

Author Handbook Editing Topics

I'm new to editing/publishers. What will the editing process be?

1. You will be assigned an editor by the EIC. You and the editor will communicate by email, passing files back and forth. Your first introduction to your editor will typically consist of the editor introducing herself and giving you the first round of edits.
2. Depending on how much work needs done, you will have an average of two to three passes with the editor. Some work comes in so clean, it only needs one or two passes; others need more work and may have five. We can't tell you in advance how many passes you will need. It all depends on how much work needs done and how efficient the editor and author are at tackling the work. **It is highly suggested that the author do a read-through after each round of edits,** since it's easy to miss errors created during the edits, when you are just accepting changes and moving on.
3. After that, your book will go through an EIC review/galley check. **The EIC review pass is the final chance the author has to make changes to the book file.** Read the entire book completely and carefully.

NOTES ON THE EDITING PROCESS:

All authors should expect a thorough editing process, unless it's a re-release of a work that has been adequately edited to our house style already, which is unlikely, unless the work has previously been edited by our editors.

We do edits using track changes, comment bubbles, and highlighting. **If you want to accept an editor change,** just do so in track changes, then remove any unnecessary comment bubbles or highlighting associated with the change. **If you (the author) sees changes that need made during edits,** feel free to make them and leave the track changes for the editor to follow. **If you need to refuse a change or question a change the editor made,** do *not* reject the tracked change. Instead, leave a comment bubble for the editor, questioning the change or explaining why you feel the editor might have misunderstood your purpose. **If something bothers you about the work/you feel something is wrong in your work or need a second pair of eyes on one part in particular,** feel free to put a comment bubble in the work to have the editor take an extra look at it for you. **You can give the editor blanket permission to do formatting changes without track changes on.** That will save you having to accept extraneous changes that are automatic.

Sometimes, you and the editor might disagree about what needs done. **Fireborn believes that there is practically no situation we cannot talk to a agreement on, if both sides are willing to compromise a bit.** There are very few issues (usual legal issues, like copyright/plagiarism, libel, or under-aged human characters having sex in the work) where we have no recourse but to do what the law says. **When you disagree with the editor and cannot seem to come to a compromise...** That is what the EIC (editor in chief) is for. eMail Kathy at the [EIC email](#)

[address](#), and she will act as the mediator. She is also the final word on where FBP's line is, the point at which we cannot compromise further.

There seems to be an awful lot of red ink on the pages. I'm worried...

Some authors are concerned. We sometimes hear comments like: "If the book needed *this* much work, why did you sign it?" Rest assured, if we signed your work, we feel the story is worth the work to make it the best it can be.

Writing is a complex endeavor. An author can be a fantastic storyteller and can craft wonderful, empathetic, three-dimensional characters, but that same author can be weak in the technical aspects of writing (spelling, punctuation, grammar, verb tenses, etc.). That doesn't make a book a horrible book; it just means the author needs help making the book better. That is what an editor does. An editor will also help authors who are good technical writers improve their continuity, plotting, characterization, timing, point of view issues... Most authors need a little help with both sides of the coin.

Many editors are also authors. They know how important a second set of eyes is, and they enjoy helping authors improve their individual works...and also, hopefully, help them hone their craft to make future edits run smoother.

My first editor (Suzanne James) had a saying that has stayed with me all these years: "The editor is not dismembering your baby; she is polishing your gem." To that, I added: "Sometimes you have to cut the rough edges before you start polishing." Remember that edits are not a grade on how well you write. There is nothing personal about it. It is a cooperative effort to create a stellar piece of work that will go out with your name and ours on it. If you find yourself getting frustrated, take a break for a day or two and go back to work.

Editors will make changes to fix technical writing and to bring the book into line with house style. In the contract, the author gives the publisher (via the editing staff) permission to make these sorts of minor changes. Unless you feel the editor is wrong (it happens infrequently, but it does happen), these edits shouldn't be of great concern to an author. Most of them will be accept and move on types of situations, since they aren't changes that will affect the meaning of the work.

An editor will never try to change the author voice or the core story. That doesn't mean there will be no content edits done on the work. If an editor sees a hole or a problem, chances are a reader or ten will as well. That doesn't mean the author is at the complete mercy of doing everything an editor says, of course. While the publisher is given final say on edits in contract, the author remains the author, and we will not make these sorts of changes without author input into how the changes are made. Short the case of a deceased author, Fireborn will never assign an editor to play the role of author, to change or add or delete significant portions of the work.

