



Is your writing and your book ready for publishing?

This is one of the most important questions to ask yourself once you finish writing your book.

Having a book that's ready for production and printing means more than making sure it's in a digital format, has been formatted correctly, has the right margins, etc. It's about sharpening and polishing your work so that production will become smoother and faster (so you can also save money on corrections/revisions in the long run!)

It's important that your manuscript goes through several rounds of editing—rewriting of awkward phrases, adding more structure to weak plot points, and fixing run-on sentences, just to name a few.

Though time-consuming and a little tedious, this is a step you can do yourself. Other authors, however, choose to work with different kinds of editors to get their books ready for their readers: for example, a line editor to check for grammar, spelling, and punctuation or a content editor to check on everything from characters to plot, setting, and so on. (For more information about the different types of editing, check out our editorial services page [here](#).)

It's a lot to take in and figure out, but don't worry! We're here to help every step of the way. Take this simple quiz to find out how ready your manuscript is for production.

Instructions: Choose the letter that most closely matches your answer.

1. Which statement sounds most like you?

- [A] Good writing is not gauged by the proper use of punctuation! I'm more concerned about developing my style rather than memorizing grammar rules.
- [B] I've got a good mix of artistry and technicality going on. While I often second-guess where to put a semicolon, I'm pretty well-versed in grammar and spelling.
- [C] While I know it's not the only thing important in good writing, I believe that clarity is incredibly important. I've spent a lot of time learning about grammar rules. I even know a thing or two about citation styles!

2. Do you use style guides like The Chicago Manual of Style or Hart's Rules when editing your work?

- [A] I've never heard of style guides before, or I've never felt the need to use one.
- [B] Not much. I'm not incredibly up-to-date and I haven't memorized anything, but I know about things like headline capitalization.
- [C] Style guides are important to me. I even have a copy of the latest edition of my chosen style guide right on my desk!

3. Did you get any feedback while writing or editing? Where did you get it from?

- [A] I've never really let anyone read my work. Some of it is a little too personal, and/or I'm pretty shy about my writing.
- [B] I've had friends or family members read my work and give me some good feedback. Or I joined some online writing groups and got feedback there.
- [C] I've joined writer's workshops and/or have had editors look at my work.

4. What system did/do you follow for self-editing?

- [A] I don't really have a system. I work in bursts and I get into a groove; I don't really have a method.
- [B] I've done a couple of readings and corrected errors or rewrote weak bits where I saw them.
- [C] I did multiple rounds of edits, concentrating on different aspects of the manuscript each time.

5. How finished is your manuscript?

- [A] Not finished at all. I'm missing some parts/changing things around/trying to restructure it to make it flow better.
- [B] I've done a few good rounds of editing, but I don't know if it's finished, per se. I'm open to suggestions.
- [C] Voila! It's done! All that's left to do is stick the cover on it and print! (Okay, maybe a round of proofreading first, but other than that...)

6. How much time have you spent editing your work?

- [A] Not much time at all. Things have gotten in the way, or I haven't really felt much like it.
- [B] I feel like I've spent a fair amount of time editing it.
- [C] A lot. I've even hired an editor to work on this with me.

7. What's been your biggest challenge so far in self-editing and other aspects of your book?

- [A] I've been having a difficult time receiving feedback for and editing my book accordingly. I think I'm a little bit emotionally attached to it. It's so hard to "kill my darlings"!

[B] I've second guessed myself a lot in the process. I know just enough about writing a book to understand what I should be doing, but I'm not a hundred percent sure if I'm hitting the mark.

[C] I've done so much work on this book for such a long time; it's been hard to stay patient and motivated. I just want it to be done.

8. What do you need the most help with right now?

[A] I'm not sure where to start, and I need a lot of guidance in general.

[B] I need help with the ins and outs of producing my book. Designing book covers, layout, editing . . . things like that.

[C] I'm most interested in getting help with marketing and distributing my book.

9. How much do you know about the different kinds of editing?

[A] There are different types of editing?!

[B] Enough to know what kind of editing I probably need . . . but I could still be wrong.

[C] I've hired more than one kind of editor for my book, and they've given me a lot of in-depth feedback. I'd say I know a whole lot about editing by now.

10. If your manuscript in its current state could speak, what would it say?

[A] *The Fly voice* "Help me! Help me!"

