

HOW TO FIND AN EDITOR YOU CAN TRUST

In a world where anyone can create a professional-looking website and claim to be an editor or proofreader, it's difficult to know who you can trust.

And even when you've found some trustworthy names, how can you be sure that the one you choose – who'll be charged with a manuscript you might have laboured over for years – is the right one for you?

Read on to find out...



WHERE TO LOOK FOR AN EDITOR OR PROOFREADER

Unless you've worked with an editor before, it can be difficult to know where to start. If you're looking for a trustworthy editor, you could...

ASK AROUND

If you're part of a writing group or you're active on social media, you'll probably know other authors who have already worked with editors. Try searching hashtags like “WritingCommunity” or “WriterThreads” on Bluesky, Instagram, Threads, or Twitter/X to find others who write in your genre and see what they have to say. Do they have recommendations? While the right person for them may not necessarily be the right person for you, it's a good place to start.

PROFESSIONAL EDITORIAL ORGANISATIONS

There are some places online where you'll find tried and tested editorial help. Professional organisations like the UK [Chartered Institute of Editing and Proofreading](#) (CIEP), US [Editorial Freelancers Association](#) (EFA), and [Editors Canada](#) have directories on their websites, which you can search for members who work in your genre. Some of the organisations require members to demonstrate a degree of experience and skill before they are approved (like my Advanced Professional membership of the CIEP). Even those that don't often come with yearly membership fees that may be off-putting for less scrupulous editors who only want to claim to be a professional.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

What are the green flags?

TESTIMONIALS

There's no better way of finding out what it will be like to work with someone than to hear from those who have worked with them already. Most professional editors will have testimonials from former clients on their websites, and perhaps on other platforms for editorial work, such as Reedsy. Even if they only feature the very best ones, it does mean they do at least have some good reviews to choose from. Be wary of editors without any testimonials at all – that could denote either a lack of experience or a list of unhappy customers.

PORTFOLIO

Professional editors should also be able to list the titles they've worked on and the publishing clients they've worked for, though sometimes it's not always possible to provide the title and author of projects that have yet to be published. An editor with no portfolio at all may not be the best choice if you're looking for a safe pair of hands.

MEMBERSHIP OF AN EDITING ORGANISATION

As I set out in the previous section, some professional organisations do the vetting for you by requiring a degree of skill or experience from their members. Editors see the membership fees as an investment in their business, as they benefit from the training and networking opportunities these organisations provide. That's another good sign the editor is legit.

TRAINING

Another thing that distinguishes a good editor is their qualifications. Not all editors list the courses they've taken in their "About Me" sections or on LinkedIn but, if they do, check out the organisations they trained with. Are they names you recognise? Do they seem trustworthy?

Just like membership of a professional organisation, training is an investment in an editor's business and a good sign that they take their work seriously. In fact, most professionals are committed to continuous professional development – not just doing enough to earn their editing stripes at the beginning of their career, but staying up to date with new developments in publishing too.

SPECIALISMS

Genre experience is absolutely essential when it comes to developmental feedback and other more substantive types of editing. Even with more technical types of editing (like proofreading and copyediting), it may be helpful for an editor to have worked on manuscripts in your genre.

An editor who specialises in your genre will understand your readers and their expectations far better than someone who has never read a book like yours before.

Some editors also specialise in particular types of editing. Maybe they offer developmental editing but not proofreading, or they're a copyeditor and don't do developmental feedback. Make sure their skills are compatible with your needs.

If you're not sure what type of editing you need, don't be afraid to ask for their advice. You can also check out my free guide, [What type of editing do you need?](#)

HOW TO NARROW DOWN A SHORT LIST

Once you've found a few good candidates, how do you decide between them?

AVAILABILITY

Consider your own schedule for publication and find out when/whether the editors will be available to work on your book.

It will help if you can provide them with some basic information about the type of editing you're looking for, an approximate word count, and an idea of when you want to publish. Some editors are booked up months in advance, so make sure to ask about their availability as early as you can.

PRICING

There's a reason this isn't the first consideration in narrowing down your list: finding an editor you can afford is important, but the cheapest option isn't always the best one. Editing can be expensive, but the quotes you get from editors should be considered alongside everything else in this guide.

A more expensive editor with a long list of happy clients and professional qualifications is a more sensible choice than a cheaper one without experience or testimonials. Be upfront about what you can afford, and they may be able to tailor their services to suit your budget or offer a payment plan to help spread the cost out a little.

SAMPLE OR TRIAL EDITS

When you've narrowed down your shortlist to just two or three editors, you could ask each of them for a sample or trial edit of your work. Most editors will want to see a sample of your work to help them develop a quote anyway, and a sample edit is a great way for you to get a sense of how they work too.

Remember that even a short sample will take up some of an editor's time – some do offer free sample edits (with a limited number of words), while others may ask for a small fee. There's no right or wrong approach, as long as you are comfortable with the amount they charge.

When you get the sample edits back, compare the changes, suggestions, and comments (alongside your full quotes, of course). Do you feel like the editor understands your book? Were their suggestions helpful? Did they respect your voice? Did they explain their changes well? Are they professional and kind in their communication? Do they seem like someone you could work with?

NEXT STEPS

So, when you think you've found the right editor, what's next?

SCHEDULING THE WORK

Your editor will have given you an idea of their availability already, but now is the time to nail it down. Make sure the start date gives you enough time to finish any revisions you want to make beforehand, and that the end date gives you enough time to review and implement their edits before your planned publication date.

CONTRACTS / TERMS AND CONDITIONS

When booking in with your editor, they may ask you to sign a contract or confirm that you agree to their terms and conditions. This is important and helps to protect both parties in the event that something doesn't go as planned. Check you're happy with the terms before entering into a written agreement.

PAYMENTS

Most editors will require at least a part payment when booking you in, to reserve the slot in their schedule. Some may even require payment in full. Whatever the arrangement, make sure that you have an invoice detailing what you're paying for. Payment methods may vary, depending on where you and your editor are based – just make sure you check their details are correct before sending any money and ask them to confirm that the payment has been received.

For more advice on hiring an editor, or on writing and editing more generally, check out:

keditorial.com/resources

For more about me and the services I offer, visit my website: keditorial.com

Get in touch: info@keditorial.com

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