



**FOUR CENTRES
EMERGING WRITERS PROGRAM**



Supporting writers of all ages and abilities

‘Editing for Writers’

Seminar hosted by Fremantle Press on Saturday 6 November 2021

Comments from participants:

Remember - Work with an editor is conversational, not adversarial. The gist of the workshop was that editors have different skill sets – some are structural, some copy and line edit experts and yet others are excellent proof-readers. Authors, too, are unique and a good editor takes that into account.

On finishing a draft, the writer is advised to put the manuscript down for at least several weeks to several months, so they can themselves read their work with fresh eyes.

Types of Editing:

Structural Editing involves being able to “see what is not there”, assessing the manuscript for how it answers the big questions it raises and looking toward developing coherence and consistency. Examples of structural editing: Are chapters similar in length, improving the readability of a novel? Is there a clear theme for each chapter? Where does the book best start – it may be chapter three? What plot holes need to be fixed?

Line Editing is attention to the style and authenticity of each line. Questions range from whether a word should be hyphenated to whether a particular word was in use at the time the novel is set.

Copy Editing covers considerations including use of repetition – is that effective or necessary? The use of swearing in the text. Do chapter beginnings engage the reader? Are chapter endings satisfactory and is tension maintained and built through the text?

Proof Reading ensures that typos, loose lines, and outdated language are identified via fresh eyes.



The three key aspects of editing:

1. Developmental/structural editing when the structure and plot of the book are reviewed – this is when an editor can spot what is missing. Do you need more tension? Is another plot twist required? What about the length of chapters? Are they too long/short/inconsistent?
2. Copy editing/ line editing when the manuscript is reviewed for grammar, and its house style - word choice/ repetition, use of swear words. It’s important to remember that language is always changing, and if it takes a long time, e.g. a decade to develop a manuscript, conventions may have changed in the interim
3. Proof reading – this is usually done by somebody who hasn’t read previous versions and brings a fresh eye to the manuscript, can pick up repetition, plot inconsistencies etc.

Do's and Don'ts of Editing

- DO Work with peer editors – i.e. people who are at the same stage or slightly ahead of you as a writer – swap around 2000 words and read each other's work.
- DO leave as much time as you can between finishing the first draft and then editing the manuscript – you will have fresher eyes, be more objective and will see what's working and what's not.
- DO read out your manuscript – if you stumble on a sentence, it is a red flag that it's too complex or confusing etc.
- DO read your manuscript in a short period of time, mark it up
- DO try to weave in what you've raised in the beginning of the story, into the ending.
- DO Get your manuscript to the best you can before working with an editor
- DON'T Pay for developmental editing – this can be counter-productive as;
 - 1) editors outside of publishing aren't making the decision to publish;
 - 2) it can be very subjective;
 - 3) they can provide false hope about a manuscript's potential
 - 4) some of their suggestions may have to be unravelled like a jumper and re-knitted – this can be a lot more work



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The Role of the Author in the Editing Process

- When matched with an editor, an author usually feels a combination of huge relief and terror. Relief because there is someone to help the manuscript develop. Terror because you will be challenged on your writing and will need to provide answers as to why you have written the way you have, or be able to make the changes required.
- You need to step up and be open-hearted and open minded.
- Approach it as an opportunity to make the book better.
- Dig deeper to make the edits that are suggested to help get the book to where it can be.
- There is a power imbalance between the author and editor – when you really want to be published it can be difficult to feel empowered BUT:
- Remember that an editor will love and care for your book in a way that's hard to appreciate as a first-time author
- Remember that an editor has your back, e.g. litigation or other issues. You may not realise this, but you need to trust this as an author.
- A writer outsources their judgement to editors – but you need to be solid when you are clear that something really does need to stay in the manuscript.
- Work with an editor is conversational, not adversarial.

