

THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF EDITING I

MJMC Sem II Paper 202

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Terms in editing can be confusing to a new author, especially because the terms are often used interchangeably and may have different meanings within the industry. However, here are the most widely accepted terms and their meanings. When hiring an editor, always speak to him or her about exactly what the editing includes.

COPYEDITING

Copyediting, commonly called line editing, is a light form of editing that applies a professional polish to a book. The editor reviews your work, fixing any mechanical errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation. Copyediting is the least-expensive version of editing.

Some professionals divide copyediting and line editing into two separate edits, copyediting being the lighter, grammar-only edit, and line editing being a more intense look at each sentence's meaning. Always clarify with your editor what is included in his or her copyedit to be sure.

LINE EDITING

Line editing is often used interchangeably with the term copyediting. However, when it is distinguished from copyediting, it refers to a unique edit that falls between copyediting and developmental editing in intensity. In line editing, the editor looks at your book line by line and analyzes each sentence. The editor considers word choice and the power and meaning of a sentence. The editor considers syntax and whether a sentence needs to be trimmed or tightened. Line editing helps to makes your prose sing.

MECHANICAL EDITING

Mechanical editing refers to the application of a particular style, such as The Chicago Manual of Style or Associated Press (AP) Style. The editor looks at punctuation, capitalization, spelling, abbreviations, and any other style rules. Mechanical editing is sometimes included in copyediting.

SUBSTANTIVE EDITING

Substantive editing considers a work's organization and presentation. It involves tightening and clarifying at a chapter, scene, paragraph, and sentence level. Unlike developmental editing, which covers the big-picture issues and deep-level restructuring, substantive editing deals with the actual prose. Substantive editing is sometimes referred to as line editing and can also be confused with developmental editing. Always check with your editor and put in writing what his or her services cover, regardless of the term used.

DEVELOPMENTAL EDITING

The developmental editor looks deeply at the organization and strength of a book. Think big picture. The editor considers everything from pacing to characters, point of view, tense, plot, subplots, and dialogue. Weak links are exposed and questioned. The editor scrutinizes order, flow, and consistency. He asks questions such as: Is this the right number of chapters? Are the chapters and paragraphs in the right order? Are there any places in the book where the pacing lags? Is there a hole in the information or story presented? Are the characters likable? Developmental editing considers all the aspects of a manuscript that make the book readable and enjoyable. Because of the extensive nature of this form of editing, it is more time intensive and costly. However, it is worth the investment if you are serious about succeeding as an author.