

WORD BIRD EDITORIAL

FROM FIRST DRAFT TO FINISHED PRODUCT: HOW THE EDITORIAL PROCESS REALLY WORKS

Sometimes it seems like the editorial process is shrouded in mystery, but it doesn't need to be. This guide describes the typical stages of drafting, seeking feedback on, and revising a manuscript. Understanding these important steps will help you get the most out of the editorial partnership—and create the strongest possible version of your novel.

Step 1: First draft—You did it! Finishing a book-length work (typically 75,000 to 100,000 words) requires commitment, doggedness, and, let's be honest, a little bit of insanity. You've spent hours staring at a screen, trying to catch the wondrous wisps of your story with your clumsy hands and keeping the faith that eventually you'll be able to type "the end." And then one day you do. A first draft is rough, unwieldy, underdeveloped in some places, and bloated in others. It is a beautiful creature at the beginning of its life. Time to hire an editor, right? Nope, not yet.

Step 2: Revision—It can be surprising to learn that "the end" is in fact just the beginning of the work ahead for a writer hoping to turn an idea into a finished book. "Writing is rewriting," and in rewriting and revising the raw material in a first draft, a writer comes closer to figuring out what she intends to say and how she should say it. Characters might be combined or cut, plot lines developed or abandoned, and exposition trimmed.

Step 3: Feedback—When you’ve used every tool you have to refine your manuscript, the next step is to seek feedback from readers you trust. That may mean asking members of your writing groups who “get” your voice/concept/audience, or hiring a professional editor. At this stage, the draft is still not ready for line-by-line editing. Instead, you need feedback on what’s working—and what’s not—when it comes to structure, plot, character development, pace, tone, clarity, prose style, and more. This valuable feedback will help guide further revision. Word Bird offers the Comprehensive Manuscript Evaluation at this stage of the process—see below for more information on what this service includes and how it can help you power through revision.

Step 4: Further revision—Armed with detailed feedback, you get down to work on the big (and sometimes difficult) changes that will make your novel tighter and stronger and help it deliver on its promises to readers. Be sure to give yourself lots of time to work through this phase. Thoughtful revision is where the magic happens.

Step 5: Revised draft—After you tackle these revisions, you will have a revised draft of your manuscript. This may be the third draft or the twelfth or the twenty-fifth, but the point is that you have addressed the structural issues in the story, developed the characters, remedied problems with the prose, and are satisfied with the manuscript in its current form. At this stage, your manuscript is ready for line editing (additional work on sentence structure, word choice, flow, and consistency) and copyediting (which deals with grammar, spelling, usage, punctuation, and other mechanics of style to give the prose a final polish).

Step 6: Final draft—When all the revision is finished, and line editing and copyediting are complete, you have a final draft in your hands. At this stage, you might begin researching agents and draft a query letter pitching your book. Or, if you are planning to self-publish, you will move forward with hiring a cover designer, book designer, and building a platform to sell your book online. Either way, you have completed the editorial process and now have a polished finished manuscript you are ready to share.

Word Bird's most popular service is the

COMPREHENSIVE MANUSCRIPT EVALUATION

Imagine what you could do with a detailed, workable plan for revision.

The Comprehensive Manuscript Evaluation includes:

- Queries and comments throughout your manuscript
- A detailed editorial letter (typically ten to twenty pages) that serves as your road map to revision
- A 30-minute follow-up phone consultation to talk through your plan

This assessment of your manuscript provides concrete, actionable feedback to guide your revision. I begin with a careful read to troubleshoot the story's structure, plot, pace, character development, tension and conflict, consistency of tone, themes, language, and other elements of the prose. I also consider your goal for the book—will you pursue traditional publication or publish independently?—and tailor my feedback to help you come closer to achieving it. Finally, I synthesize my feedback into a detailed editorial letter that will help you figure out how to solve the problems in the manuscript and what to tackle first.



Kelly O'Connor McNeese

I developed my approach to manuscript evaluations based on what I've learned in more than fifteen years of experience across multiple roles in the publishing industry, including in-house editorial positions with two publishers, work as a contract editor, and my writing career as the author of four published novels. The role of the editor is to question, challenge, support, and dream alongside you as you work to create the strongest possible version of your novel. It is a partnership that can change the course of your work. The sooner we get started, the sooner you will be moving closer to achieving your goals.

www.wordbirdedits.com

WORD BIRD HELPS WRITERS SOLVE PROBLEMS IN THEIR WORK AND GET CLOSER TO THEIR GOALS.

“Kelly is always my first reader—before my agent, my editor, even my husband. She has a tremendous gift for seeing straight through to the core of both the problems with and potential of a story, and making specific and wise suggestions to take a story to the next level. Best of all, she delivers even the toughest of editorial advice in a straightforward but supportive way that encourages me to move forward and make my writing the best it can be.”

—Eleanor Brown, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Weird Sisters* and *The Light of Paris*

“Word Bird was an invaluable step on my journey to publication. While immersed in the writing process, we often lose our objectivity. Kelly’s razor-sharp eye and vast knowledge of story structure provided suggestions I otherwise would have missed. Thanks to Kelly’s evaluation and feedback, I was able to strengthen my draft and my craft, eventually receiving multiple offers of representation.”

—Lori Nelson Spielman, internationally bestselling author of *The Life List*

“Kelly goes the extra mile in providing professional input that is itself well worth the cost she charges for an extensive manuscript evaluation. I highly recommend her to both the novice and seasoned writer.”

—Paul Andrew, author of *Ankathata’s Freeze*

“Even published novelists need a second trusted, expert set of eyes to read their work. I count on Kelly to provide thoughtful insight and help me solve problems in my work.”

—Susan Gregg Gilmore, author of *The Funeral Dress* and *Looking for Salvation at the Dairy Queen*

Ready to get started? Click here to book a free consultation.