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Developmental Editing Services

The creative process is often messy, making it challenging for writers to see the end result from the audience’s perspective. With a professional trained to evaluate your content and suggest improvements, you can retain the voice of your work while adding to its readability — and potentially success. I am a certified editor who offers three big-picture options to meet your needs. I evaluate manuscripts individually to give you a fixed bid in advance based on your word count, stated needs, and how much editing work is expected. See the detailed Processes section below, and example **prices** in this recap of developmental offerings:

* **Manuscript review:** A big picture review of a nonfiction or fiction manuscript. You will receive a letter of three or more pages that outlines the strengths of the manuscript, as well as opportunities for improvement, and suggestions on ways to address major challenges to honing your text. For a fiction manuscript (or creative nonfiction), the narrative arc, dialogue, plot, and settings would be among the considerations.Elements considered in other nonfiction include the sequencing of content, voice, use of visuals to assist reader comprehension, and completeness of the presentation.
* Fee is 0.8 cents/word, or $480 for a 60,000-word book manuscript, as an example

A manuscript review helps if you are unsure of the status of your manuscript. I also **review book proposals** (or edit or write this key piece of traditional non-fiction pitching that also helps authors refine a book’s focus and audience).

* **Developmental edit:** A written review of your completed (or near complete) manuscript is provided, and a book map. The content review involves a six page or longer letter (*editorial letter*) that delves into overall structure, clarity, voice, pacing, theme, point of view, and more. The *book map* is a table that helps you visualize elements that are uneven in an early manuscript.

Book maps are individualized, so one might focus broadly on the main events and themes in each chapter, while another could cover different aspects of characters so you can see where “holes” exist in their descriptions. Two hours of phone calls or email exchanges is included with the single review round.

* Fee starts at 3.5 cents/word, or $2,100 and up for 60,000 words (for nonfiction). Can become Author Coaching for additional input at $65/hour. See separate Line-by-Line Editing Services recap for information about a Line Editing step (for voice/ and style) and/or Copy Editing, which is a detailed review of grammar, etc. in the final content.
* **Substantive edit:** In addition to an editorial letter of six or more pages on clarity, inconsistencies in tone and plot points, etc., you receive notes in your completed Microsoft Word manuscript. These comments point out examples of particular strengths or elements to consider addressing, such as paragraphs that could be tightened up for pacing, transitions that need smoothing, and example suggested rewrites of sentences to improve factors such as the flow or to reduce ambiguities. Track changes and the Comments feature of Word are used, and flagging will be done of any facts for the author’s confirmation. A book map is included, and three hours of phone or email for the single round of review.
* Fee starts at 5 cents/word, or $3,000 for 60,000 words (for nonfiction). See separate Line-by-Line Editing Services recap for information about a Line Editing step (for voice/ and style) and/or Copy Editing, a detailed review of grammar, etc. in the final content.

Related Services

* **As-you-go developmental editing:** As with any skill, writers learn the best when they practice, receive guidance on the content, and then practice some more. In the as-you-go developmental approach, I help craft a book or other document from an initial concept, outline, or draft. This can involve researching or making suggestions on the focus of content and its organization, sometimes based on an analysis of competing works, or on an analysis of a publishing house imprint or line that the author seeks to submit to.
* Typical fee is $65/hour, in 5-hour minimum increments
* **Ghostwriting:** If lack of time and/or writing experience hinders you from developing the book envisioned, I provide [**ghostwriting**](https://www.vitalwordplay.com/post/five-traits-of-a-great-ghostwriter) services for book proposals and select books. This involves writing the book for you based on interviews and background material about the subject, with outlines and updates shared along the way. I previously ghostwrote magazine columns for non-profit directors, opinion pieces for physicians and more while a professional public relations expert, and my name need not be mentioned with the published content if preferred.
* Typical fee is $65/hour, in 10-hour minimum increments

Content Specialty Areas

I provide a developmental or substantive edit for almost all nonfiction, including:

* Prescriptive nonfiction (self-help, how to books)
* Creative/literary nonfiction, which is broadly categorized as personal (memoirs, autobiography, essays) or topical nonfiction (about your views of nature, history, or another topic)
* Expository nonfiction (to inform lay audiences about history, philosophy, etc.)

Subjects of particular expertise, beyond self-development and mindfulness-related content, include: biotechnology, conservation, diversity, engineering, life sciences, medicine, nanotechnology, native landscapes, public health, social justice, broadly accessible spirituality (e.g., New Age memoirs), Spanish language treatment, and sustainability. Content for professional audiences may include an added fee.

**Testimonial**

I truly enjoyed working with Barbra, her attention to detail and suggestions exceeded my expectations. Initially she started by copy editing and proofreading my memoir, but after working through my initial manuscript and seeing its potential, she gave me some recommendations on where we could improve the project.  We decided to continue the work and through additional developmental editing we created a new manuscript that vastly improved the book.  All I can say is that I’m grateful for her suggestions!  I am thankful for her enthusiasm and willingness to immerse herself in the subject of my book. I strongly recommend Barbra!

Roman Castilleja, [Rowing Home](https://www.vitalwordplay.com/editing-info?pgid=kqziq67f-e169fbf9-1a34-4156-b118-3d4df87cc443)

Editing Process

I make at least two passes through the manuscript if you are purchasing a single round of service (i.e., not Related Services). The first considers overall factors such as clarity and audience appeal. The second pass is a closer read for more detailed elements to include in feedback.

I often share a simple questionnaire after you reach out on the [Contact](https://www.vitalwordplay.com/contact) page with basic details. I review your content in Microsoft Word. The details you share and content review help to understand your writing goals and concerns, content status, finances, and deadline (if any). I typically get an estimate back to you within 7 workdays.

For traditional Developmental or Substantive edits, a phone conversation or follow-up emails will then occur as best during the editing step, and/or after you’ve considered the feedback. If I do not have the right background to help guide Developmental or Substantive edits, such as for a book focused on political science, I will immediately inform you and suggest any appropriate alternative editors.

My Experience

An award-winning writer and editor, I have edited for magazine and other clients for two decades. I ran a creative nonfiction writing group for several years, and judged state and national book competitions. [Since 2016](https://www.vitalwordplay.com/editing-info?pgid=kqziq67f-e169fbf9-1a34-4156-b118-3d4df87cc443), I have worked on books with self-published authors and W. W. Norton, MIT Press and other publishing houses. Beyond dozens of continuing education classes, I aced the University of California, San Diego copyediting certificate program.

I use an organized approach to developmental edit, copyedit and proofread print and digital content. Clients have included self-published authors of memoir and self-help, a national lab, an engineering construction institute, a spirituality blogger, and conservation non-profits. I began my career interning at newspapers, and freelanced on the side about public health and other topics for decades. I previously spent a decade in public relations, overseeing magazines, and writing web features and more while assisting faculty at a top-ranking medical school and an R1 research university.

***Thank you for your interest in Vital Wordplay services!***

Barbra A. Rodriguez