

Editing

Editing is the final stage of the writing process. It involves the detailed inspection of a text with a view to regularising its spelling, punctuation, grammar, and even typographical layout. In the world of publishing, this stage is called 'proof-reading'. It is the point at which you check that all your details are correct, and you examine the document very closely for internal consistency prior to releasing it into public view.

The degree of editing you need to perform on your writing will obviously depend upon the nature of the communication. Few of us would think of editing a letter to a close friend; but if you are writing for the public you will need to take more care. A manager preparing a sales brochure, or the directors of a company producing an annual report will need to make sure that their work is carefully edited. Any mistakes or infelicities will create a bad impression. Close editing is called for.

In many forms of professional writing the editing may be done by someone other than the original author. Newspaper reporters often have their work 'subbed' (sub-edited) by someone close to the final production process. Book authors too often have their work examined by professional text editors. This is not because reporters and novelists lack writing skills, but because publishers of books and newspapers usually want to control the appearance of work which appears under their imprint.

Attention to details

This sort of editing in fine detail is quite an advanced skill. That is why publishers often employ professional text editors: they do not expect even fairly successful authors to pay such a degree of detailed attention to their texts. [Famous writers such as James Joyce and Virginia Woolf for instance made spelling mistakes in their manuscripts.] However, even though it is an advanced skill, many people can easily improve the quality of writing they release into public by paying closer attention to details. It is a useful skill which is well worth developing.

So, the degree to which your text needs to be closely edited will depend upon the nature of the of writing, as well as the audience for which it is intended. If you are a student producing a coursework essay, your tutor