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**Working With a Freelance Editor**

**By Jennifer Tribe**

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If you are interested in creating information products, you will very likely deal with editors throughout your career. You may need someone to edit a book, review a special report, or tighten up a magazine article. Even if you are a brilliant writer, it always helps to have someone else look at the work with fresh eyes.

Most of these editors will be people you hire on a freelance or project basis. To get the most out of such a relationship, it helps to be clear about what you need and what you can expect.

To start, you should know what kind of editing you are looking for. There are many different levels and varieties of editing. Probably the three you will encounter the most are substantive editing, copyediting and proofreading.

**Substantive editing**

Sometimes called developmental editing, substantive editing looks at both the content and structure of a manuscript as a cohesive whole. Does the story or argument flow logically? Are there obvious gaps in a certain area? Too much information someplace else? Substantive editing can involve re-ordering large chunks of text, removing text, adding text, and even rewriting.

**Copyediting**

Probably the most misused of all the terms, copyediting is often used as a catchall phrase for any and all kinds of editing. Strictly speaking, however, copyediting checks for errors in grammar, usage, spelling, punctuation and other mechanics of style, internal consistency, cross-referencing, labeling and so on.

**Proofreading**

## Working With a Freelance Editor

Proofreading is the final review of a fully formatted and typeset manuscript. It is meant only to catch small errors such as the odd spelling mistake or hyphenation snafu that might have been missed at the copyediting stage, or that appeared during the layout process.

The above definitions are fairly standard but there are variations. Not every editor defines editing terms in the same way. It is therefore crucial that you discuss in detail the exact nature of the services your editor will provide.

You will also want to clearly discuss the fee arrangement. Some editors charge by the page or word, while others charge by the hour. Still others charge a flat project fee. One method of charging is not necessarily better than other. Just be sure you know what you will get for your money. If you are being charged by the hour, ask the editor to provide an estimate up front of how long the project will take so there are no surprises when the final invoice arrives.

The best way to avoid misunderstandings is to have a written contract signed before any work begins. A contract will typically include a

detailed description of the services to be provided

statement of the fees and payment schedule, and

timeline for the work to be completed, including any project milestones.

Depending on the scope and nature of the project, your contract may also include a number of other considerations. An important clause to include, especially on a book project, is one that deals with copyright. You want to make sure that, as the author, you retain all rights to the material no matter how much editing or rewriting the editor may do on your behalf.

Many editors will supply a contract, but be prepared to create one yourself if they do not.

Here are a few final tips for working with an editor:

Some editors specialize either by format, by topic, or both. For example, an editor might be a specialist in audio scripts or might focus solely on medical books. You may want to look for an editor with particular expertise in your subject matter, especially if you are writing about a highly specialized field.

Be open-minded towards an editor's suggestions and changes. It can be hard on the ego to see your painstakingly crafted manuscript go under the editor's knife. But keep in mind that if an editor is making alterations, it's because he or she thinks it will improve your work. And in the end, a good product makes you look good too.

Establish and maintain clear lines of communication. Know what your expectations are and convey them. Ask the editor to keep you in the loop as the work progresses.

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## **Break in with Fillers: The Best Market for New Writers**

**By Shelley Wake**

### **Break in with Fillers: The Best Market for New Writers by Shelley Wake**

Interested in breaking into writing or breaking into a new area? You can't go past writing fillers. Fillers are one of the most overlooked opportunities in the freelance writing world and offer one of the best opportunities for new writers.

#### Fillers Are In Demand

I've spoken to hundreds of editors and been told over and over again that fillers are the one thing they never get enough of. Most publications tend to publish more freelance fillers than they do freelance articles. Yet, they often receive 100 times more articles than fillers. This is a gap in the freelance market that you can take advantage of.

#### Fillers are a Great Place to Get Started

Many publications are careful about publishing feature articles from writers they don't know. Even if your article is good, an editor might decide not to publish you because they don't know you as a writer. This is especially true if you don't have a lot of experience or any clips. But even without experience or clips, most editors will consider a filler. In fact, many editors treat writing fillers as the testing ground to see if a writer can be relied on to write feature articles.

Here's what one editor had to say about fillers:

"One of the best ways to break in is to write fillers. It gives me a chance to start to build a relationship with a writer and see that I can trust them. Of all the freelancers I work with, over half started out writing fillers." – Margaret, Magazine Editor

So not only can writing fillers get you some clips, it also has the potential to turn into a long-term writing opportunity. Consider fillers a stepping stone to much bigger things.

#### The Smart Way to Write on Spec

Fillers are almost always submitted on spec. This means that you avoid the problem of having to query the publication and sell yourself as a writer, because your filler is doing the work for you and showing the editor your writing skill.

The big argument against writing on spec is that you spend your time writing pieces that might never sell. Fillers reduce this problem because they are short and take less time to write. So even if your filler doesn't sell, you haven't wasted as much time as you would have on a longer feature article. Fillers are also more flexible, with few publications having set guidelines for fillers. This means that a filler will often be suitable for more than market. So if it gets rejected once, it's not a waste of time. You can just send it to a new market, often without having to make any changes.

### Fillers Rely on Information, Not Writer Qualifications

Fillers usually rely on information, not on the writer's qualifications. This means that you don't have to sell yourself when you submit fillers. Instead, the information you put in the filler sells it for you. This makes fillers a perfect option for writers lacking the experience or clips to sell themselves to an editor.

### You Can Write a Lot of Them

Since fillers are short, you can write a lot of them and submit a lot of them. You could literally have hundreds of pieces out in the market for consideration in a short time. And if you write them well, you could have a lot of them published in a very short time. That means you can build a list of clips fast.

And one other benefit is that magazines don't have as limited a space for fillers as they do for feature articles. So if your filler gets accepted, it's likely to get published fast. The same isn't true for feature articles, where an accepted article will often be scheduled for an issue a year or two away. That's one more good reason why fillers are a great way to build clips fast.

Once you've got the clips, then you have a few more options. Until then, fillers are a great place to start.

And one final tip. Once you have the clips and start moving into feature articles, don't forget about fillers. As you're researching a feature, take note of interesting facts, trivia, or anecdotes you come across. These can make fillers and be an added bonus, bringing in some extra cash and some extra clips.

Shelley Wake is the author of "Getting Published Without Clips." This practical no-nonsense guide shows writers exactly where to go and what to do to break into freelance writing. Packed with inside information, proven methods, hidden markets, and more, it's successfully launched hundreds of freelance careers in record time.<http://www.writingstuff.com/fr02m.html>

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