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Line-by-Line Editing Services

The complexity of long-form content makes it challenging to create a consistent style throughout a manuscript and to avoid errors in spelling, word choices, and more. These are often called “mechanical errors,” yet impact everything from the mood set by a piece, to readers’ understanding of and trust in the truth of what’s being shared. Studies suggest that readers have a harder time retaining information and believing a writer is credible if something like newspaper articles contain grammatical errors.[[1]](#endnote-1) Online readers have also noted being willing to pay more for edited content, expecting it to be more professional and well organized.[[2]](#endnote-2) Here are three editing options once your basic content structure is defined:

**Copyediting options**

As a certified editor, I offer three levels of copyediting (light, medium, heavy) for fiction and nonfiction authors to consider based on your content status, finances, and deadline (if any).

For all levels, I will correct indisputable errors in grammar, syntax (word order), and word usage (including inconsistent capitalization, use of hyphens, etc.). The main elements added in a medium or heavy copyedit are addressing major organizational challenges and factors that can reduce reader understanding, such as awkwardly phrased passages or unclear word choices. These editing levels differ in whether those elements are pointed out for the author to address or “fixed” for your consideration.

* Fee is from 2.5 cents per word to 5 cents per word ($1,500-$3,000 at 60,000 words)

At 3 c/word or higher, you receive a guide that documents style and formatting decisions made throughout the manuscript. The style guide covers word choices that aren’t addressed by the Chicago Manual or other basic style guide, so you can track steps taken to consistently treat something like hyphenation. Having this top-level list of editing decisions can reduce the time needed for professional proofreading as a next step. It also helps ensure consistency in how you refer to book content in blog posts, query letters and future works, such as a book sequel.

**Line editing**

I line edit memoirs and other creative nonfiction for voice and style — that is, to ensure ideas are clearly expressed in the author’s voice, and to ensure engaging writing. A line edit is done after developmental editing, and before copyediting for errors in spelling and such. Line editing, like developmental editing, considers big picture elements that impact voice such as point of view, but content is reviewed sentence by sentence. Style considerations include improving the way quotes are handled, and indicating approaches that sap energy, such as overuse of adverbs, awkward phrasing, and wordiness or repetition. For example, overly complex sentence structures can reduce readers’ engagement, taking away from the mood of a piece and hiding the author’s voice. In addition, sentence flow is evaluated, as well as whether they effectively convey urgency or another mood the author is after.

* Fee ranges from 3 to 5 cents per word

**Proofreading**

Proofing is a final, catch-all step to check for glaring errors, such as double periods at the end of a sentence, misspelled words, a misnumbered page or a headline in a different style than other headlines.

As an author of fiction or nonfiction, it could be tempting to skip proofreading. But it’s very common for a few grammar glitches and more to be caught during proofing, which is why traditional publishing houses often have two separate proofreaders review finalized text, image captions and all. They know each professional might catch different things. For that same reason, I rarely proofread a book that I have already copyedited (unless finances are a pressing concern and a bundled package is preferred).

Why not run Microsoft Word’s Spell Check instead and purchase software to flag potential grammar gaffes? Not having real eyeballs proof your finalized work is risky; editing software won’t pick up that you mistakenly used “feat” when you meant to write “feet,” for instance. That’s why even seasoned writers hire proofreaders.

* Fee ranges from 2 to 3.5 cents per word

My Process

I evaluate manuscripts individually to give you a fixed bid in advance based on your word count, stated needs, and how much editing work I will do. For copyediting, I will often suggest two levels of copyedit that you can choose between, sharing the specific details of what I will do in each case. I provide one round of copyedits or line edits, and a reduced rate if you want a second round after you have updated the manuscript with suggested edits. Proofreading involves one round of review for glaring errors.

With each type of sentence-level edit, the best estimate is possible from reviewing your entire manuscript. But if preferred, I can develop a bid after reviewing at least six chapters (two from the beginning, two from the middle and two from the book’s end). I am happy to share language in writing in advance about not showing your content to anyone in any form without your prior written permission.

My Experience

An award-winning writer and editor, I have a passion for elevating authors and prose, and have edited professionally for magazine clients and others for two decades. [Since 2016](https://www.vitalwordplay.com/editing-info?pgid=kqziq67f-e169fbf9-1a34-4156-b118-3d4df87cc443), I have focused on working with self-published authors and with W. W. Norton, MIT Press and two other publishing houses. In addition to running a creative nonfiction writing group for several years, and judging state and national book competitions, I continually work to expand my skills. That includes classes on storytelling, structure, editing for voice and style, the publishing process, using the language of diversity, and more. Formally, I have completed the Poynter Institute/ACEScertificate in editing, as well as acing UC, San Diego’s copyediting certificate program (with more than 120-plus hours of classwork).

I use an organized, thorough approach to developmental edit, ghostwrite, line edit and copyedit print and digital content. Beyond book projects, copyediting and proofreading clients have included magazines for a geological sciences college and an engineering construction institute, a spirituality blogger, conservation non-profits, and the Health and Human Services division of Texas (editing physician education modules). Until 2016, I spent a decade plus developing magazine issues, web features and other content while assisting faculty with communicating their work at a top-ranking medical school and an R1 research university.

Next Steps

Please reach out on the [Contact](https://www.vitalwordplay.com/contact) form with basic project details, after which I will send a few questions tailored to your specific situation. After receiving those responses, we can discuss sharing of your manuscript in Microsoft Word. I would get an estimate back to you within five working days. I also offer developmental editing of a rough manuscript and ghostwriting.

Thank you for your interest in Vital Wordplay Services!

Barbra A. Rodriguez

1. Appelman (Northern Kentucky University) and Boll, 2011: https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/073953291103200205 [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Dr. Fred Vultee, Wayne State Univ., 2015: https://www.americanpressinstitute.org/publications/research-review/the-value-of-copy-editing/ [↑](#endnote-ref-2)