[B] "I don't know where I'm going, but I'm on my way."

[C] "It always feels impossible until it's done."

Now tally your score:

A

B

C

If you scored...



Mostly As:

You need to spend more time on your manuscript.

Maybe you're just not the methodical or technical type, or you don't really know where to start in terms of editing or layoutting. And that's absolutely okay—that's why we're here. In the meantime, you can do a few things to get your manuscript a little more prepared for publication.

We recommend that you...

1. Read your work aloud.

Try to read your manuscript aloud. It's been said that this is a good way to identify errors, especially in subtle phrasing and dialogue. This is one of the simplest and most effective tricks to catching mistakes in your book.

2. Read for something specific.

It's difficult to spot problems in your manuscript unless you're specifically looking for them. Do different readings for different elements. For example, you could do your first reading to figure out if you need to change anything in your plot, the second one for style, grammar errors, and so on.

3. Get feedback from someone you trust.

Who better to ask for help than the ones closest to you, right? Ask someone you can trust to be really honest with you about your work. It's especially useful if you can find a friend who reads a lot of books in the same genre as yours.

4. Get an editorial assessment. ★

An editorial assessment is a valuable tool for writers in any stage of their manuscript. During an assessment, our in-house editorial evaluators will read

the first chapter or the first 1,700 words of your book, and then provide you with an expert's recommendation on what type of editing your book needs. This is important not just so that you can get the right type of editor to help you make your writing sharper and more effective; this service could also save you a lot of time, money, and frustration. Without an editorial assessment, you could, for example, get someone to do a line edit (which costs money and takes time), and then later find out that you needed to fix a plot hole in chapter 5. Yikes!



Mostly Bs:

You've done a good amount of work on your manuscript, but you're not sure if it's enough.

You've done your research and you've done a bit of self-editing. You've maybe even workshopped your work or joined an online feedback group. But you could have a blind spot or two, and you're starting to think it may be a good idea to get a specialist to help.

We recommend that you...

1. Break it down.

A large body of work is really just a collection of small pieces. Do different rounds of editing for things like plot and characterization, then do individual chapters to see if they all make a complete piece of work with a cohesive tone.

2. Crack open those style guides.

Yes, yes, we know style guides can be pretty boring. However, punctuation is really important for clarity of thought. It makes all the difference between "Commas are important, people" and "Commas are important people!"

3. Read a couple books in your chosen genre.

Chances are, if you're writing sci-fi or historical fiction or self-help, you've probably read a lot of the same. But the next time you're reading books in your genre of choice, take note. What makes your book different from this book? What makes it the same? It's important to tell your story the way you tell it, but it's also good to know your genre conventions—even if it's just to break them.

4. Try an editorial assessment.

An editorial assessment is a great tool for writers who want to figure out what their next step in the production process is. During an assessment, our in-house editorial evaluators read the first chapter (likely the first 1,700 words) of your manuscript and give a recommendation on what kind of editing your book needs. For example, you might just be thinking that you need a full developmental edit, but an editorial evaluator could say that all you need is a good copy edit.



Mostly Cs:

This project's a long time in the making, maybe even years, and you're ready to publish your book.

You've done a lot of work on your manuscript and you've spent a lot of time talking with different kinds of editors about your work. Maybe you've published a book before, or maybe you've just spent a lot of time researching the publishing world. Either way, you know your stuff, and you already know what you want to do next.

We recommend that you...

1. Think about what you want your book cover to look like.

The old adage is that you shouldn't judge a book by its cover, but the truth is that more often than not, people are drawn to a book because of the cover design. A cover also says a lot about the genre of a book and what readers can expect inside.

2. Look at distribution options.

How do you want to make your book available to your readers? In what formats? These are all important things to think about during the publishing process.

3. Build your readership.

Lots of authors are online these days. They have their own websites, talk to their readers on social media, and build their readership a number of ways. How are readers going to find you? But before anything else...

4. Consider getting an editorial assessment.

It's never a bad idea, getting a second or even third look at your book before you publish it. During an assessment, one of our in-house editorial evaluators inspects the first chapter or the first 1,700 words of your book and combs it for errors, plot holes, inconsistencies, and anything else you might have missed. Then, they will recommend the kind(s) of editing your book might still need to really make it shine.

If you'd like to know more about our editorial assessment service, call your Publishing Consultant at **888.519.5121** to get more details.