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# The Editing Process

A series of tweets about what to expect from the editing process post-book deal.

by Naomi Hughes 2 years ago 1 Like 524 Views ▾



**Naomi Hughes**  
@NaomiHughesYA



Hey guys! So let's chat about what kind of edits you can expect after you sign a book deal (or if self-publishing, what to hire editors for).

6:50 AM - May 10, 2016

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**Naomi Hughes**  
@NaomiHughesYA




Once you sign your book deal you can usually expect 3 major levels of edits. Developmental, scene-level, and line edits.

6:51 AM - May 10, 2016

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**Naomi Hughes**  
@NaomiHughesYA

Depending on what sort of work the book needs, it's not rare for an editor to want to do 2 or even 3 rounds of any single level of edits.

6:52 AM - May 10, 2016

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**Naomi Hughes**  
@NaomiHughesYA

That's in your best interest! If your editor wants 2 rounds of developmental edits, it just means there's still untapped potential there.

6:54 AM - May 10, 2016

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**Naomi Hughes**  
@NaomiHughesYA

Developmental edits are the first type of edit you'll work on after signing a deal. They focus on big-picture, overall stuff.

6:55 AM - May 10, 2016

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**Naomi Hughes**  
@NaomiHughesYA

Developmental edits tend to involve the most heavy lifting for revisions and can sometimes (but not usually) even mean a total rewrite.

6:56 AM - May 10, 2016

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**Naomi Hughes**  
@NaomiHughesYA

If your editor wants you to rewrite, it DOES NOT mean they now hate your story. It means they see potential for even more depth/awesomeness.

6:57 AM - May 10, 2016

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**Naomi Hughes**  
@NaomiHughesYA

Developmental edits cover big-picture stuff: pacing, plot, POV issues, conflict tightness, character arcs, stakes & escalation, etc.

6:59 AM - May 10, 2016

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**Naomi Hughes**  
@NaomiHughesYA

Once developmental edits are done & your editor is happy with the story's basic building blocks, scene-level edits come next.

7:01 AM - May 10, 2016

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**Naomi Hughes**  
@NaomiHughesYA

Scene-level edits focus on how the big picture of your story plays out at the scene level.

7:02 AM - May 10, 2016

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**Naomi Hughes**  
@NaomiHughesYA

During scene-level edits, editors look at chapter intros/extros, scene-level conflicts, dialogue, whether scenes fulfill multiple purposes.

7:05 AM - May 10, 2016

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**Naomi Hughes**  
@NaomiHughesYA

More stuff editors look at during scene-level edits: whether the story beats come at the right times, how deep your POV is, etc.

7:07 AM - May 10, 2016

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**Naomi Hughes**  
@NaomiHughesYA

Many editors will also mix in a little bit of line-editing (tweaking words/phrases, nit-picking at the sentence level) during scene edits.

7:07 AM - May 10, 2016

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**Naomi Hughes**  
@NaomiHughesYA

Important to remember: editors are human. Some of us are better at developing plot, others are great at making the writing craft shine.

7:09 AM - May 10, 2016

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**Naomi Hughes**  
@NaomiHughesYA

That's why most editors get second reads from coworkers, assistants, interns, publicists, etc. It takes SO MANY people to make a book, guys.

7:11 AM - May 10, 2016

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**Naomi Hughes**  
@NaomiHughesYA

That's also why it's important to make sure any freelance editor you hire is not only a good editor in general, but a good match for YOU.

7:12 AM - May 10, 2016

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**Naomi Hughes**  
@NaomiHughesYA

If you're hiring a freelance editor, think about your own strengths/weaknesses. Do you need a plotting genius? A writing craft coach?

7:13 AM - May 10, 2016

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**Naomi Hughes**  
@NaomiHughesYA

Personally, I'm like a chess player when I edit. I love playing with plot, conflict, motivation, character arcs.

7:15 AM - May 10, 2016

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**Naomi Hughes**  
@NaomiHughesYA

As an editor, I love to think about how everything connects: can you solve five problems by tweaking one plot element?

7:16 AM - May 10, 2016

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**Naomi Hughes**  
@NaomiHughesYA

Yes! Good editors are on YOUR side. We know what we can & can't help you with, & we want you to get what you need.  
[twitter.com/Kymburleev/sta...](https://twitter.com/Kymburleev/sta...)

7:17 AM - May 10, 2016

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**Naomi Hughes**  
@NaomiHughesYA

Okay, I got off on a side tangent. Back to the levels of edits! :P

7:19 AM - May 10, 2016

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**Naomi Hughes**  
@NaomiHughesYA

Once your editor is happy with your story and how it's presented at the scene level, you'll move on to line edits.

7:20 AM - May 10, 2016

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**Naomi Hughes**  
@NaomiHughesYA

Line edits are nitty-gritty. Most editors use Word's Track Changes program, though some still like to use paper and sticky-notes and such.

7:21 AM - May 10, 2016

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**Naomi Hughes**  
@NaomiHughesYA

Line edits focus on the strength of your story at the sentence level.