Often, the author will have a clear picture in mind while writing the book, but that picture didn't adequately make it to the page, leaving the reader/editor to fill in blanks or misunderstand something. If the editor points out a hole or conflict, it's worth the author's time

to fill/correct for it. That doesn't mean the author doing exactly what the editor suggests or envisions. Take the time to use the comment bubbles (or email) to discuss it with the editor. Sometimes, what seems like a huge change can be settled with the author adding (or deleting or changing) a few words or sentences. When Suz and I first started working together, a simple misunderstanding had her envisioning making major characterization changes to the work; in the end, I needed to change one word throughout the book to make it clear to her.

We do allow for the use of a certain amount of vernacular in our stories, both in dialog and in narrative. However, even vernacular has to be readable, unless a bit of dialog is *meant* to be unintelligible to both reader and POV character (certainly not in large swaths of the story). That means a deep brogue/accnt may need reined in. It also means that even vernacular should have a minimum of correct spelling, grammar, and always correct punctuation.

I want to improve my craft. Can you suggest resources?

Actually, we can! [Daily Grammar's lesson archive](#) is a fantastic resource for authors who need help with learning the technical side of writing. If you need help with other craft items, ask Kathy or Brenna. We probably have something we can point you to, and we will also discuss items with you, if you feel it would be beneficial.

What can I do in advance of edits to make the edits go faster?

You were probably sent this when you were signed to FBP, but I'll include it here, just in case.

Basic "Pre-Edits" Worksheet (for authors)

Search for the following terms

That

Read the sentence aloud. If the sentence makes sense without the word "that", please delete this word.

It

If at all possible, replace the word "it" with a more concrete noun or phrase. Example: It didn't matter. = The crappy weather didn't matter.

Was

In instances where you're using it in a sentence such as: He was tall. He was sad. She was pretty. She was tired. – please attempt to re-write to *show* the reader rather than tell.

Example:

He was tall. = *When Jake walked into a room, his head nearly brushed the top of the doorframe.*

She was tired. = *She struggled to keep her eyes open and bit back a yawn.*

** Telling is usually a sign of lazy writing. Put some effort into these sentences and try to draw the reader a picture with your words. ☺

Action Tags

If you use an **action tag** (He laughed. She chuckled. Bobby rolled his eyes.), make sure you separate the dialogue with a period (or question mark or exclamation point, if applicable), not a comma, and capitalize the first word in the **action tag**.

Use action tags a lot. These create a more vivid picture for the reader. They help show the character's personality, and also, bring a setting to life.

If you use something other than an action tag, please try to stick with the word *said*.

Anything else draws the reader's attention and reminds them they are reading a story ... rather than living the fictional dream.

Examples of exceptions would be if something was whispered or yelled.

Overused Words and Phrases

Read through your manuscript and look for overused words or phrases ("*Just*" is a very commonly overused word). If your character is rolling his eyes three times on one page, change two of them to something else. If you use the word "hand" six times in 2 paragraphs, find another way to describe what's happening using other words.

Redundancy

Read through your manuscript and look for redundancy -

He shrugged his shoulders. He nodded his head. He squinted his eyes.

** A person ONLY shrugs their shoulders, nods their head, or squints their eyes, so "his shoulders", "his head", and "his eyes" are not needed.

He shrugged. He nodded.

Floating or Autonomous Body Parts

Read through your manuscript and look for floating body parts. Connect them to the person, or rewrite for clarity.

Examples:

His hand touched her face. = *He touched her face.*

Her head lifted. = *She lifted her head.*

Hanging Modifiers

Read through your manuscript and look for hanging modifiers. Fix these sentences so they make sense.

Examples:

Looking over his shoulder, the man followed closely on his heels. = Looking over his shoulder, Jake caught sight of the man following closely on his heels.

The way it's written in the first sentence, it means "the man" who is following too closely looked over his shoulder and the entire sentence doesn't make sense. **ALSO, remember, in sentences like this, the actions expressed have to be able to be done simultaneously.**

Here's an example:

Tying his shoes, he walked out the door. The way this sentence is constructed, it means the man tied his shoes and walked out the door at the same time - a physical impossibility.

Be careful, and make sure your sentences make sense.

Knew & Felt

Read through your manuscript and look for the words "he/she knew" and "he/she felt". Delete them and rewrite the sentences for clarity. You're in a character's POV (point of view), so it's understood that they "knew" or "felt".

Examples:

He knew she hated him with a passion. = She hated him with a passion.

She felt her face grow hot. = Her face grew hot.

Welcome to Fireborn!