



10 Small Things

**That Will Make
Your Document
Ready For An
Editor**

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Let's admit it, it's a big step hiring an editor.

You've researched editors in your genre, you've sorted out your budget so it's realistic and you have your manuscript in a Word document (or ten). After approaching a couple of professional editors you've found one you'd like to work with.

What next?

After an initial chat the editor will want to see your manuscript (or at least a few chapters) to assess it. This is how we determine how much work is actually needed, rather than how much work the client thinks is needed (hint: listen to your editor, they know how to make your manuscript work). By all means let your editor know what you want – no editor will force you to have a developmental edit if all you want is a proofread – but listen if they recommend that the manuscript isn't ready for a final polish.

You may think the document you've been working on is ready to be sent, but is it? *Is it really?*

A few quick polishes will make sure that the editor will see your manuscript in a good light and you're more likely to land the editor you want to work with.



Here are ten small things that will make your document ready for an editor:

1. **Sort out your margins.** It's fairly standard to have one inch (2.54 cm) margins all round.
2. **Set your line spacing to double spaced (2.0).** It may look too spaced out, but the aim here is to have your document as easy to read as possible. If your editor wants to print out pages to work on, the generous margins and line spacing will give them space to make any notes they need without having to squish them in.
3. **Ditch the fancy fonts.** Ditch them. Use a standard 12pt font such as Times New Roman, Arial, Courier or Calibri. Yes, they can look boring, but the aim is to have a readable document. When you publish your book your designer will help you find a suitable font that takes into account subject, publication type and audience – until then just have a nice, clean readable file. No editor wants a manuscript sent to them in Comic Sans, or any other fancy font. I've had my share of these 'fun' documents, and believe me, you'll just give your editor more work to get the document into a useable form, and you *will* be charged for it.

If you follow steps 1–3, this should get you to roughly 250 words per page, which is how many editors see a standard page. Setting your page out this way makes it easier to read, your editor won't need to alter anything and it's how many publishers prefer their manuscripts to be laid out.



4. **Add page numbers.** This will make it easier for your editor to make comments and to track where they are in the edit. A simple number in the footer, bottom right, or in the header, top right, will suffice.
5. **Add a header** which includes at least your name and the book title. This isn't strictly necessary, but it's good practice and can let your editor see exactly what they are working on at any time.
6. Set **out your document using Styles.** It's a fairly quick and painless way to make your document look professional. [I've written out some instructions to guide you through the process.](#) It's not complicated and it will make your document setup easier to navigate if anything structural needs changing. Remember to make your paragraphs indented using Styles rather than using the tab key and don't add any unnecessary returns.



Remove watermarks – they show lack of trust

7. **Make sure there are no watermarks on your document.** Trying to work on a document that has been watermarked is extremely difficult and totally unnecessary. If your editor gets a watermarked document the chances are they'll return it for watermark removal, or they may even refuse to work on it at all. The relationship between author and editor is based on trust and if you show that you don't trust your editorial professional they may decide the relationship won't work. If you use a professional editor, who is a member of a professional organisation such as the [SfEP](#), they are bound by the society's professional code of conduct. A professional editor will never breach your copyright.
8. **Decide on a style guide.** This could be something as simple as using [oxforddictionaries.com](#) as your preferred dictionary, to more complex decisions such as letting your editor know you prefer to use [New Hart's Rules](#) as a basis for your style guide. Style guides are important to allow your editor to follow your preferences, so deciding on one at the beginning will save you both time. If you're not sure, ask your editor for advice.
9. **Run the whole manuscript through a spell check.** The final step before sending your document is to check your spelling.
10. **Read your manuscript through one last time** to make sure everything is as you want it to be. Really read it, don't just skim. Once your editor starts work, this is the document they will be using so a final check is essential.

If you follow these ten quick steps you'll have a document that looks as good as it (hopefully) reads. A good presentation shows that you value all the work you've put into your manuscript and it will send the right signs to your editor.

Not sure how to carry out the changes? That's OK, don't fret – [I wrote a blog post especially to help you with that.](#)

Think I'm the right editor for you? [Contact me and we can talk through your project.](#)