If you are a self-publisher, or a business looking for help, you may decide to forego a developmental editor, but you should always hire a copy-editor.

Proofreader

Finally we have the **proofreader**. A proofreader should be one of the last people to look at your manuscript. Once the manuscript has been copy-edited it is usually sent to a designer or typesetter to be made ready for publication. The proofreader does not edit, but checks consistency, style, tables and illustrations, captions, page numbers, spelling, headings and format. They make sure that everything is as it should be and that no errors have been introduced during the formatting of the manuscript. They are also the final check and may pick up errors made or not picked up by the copy-editor. They use minimal intervention and should not be expected to do the copy-editor's job. They really are the last in line to make sure all is as it should be.

So when you are looking for a publishing professional it's really not that difficult to figure out who you may need. The acquisitions editor will find you (through your agent). The developmental editor does the heavy stuff, the copy-editor does the nitty gritty stuff and the proofreader checks that the book is ready to publish.

Help! **I need an editor**

Which editor do I use?

Acquisitions Editor

May acquire your book for a publisher (if it's good enough and is a good fit).

Developmental (Substantive) Editor

They do all the re-writing and re-structuring. They re-shape, mould and form your manuscript.

Copy-Editor

Deals with the nitty gritty. They check spelling, grammar, punctuation, voice, consistency, format, structure, content and style.

Proofreader

The final check.
They are the last people to make sure all is as it should be.
A fresh set of eyes for consistency, style and content.

northerneditorial.co.uk