

A SIMPLE 5-STEP GUIDE TO

Self-Editing



*Self-Editing Your Manuscript Saves You Time &
Money on Professional Editing*

WRITTEN BY THE BRIELLE AGENCY

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Self-Editing

Self-editing is the process by which an author checks his or her work to ensure that it is free of major errors and plot-holes. One of The Brielle Agency's requirements for taking on medium (copyediting) and heavy (developmental) editing projects is that an author should have self-edited their work at least once.

We ask that authors do this to

- 1) save their editor (and themselves) time, and
- 2) to save themselves some money.

Performing a simple self-edit helps to eliminate minor mistakes that can easily add up to a bigger price quote. For example, the difference between a medium edit and a light edit is a few hundred dollars more. An author who has taken the time to look over their work and fix as many of their errors as possible can easily go from needing a medium edit to just needing a light edit; the difference between a \$1200 price tag

and a \$900 price tag. However, many authors are sincerely confused about what it means to self-edit their work. Many times, they are excited to get to the "The End" and send it off to someone who will fix whatever problems the manuscript has. I get that. It is what editors are for, but just keep in mind that it will cost you more to have an editor do it (because it takes more time and numerous cups of coffee) than if you did it yourself. To help you get through your self-editing task, I have put together this simple 5-step guide to self-editing your work.

Step 1

Give Yourself a Break

Finishing a book can be a very relieving and exciting experience. However, try not to use this time to start shopping around for a professional editor. Allow the book to sit for a few days or a few weeks. I would suggest at least a month. Then revisit it and see if you can fix any minor errors you find.

Step 2

Try Not to Obsess Over the Minor Details

It can be tempting to obsess over minor details after a book has been finished. "Should I add this scene?" "Maybe I should tweak this character a bit." Now is not the time to be obsessing. Take a break away from the manuscript and use that time to jot your obsessions on paper. Do not make any changes to the manuscript during the break. Let it sit. You will be surprised to find that by the time you revisit the manuscript, those scenes you wrote on paper will no longer matter much. If they still do matter, however, then add or take-away during the self-editing stage.

Step 3

Revisit the Manuscript with Fresh Eyes and a Rested Mind

After your resting period, revisit your manuscript by reading it aloud to yourself, or by using the "Read Aloud" feature in Microsoft Word. (You will find this feature in the REVIEW tab right next to Proofing in the far left-hand corner.) This is also a good time to revisit your punctuation (pauses, stops, and separations) and spot minor spelling errors. An editor can help you polish up the grammar portion and spelling errors or misused words. It is also a good time to listen for repetitions and overuse of specific words and phrases. Also, check the flow of your dialogue (if you have any) and scenes. Reading your manuscript aloud cannot be understated when it comes to its effectiveness as a self-editing (and professional editing) tool.

Step 4

Pass It Over to Someone Else (Family, Friends, Work
Colleagues)

After you have read through your manuscript, ask friends and family to give it a go too. Often, because an author is so close to the story, they will tend to miss things that others won't hesitate to point out. Take their feedback in stride and make changes where you deem it necessary. Self-editing is one of the few areas where I believe more eyes can make the pot of soup better.

Step 5

Run One Last Spell-Check (Using Spell-Check Software)

There is a range of authoring and grammar tools available these days (many for free), that there is no excuse for a manuscript to be riddled with spelling errors. Microsoft Word has a spell-check tool. I utilize it for everyday documents. I also use Grammarly, which is another great editing tool. Do your research and find what works best for your needs. But, be careful. Not all flagged errors are usually correct. I have had Grammarly and Word flag words and grammar that I have had to ignore because I knew better. An editor should be able to catch these kinds of errors if your editing tools cause you to make such changes.

Conclusion

You've Got This!

All in all, your manuscript deserves all the time and attention you can dedicate to it. After all, you put in the late nights and odd hours to make it happen, so why not take a few extra days making sure that having it perfected (by a professional) does not cost you more than you need to pay for it. I hope you find this guide useful in your next self-editing adventure. I wish you the best of luck and congratulations on finishing your first draft!

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