

Save Money!

7 Steps to Preparing Your Manuscript for Copy Editing

Here it is, as promised! I hope you get a lot out of this tip sheet. These are some of the very steps I use in my professional business to copy edit and proof documents. Please enjoy.

You can save yourself a lot of money by being as thorough as you can be prior to sending your manuscript to a professional copy editor. Do these seven steps and you'll be amazed at what you missed the first (or second, or third) time through.

- 1) **RUN** spellcheck. *Be sure to look at each suggestion to make sure it is correct* before you accept the suggestion. This is one of the most-overlooked help tips ever. Even though spellcheck isn't flawless, you can catch a lot of typos this way. (I realize many people don't agree with this step because it's not flawless, but the function is there; why not use it?)
- 2) **CHECK** anything you're unsure of or are claiming to be true: Abbreviations, dates, facts, numbers, and so on. If you are unsure of *anything*, take the time to research it. This step can affect your future credibility. **LOOK** at every graphic, table, chart, and anything that isn't just copy. Read every single word and number in charts and tables. Check for accuracy. If you have a Table of Contents, index, and/or foot notes or end notes, cross-check every single item. (I hum a lot at this stage. It seems to keep my mind a little more sane.)
- 3) **PRINT** a hard copy in a DIFFERENT FONT. Now the fun begins. Gather pencils, sharpeners, erasers, post-it notes, colored pens, and those little plastic page markers that look like arrows. (I put mine in a little velvet bag. I have all kinds of tricks like this that make copy editing and proofing more interesting to all my senses.)
- 4) **CHANGE** everything about your normal work environment. This will help you break out of the auto-pilot your eyeballs and brain have been on while you've been writing. Sit in a different chair or room, or get out of your office altogether. It is extremely easy to become blind to your own writing. Often writers will not see that they are missing simple words like "to," "at," and "the." Our minds fill in those little words, and you literally read as though those words were there. Do everything you can to read with new eyes. Imagine yourself as a different person. (I grab some kind of tea I don't normally drink, do my hair a little differently, and go sit by the creek in my local park, where I imagine myself in England!)
- 5) Now very carefully read and **PROOFREAD** each and every word. If you're not a grammar king or queen, do your best with the punctuation and syntax. **CORRECT** as you read,

using a colored pen that is easy to see on the page. Write the corrections in the margins as well as in the text itself to make them simpler to find later.

- 6) Once you're back in your office, **ENTER** the corrections into your digital manuscript. Do this carefully or you can miss some of your proof marks. You might even want to use a different colored pen to cross a line through marks you've entered. (I don't necessarily wait until I'm completely done with a document; sometimes the change in tasks is helpful to stay fresh on the copy editing and proofing.)
- 7) Now **READ** your entire manuscript out loud. I know, I know. You're probably sick of your own work by now. You may need to take a break for a couple of days before you do this step. Either that, or ask someone else to read it aloud to you. You'll be absolutely amazed at what you catch doing this step. This is where the real money savings can be, if you are getting ready to pass your manuscript on to a professional copy editor. You may want to go through all of these steps again to be really thorough.

Remember, the more copy editing and proofing you do yourself, the more you can save when you pass your document to a professional copy editor or proofreader. Of course, I strongly recommend that you **DO** use a professional, simply because, no matter how carefully you work through the steps above, it is almost impossible to sufficiently remove yourself from your own writing to be objective enough to edit without emotional attachment.

Stay focused and always remember to enjoy what you do. This is what makes happy people!

Warmly,

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