

## Questions to ask a Potential Editor

Contributed by Charity Hogge  
Monday, 08 May 2006  
Last Updated Friday, 07 July 2006

What you need to know before you decide to work with an editor.

Here's what you need to do when working with a book editor

When I meet with a new client, I first determine what level of editing the writer wants. What are you comfortable with, and what do you need? I do a sample edit, usually 3-5 pages, at no charge. I do this so that you can experience firsthand my style of editing—;is it too heavy-handed, or not critical enough?—;and so that I can get a sense of your writing. Once I have edited a few pages, I can give you an accurate estimate of the time I'll spend, as well as how much it will cost.

I charge \$19 per hour, and editors on the high end charge as much as \$35 per hour. It isn't cheap, so ask some questions: On average, how many pages does he or she edit per hour? (I average 7-10; if your book is 300 pages long, I'll charge you at least \$600 &hellip; and you could easily spend a lot more. This depends on the depth of the edit.) What is the editor's background? (Look for a degree in English or something similar, or a lot of experience &hellip; or hopefully, both.) How many books has she or he edited? Have any been published? Discuss your book and listed to the editor's reaction: is she excited? Does she seem respectful of your goals and boundaries? And of course, you'll need her references.

I cherish my relationships with my past clients. I feel like I know them intimately from closely reading their writing, and I am honored by their trust in me. I am proud that they recommend me and speak on my behalf, and I make an effort to keep in contact with them after our work together is done. I like to know if they've had success in publishing or are writing another book. Call up a couple of your prospective editor's past clients and ask them if the editor contributed to a quality manuscript.

Another point to think about: Most people prefer to read from paper rather than a computer screen. However, there are advantages to having an edit done electronically: you can go over the changes (I like the Microsoft Word "track changes" function) and accept or reject them instantly, without having to laboriously transfer commas from paper to computer. Personally, I work a little faster with electronic data, although I prefer paper too.

Sometimes I think that the hardest part of editing is convincing writers that they need one. You need one. It's not personal. It's easy to get wrapped up in your writing: you wrote it, you read over it so many times that you don't see obvious mistakes. And you love your words. It's hard to be hear that, for

example, on page 143 the description is nice but much too long &hellip; That the event on page 87 seems out of order ... That the names of two of your characters are too similar and you might want to change one&hellip;. (And what&rsquo;s up with dropping that last serial comma?)

Just remember that you and your editor are fighting the good fight. There is an increasing tendency to forego proper usage; who has time for a comma splice while instant messaging? But you have something to say, and how you say it matters. We love a well-turned phrase. We have this for grammar. And if you trust us, we&rsquo;ll help you produce a manuscript that speaks from your heart with striking clarity.

For details, visit [www.MightyPenEditing.com](http://www.MightyPenEditing.com). I&rsquo;ve been doing this for seven years, and I&rsquo;d love to talk with you about your book.