# Legal Terms for Editing

Setting expectations

Line editing and Copyediting are conducted before proofreading, which is the final stage of work to be undertaken on a manuscript before publication. **Author**, your manuscript will not be ready for publishing at the end of either the line edit or the copyedit. It should be subjected to a final proofread as to content and layout by a trained professional. (I regret, I do not provide a proofreading service.)

Line editing

I will:

Determine the language and reading level appropriate for the intended audience and medium;

Ensure the work conforms to the appropriate style manual or guide and dictionary, and create a Style Guide to establish design decisions for this manuscript;

Where necessary for narrative clarity and quality, move chapters, sections, or paragraphs from one place to another;

Flag sentences or paragraphs that require further development by the author for effective narrative quality and flow;

Only write original material (ghostwrite) if commissioned by the author for a certain purpose and at additional rate; and

Only conduct original research if commissioned by the author for a certain purpose and at additional rate.

*Nonfiction*

Recommend, if necessary, that certain ideas be developed further or cut from the manuscript for use in a second publication.

*Fiction*

Recommend changes in pacing and plot;

Recommend changes in dialogue to ensure that diction, tone, and vocabulary are consistent with character’s age, occupation, life experience and educational background; and

Identify characters who should get more or less time on the stage, or who should be cut from the manuscript.

I will not:

Ensure that the grammar, spelling, and punctuation of the work is correct, line-by-line (because that needs to be done in the next phase of writing, once all the bigger picture pieces are in place);

Perform any proofreading;

Write original material (ghostwriting) unless commissioned by the author for a certain purpose and at an additional rate; or

Conduct research unless commissioned by the author for a certain purpose and at an additional rate.

Copyediting

I will:

Determine the language and reading level appropriate for the intended audience and medium;

Ensure the work conforms to the appropriate style manual or guide and dictionary, and create a Style Guide to establish design decisions for this manuscript;

Only where necessary, rewrite sentences, paragraphs, or passages to resolve ambiguities, ensure logical connections, and clarify the author’s meaning or intention, in harmony with the style of the material;

Ensure that transitions between sentences and between paragraphs are smooth and support the coherent development of the text as a whole;

Adjust the length and structure of paragraphs to ensure variety or consistency, as appropriate to the audience and medium;

Where necessary to ensure that a paragraph has a clear and coherent focus, reorder sentences within paragraphs;

Eliminate wordiness;

Render jargon to plain language while leaving terms of art intact;

Delete material that is redundant or detracts from the narrative, or flag such material that in my judgement, should be deleted;

Ensure correctness and consistency of spelling, mechanics, usage and punctuation. Language is a flexible tool and evolves daily: different styles of expression, usage and punctuation are appropriate to different forms of writing. The approach will be set out in the Style Guide. I will use the styles that appear to me to be most appropriate to your work. If that means, for example, including or misplacing commas, splitting infinitives, or using terminal prepositions where your friend who reads a lot of books and majored in English at college would not, then my decision is final, because you are paying me to read the whole manuscript and to judge what is appropriate, correct, and consistent for the document as a whole;

Make sure that text boxes and tables add to the clarity and coherence of the manuscript; and

Ensure that headings, tables, and footnotes are clearly and sequentially numbered.

I will not:

Undertake proofreading;

Write original material (ghostwriting) unless commissioned by the author for a certain purpose and at additional rate; or

Conduct research unless commissioned by the author for a certain purpose and at additional rate.