

5 Tips for Editing a Manuscript Without an Editor

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Tuesday, June 04, 2019 - by [Hayley Milliman \(@prowritingaid\)](#)

So you've completed a draft of your manuscript! Congratulations!

What's next?

Before sending your manuscript out, you'll want to edit it to correct your mistakes. While editing your own manuscript might seem daunting or hard to manage, it's perfectly possible to edit all by yourself. In this article, we'll share our five best tips for editing your manuscript... *without* an editor.

5 Tips for Editing Your Manuscript Without an Editor

1. Take a Break
2. Read Your Work Out Loud
3. Search for Repeated Words or Phrases
4. Edit Your Work Over and Over Again
5. Use Editing Technology

Editing your work is important. A clean, polished [manuscript](#) has a much higher chance of being accepted for publication than one that's riddled with spelling or grammar mistakes.

While [working with a human editor](#) is a great way to get your work in tip-top shape, there are many ways to edit by yourself, too.

Let's take a look at [how to edit](#) without an editor.

Tip #1: Take a Break

Before you start tearing up your manuscript with a red pen, take a step back.

Give your manuscript some time to settle and let your mind relax before editing. You don't need to jump into the editing process immediately after typing "The End." Have a break and think about something else for awhile.

When you come back to your work, you'll see it with fresh eyes. You'll likely feel more fondly to it, as well as be able to spot casual errors more easily.

Tip #2: Read Your Work Out Loud

When you come back to your manuscript after taking a break, read it out loud. You'd be surprised how many mistakes you can catch solely by speaking something! Awkward phrasing? Passages droning on and on in parts?

Reading your text out loud can catch all of these errors! Pour yourself a hot cup of coffee, uncap your pen, and read to yourself.

Tip #3: Search for Repeated Words or Phrases

One of the most common errors you'll catch when reading out loud are repeated words and phrases. As authors, we tend to get certain ideas "stuck" in our heads. Maybe you've started describing every vista as "breathtaking" or asking your reader to "imagine" something more often than you should.

Whatever your particular catchphrase, I can guarantee your work has one! While you're reading out loud, make a note of what you say over and over again. Then, head back and eliminate some of these repeats. Your work will feel more engaging when you remove them.

Tip #4: Edit Your Work Over and Over Again

[Writing](#) is a process. So is editing.

Your manuscript won't be finished on your first edit. It won't be finished on your second edit. It probably won't be finished on your third edit, either.

Have you heard the saying, "The book is written in the edits"? It's true!

Your book will come alive when you edit. You'll be able to tighten up [plot points](#), make dialogue snappier, and improve the reader's experience of your work with every edit. Don't consider another round of editing a failure—consider it a time to further optimize your work.

Ideally, you'll read and revise your manuscript at least a few times before you send it off to a human editor or to an [agent](#).

Tip #5: Use Editing Technology

Editing technology like [ProWritingAid](#) or [Grammarly](#) has improved by leaps and bounds. While it will never fully replace a human editor (you still need them to find your [character](#) inconsistencies and plot holes), it can help you tighten up your manuscript before you submit. That way your editor or agent can focus on the meat of your story, not on your grammar and word choice.

That said, editing tools don't do the job for you. All they can do is highlight potentially problematic areas like passive voice, overused words, [sticky sentences](#), and awkward constructions. It's up to you to decide how to deal with those issues. You'll improve your [writing style](#) as you use the reports because you'll become more aware of the mistakes that you make. Not every suggestion will work for every writer, so you'll have to use your own judgement.

Final Thoughts

Editing your manuscript is an important part of your writing process. In fact, it might be even more important than writing your manuscript was in the first place!

Editing isn't about catching every single grammatical mistake you made (though that's important, too). It's about crafting a book that readers are engaged with and excited to read.

If you don't have an editor, don't worry—you can easily improve your work and edit your manuscript by following the steps outlined above. Happy editing!