7:22 AM - May 10, 2016

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**Naomi Hughes**  
@NaomiHughesYA

Line edits ask: does each word carry its weight? Where can you trim? Where is something (like info, or a character's motivation) missing?

7:24 AM - May 10, 2016

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**Naomi Hughes**  
@NaomiHughesYA

Line edits also usually ensure you have a hook at the end of each scene or chapter (that keeps tension high), depending on genre, of course.

7:24 AM - May 10, 2016




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 **Naomi Hughes** @NaomiHughesYA 

By the time you get to line edits, usually your editor will have called you out on any frequent, repetitive craft problems.




7:25 AM - May 10, 2016



 3  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 

 **Naomi Hughes** @NaomiHughesYA 

That way, instead of cutting 1k occurrences of the word "that" in line edits, they'll make 1 note during scene edits for you to quit it. :)




7:27 AM - May 10, 2016



 3  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 

 **Naomi Hughes** @NaomiHughesYA 

When you get your line edits back, DON'T FREAK OUT. Yes, there's a lot of red. No, we don't think you're a terrible writer.




7:28 AM - May 10, 2016

 8  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 

 **Naomi Hughes** @NaomiHughesYA 

There can be around 1,000-2,000 changes (comments and tracked changes) per manuscript during line edits. But don't get overwhelmed!

7:29 AM - May 10, 2016

 4  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 






**Naomi Hughes**  
@NaomiHughesYA

Those changes include tiny things like moving a comma, or cutting/pasting a sentence to a spot where it'll have more impact.

7:30 AM - May 10, 2016

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**Naomi Hughes**  
@NaomiHughesYA

My recommendation during line edits is to 1. read the comments, 2. turn Track Changes to "view no markup," & 3. see how your story reads.

7:31 AM - May 10, 2016

♡ 6 👤 See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets




**Naomi Hughes**  
@NaomiHughesYA

That way, you can see how the tiny changes affect the big picture without getting overwhelmed about what exactly has been changed.

7:32 AM - May 10, 2016

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**Naomi Hughes**  
@NaomiHughesYA

And remember! EDITS ARE UP TO YOU. If a change upsets you, talk to your editor! Often we can find a compromise that makes everyone happy.

7:33 AM - May 10, 2016

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**Naomi Hughes**  
@NaomiHughesYA

The way line edits are carried out vary, depending on the author, on the editor, and on what sort of relationship & trust levels they have.

7:33 AM - May 10, 2016

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**Naomi Hughes**  
@NaomiHughesYA

Some authors are okay with editors making subjective, sentence-level rewrites via Track Changes. Some hate it.

7:36 AM - May 10, 2016

♡ 3 👤 See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets




**Naomi Hughes**  
@NaomiHughesYA

We usually default to only making objective changes in the text during line edits, & using comments to suggest subjective ones.

7:38 AM - May 10, 2016

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**Naomi Hughes**  
@NaomiHughesYA

By the way, when I say "subjective," I usually mean "this needs to change, but the author is the one who can decide HOW to change it." :)

7:39 AM - May 10, 2016

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**Naomi Hughes**  
@NaomiHughesYA

The editor-author relationship varies widely. When I'm freelancing, I tend to be much more "I recommend x" and "have you thought about y?"

7:40 AM - May 10, 2016

♡ 2 👤 See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets



**Naomi Hughes**  
@NaomiHughesYA

When I'm working with a contracted author, I have an obligation to my publisher and a stake in the outcome of your work.

7:40 AM - May 10, 2016

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**Naomi Hughes**  
@NaomiHughesYA

So in freelancing, I can be more coach-y and, if you prefer, hands-off. With contracted authors, the process demands more structure.

7:42 AM - May 10, 2016

♡ 2 👤 See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets





**Naomi Hughes**  
@NaomiHughesYA

And structure is good! Structure gets books to readers on time. Structure sets boundaries, and defines relationships clearly.




7:43 AM - May 10, 2016



♡ 4 👤 See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets

 **Naomi Hughes**  
@NaomiHughesYA 

Just know that there will be a difference between working with a freelancer, where you're the boss, & working with an editor post-deal.

7:44 AM - May 10, 2016




 2  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 

 **Naomi Hughes**  
@NaomiHughesYA 

Replying to @NaomiHughesYA

That doesn't mean freelancing or post-deal editing is better/worse--just a difference in the structure and formality and relationship.

7:47 AM - May 10, 2016



 1  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 

 **Naomi Hughes**  
@NaomiHughesYA 

Yes! This is my FAVORITE. I love sifting through symptoms to find underlying causes. :) [twitter.com/emenozzi/statu...](https://twitter.com/emenozzi/status/692848484848484848)




7:48 AM - May 10, 2016


 3  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 

 **Naomi Hughes**  
@NaomiHughesYA 

After you're done w/ developmental, scene, & line edits, there's also copy edits/proofreading, but those are objective edits (grammar, etc).

7:57 AM - May 10, 2016

 1  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 



**Naomi Hughes**  
@NaomiHughesYA

So basically, each level of edits tightens your story at successive levels: big picture, scene, and sentence.

8:03 AM - May 10, 2016

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♡ 1

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