



Book Writing & Self Publishing Course

MODULE 2: PRACTICAL BOOK WRITING

Topic 9: Preliminary Editing of Your Work

You should be the first to edit your book. These days, people type with Microsoft word processor, which helps them with spellings, punctuation and even word-counts.

But there are also editing soft-wares that one can download or purchase online to help with editing.

Effective editing is key to good writing. You should engage professional editor for your book, but you can do the initial editing by yourself; that's part of the reason you are called, a Self-publishing author.

Here are few guidelines.

Only edit printed work. That means you have to print out your book and carry out a manual editing. In the process, you rearrange, cut what is not necessary, delete, and substitute words.

Read aloud your content to hear how it sounds. This is to check style. Ear is better than eye to check style.

Edit for content:

- Is your purpose of writing immediately clear?
- Have you limited your subject sufficiently, that you didn't take many subjects in one place?
- Did you support your point with enough details including examples?
- Does the organization of your writing flow easily? Is it logical from beginning to end?
- Does your work answer the following questions relating to your theme: "who, what, when, where, why, and how", where necessary?

Editing for brevity

- Have you weeded out extraneous words that do not add much to a sentence?

- Have you used short, punchy words instead of long ones? Eg, instead of endeavour, use 'try'. Instead of aggregate, use 'total'.
- Did you use specific adjectives to make your sentences punchy?
- Is the average sentence length about 17 words? Long sentences bore the reader, except you inject effective punctuation that provide 'stop & break' in sentences.

Editing for tone & style

- Does your copy sound as if it is coming from a human being or an institution? Have you written with human touch?
- Have you avoided using an authoritarian tone when telling others what to do, except you have authority to do so?
- Have you used tact and good taste when dealing with sensitive or difficult situations?

Editing for Vigour & pace

Check to see if you used the strongest verbs possible. Determine if you...

- avoided passive voice in most cases
- used long nouns that can be changed to verbs

eg. Change, "give consideration to", to "consider"; "arrived at an agreement" to "agreed".

- you varied the length of your sentences. Your writing should contain short, medium and longer sentences. This adds rhythm and pace to your work.

Editing for paragraph length

- Does each paragraph deal only on one issue? Including more than one issue in a paragraph can confuse the reader.
- Is each paragraph developed logically?
- Does each sentence in the paragraph contribute to the main idea of the paragraph? Have you supported the idea with enough details: facts, examples, incidents, arguments, reasons?
- Are the sentences in each paragraph linked where necessary by transitional words, such as "however, also, yet, although", etc?
- Have you avoided using paragraphs longer than 7 or 8 lines? Long paragraphs cause accidental line skipping when reading.
- Have you varied your paragraphs length? An occasional one-line paragraph is okay. It adds punch, depending on the point it conveys.

Your final editing

Put yourself in the readers place and re-read the script to be sure nothing can be misinterpreted.

Check for accuracy of facts. Verify tenses.

Then you may turn in your work to an editor to see what you haven't seen.

That's how to self-edit your work.

Congratulations!