

4 Main Levels of Editing

This document is to help define the levels of editing. The many stages of editing can be confusing because the labels are interchangeable, you may not need every level, and the different tasks can overlap. We'll begin with a simplified analogy, followed by details about each level of editing, how each level corresponds with the writing process, and how to determine what level of editing you need. .

Writing and editing are like baking. Let's imagine for a moment that you get an idea to bake a cake for a birthday party. You'll go to the grocery store to buy the perfect ingredients to make your idea come alive for your intended audience. You'll mix the ingredients together in the right order and amounts and then let it bake until your project looks and tastes exactly as your guests are hoping for. Then you'll clean the counter, wash the dishes, and make sure everything is perfect before the guests arrive.

As authors, we do the same for our stories. We get an idea of who, what, when, where, and why. Then we figure out how to make the story come alive. As we write, we craft elements of writing to create an irresistible treat for our readers. Finally, we clean up our mess before sharing our creation with the world.

The levels of editing follow the same journey. A developmental editor examines the overall concept, genre, and intended market. A content editor makes sure the flow is logical, and the story makes sense for your intended purpose. Copy editors correct errors in grammar, sentence structure, and clarity. Finally, proofreaders polish out any remaining spelling and punctuation mistakes.





Of course, there's a lot more to it, so I've included additional details in PDF for you. I hope it serves as a helpful resource.

I'm a copy editor and proofreader, which are the most common services self-published authors seek. Now that you know what editors do, tomorrow I'll tell you a little about the tools copy editors and proofreaders use to do their job.

4 Main Levels of Editing

Type	Other Names	Focus is on...	What The Editor Reviews
<p>Developmental Editing</p> 	<p>Coaching Substantive Structuring Conceptual</p>	<p>the overall concept, content, organization, and presentation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Flow, transitions, and organization of chapters and paragraphs• Progress and pace of the story• Clarity and effectiveness of story sequence• Readability and clarity of the overall message for the intended market and audience
<p>Content Editing</p> 	<p>Developmental Substantive Copy Editing Stylistic</p>	<p>tone, clarity, and accuracy, conceptual problems, gaps, ambiguity, flow, and consistency.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Readability, organization, pacing, sentence structure, rhythm• Explanations, anecdotes, illustrations, analogies, and assumptions• Faulty logic, factual errors or inconsistencies, outdated or irrelevant content• Fiction issues such as descriptions, plot, dialogue, point of view, character development, setting, lack of conflict/tension
<p>Copyediting</p> 	<p>Line-by-line Line Editing</p>	<p>content is correct, logical, consistent, and understandable</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Glaring typos, grammar, and punctuation errors• Inconsistencies and Anomalies• Check sources cited and Scripture references, suggest related scriptures• Stylistic suggestions such as redundancies, word choice, sentence clarity, consistent of tone/voice
<p>Proofreading</p> 	<p>Mechanical Edit</p>	<p>Consistencies and errors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Spelling, grammar, and capitalization, abbreviations• Typographical, layout, spacing, formatting, alignment• Table of Contents• Specialized terms, character names, location references, etc.• Numerical and alphabetical sequences• References to illustrations, tables, and figures within the text• Scriptures are copied accurately with the correct verse and version• Formatting of Biblical references

How The Levels of Editing Align With Your Writing Journey

Type	Stage of Writing	Questions to ask yourself
Developmental Editing 	Concept, idea. What, when, where, why, for whom?	Does my idea fit for my genre, audience, market?
Content Editing 	Outline, getting the pieces together. Does the story go where it should to accomplish the purpose of the project?	Does my story make sense and flow well?
Copyediting 	The right ingredients at right time, in the right order	Does my manuscript say what I want it to? Is my writing clear and does the story make sense to someone else? Could it benefit from a few re-writes? Would I benefit from a little coaching?
Proofreading 	Cleaning up the mess	Is my piece error-free in regards to punctuation, usage, grammar, spelling, citations, layout, and formatting? Does it meet all of the publisher's guidelines? Is this a perfect, polished, professional piece?

How To Determine What Level of Editing You Need

Type

Example

You may need an editor or proofreader if...

Developmental Editing

I'm going to teach authors about the basics of editing during my Share Person week on WMWN.

Since Kim always talks about bunny trails, I'm going to share pictures of our beloved departed BunBun for the animal lovers in my writer's group whenever I feel like it..



Content Editing

Day 1: Introduction. Transition to definitions of basic levels of editing with baking analogy. Provide practical cheat sheets relevant for authors.

Day 1: Assure authors that editors are their friends and we need to make a living too, so get over it and everyone will be better off. Because I said so.

Transition to Day 2.

Day 2: In-depth explanation of how editors set up their business and of the tools we use to prove we know more than authors so just do as we say.

Day 2: Recap Day 1 with links. Transition to day 2 to explain the tools editors use to for understanding of what an author is actually paying an editor to do.



Copyediting

The levels of editing follow the same journey. A developmental editor examines the overall concept, genre, and intended market. A content editor makes sure the flow is logical and the story makes sense for your intended purpose. Copy editors correct errors in grammar, sentence structure, and clarity. Finally, proofreaders polish out any remaining spelling and punctuation mistakes.

Errors in grammar are corrected by copy editors while sentence structure is also reviewed for clarity. The levels of editing are like baking a cake. Your overall concept will be examined by a developmental editor. Proofreaders fixed spelling and a proofreader will polish out mistakes in punctuation. Developmental editors also review the genre and intended market so content editors will ensure the flow is logical.



Proofreading

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You're human.

(Did you catch my two mistakes? See the next page)



Proofreading Errors From Page 3

We get an idea...

--needs to be plural to be consistent with the rest of the paragraph.

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Extra space.