

# Boost Your Book's Impact: A Look at the Four Phases of Editing for Self-Published Authors

With traditional publishing being such an exclusive game, self-publishing is the perfect way for authors to share their stories. Yet, while most authors know they need a professional editor, many need help to figure out what kind.

As a freelance editor, I've noticed that many people looking for an editor use the terms 'copy editing' and 'line editing' interchangeably. Still more confuse copy editing with proofreading.

If you're a self-publishing author, you should know there are four primary types of editing:

- structural (or developmental editing)
- copy editing
- stylistic (or line editing)
- proofreading.

In this article, I'll explore each editing phase and its significance in the editing process.

## Phase One: Developmental or Structural Editing to Shape Your Manuscript

Structural or developmental editing is the first stage in the editing process. During this phase, your editor will focus on the big picture to help you refine the following:

- structure
- plot
- characters
- narrative flow

Some of the critical tasks in structural or developmental editing include:

- **Plot Evaluation:** Your editor will assess your story's pacing, plot holes, and coherence. This helps strengthen your storyline and captivate readers from beginning to end.
- **Character Development:** Characters are integral to any great story. Your editor will provide feedback on character depth, consistency, and motivations.
- **Point of View (POV):** Here, your editor will address any issues related to the narrative perspective. The goal here is to ensure a consistent and engaging POV throughout.
- **Setting and World-Building:** This is essential, especially in fantasy or science fiction genres. Your editor will help you create immersive and believable worlds.

Developmental editing is a collaborative process between the author and the editor. The focus is on shaping your manuscript into a compelling and well-structured story. It also sets the foundation for later editing stages.

## Phase Two: Copy Editing to Polish Your Prose

Once your developmental edit is complete and your structural issues are sorted, it's time for copy editing. Copy editing delves into the finer details of your writing, such as:

- overall readability
- grammatical errors
- inconsistencies
- awkward phrasing

Key tasks in copy editing include:

- **Grammar and Syntax:** Correcting grammar and syntax errors to ensure clarity and coherence.
- **Spelling and Punctuation:** Checking for spelling mistakes and consistent, appropriate use of punctuation.
- **Style and Consistency:** Maintaining consistency in style, tone, and formatting throughout the manuscript.
- **Word Choice:** Suggesting alternative words to improve clarity and enhance your narrative's impact.

Copy editing helps polish your manuscript and get it ready for the next phase in the editing process.

## Phase Three: Stylistic or Line Editing to Make Your Manuscript Shine

Line editing goes beyond the mechanics of copy editing (spelling, grammar, and punctuation). It focuses on enhancing the language itself. This type of editing aims to elevate your prose, making it more engaging and expressive.

Critical tasks in line editing include:

- **Sentence Structure:** Evaluating sentence structure for clarity, rhythm, and variety.
- **Voice and Tone:** Ensuring the author's voice shines through while maintaining consistency in tone.
- **Eliminating Redundancy:** Identifying and removing redundant phrases or repetitive expressions.
- **Enhancing Dialogue:** Improving dialogue to make it authentic and engaging.

Structural or line editing adds depth and literary quality to your writing so it resonates with readers. It's the stage where your manuscript truly comes to life.

## Phase Four: Proofreading to Ensure Quality

Proofreading is the last editing stage, focusing on catching any remaining errors before publication. It's a meticulous review of the final formatted manuscript to ensure it's error-free.

Critical tasks in proofreading include:

- **Checking for Typos:** Scanning for typographical errors, misspellings, and formatting issues.
- **Formatting and Layout:** Ensuring consistency in fonts, headings, margins, and other formatting elements.
- **Cross-Checking:** Verifying that all elements, such as page numbers, table of contents, and captions, are accurate and in place.

Proofreading provides that extra layer of quality control. It ensures that your book is free of distracting errors that can detract from the reading experience.

If you plan to self-publish your work, you should understand the four editing phases. Each phase plays a crucial role in refining and perfecting your manuscript. And while a well-edited book presents as being professional, a lack of proper editing can drive readers away.

If you want to compete in the literary marketplace, it's worth collaborating with a skilled editor. Knowing the various phases of the editing process can help you invest in the right editing services for your self-published work.