

say it simply


Nina Durfee
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8 Critical Questions to Ask an Editor Before You Invest

With responses by Nina Durfee

1. **Whom do you serve?** Fiction writers? Non-fiction writers? Technical writers? I serve primarily coaches, holistic and spiritual healers, and entrepreneurs who want to write the non-fiction self-help or how-to book that will increase visibility and credibility for their business.
2. **What kind of editing do you do?** Before you hire an editor, know what you want from her. Do you want copyediting to address grammar, punctuation, spelling, etc.? I do this. Do you want structural editing that focuses on language issues, smoothing transitions, organizing content, flagging for fact checking, restructuring sentences and paragraphs to be clear and concise? I do this. Do you want deep developmental editing, someone to walk with you from beginning to end as you write, to address plotting, pacing, and literary or stylistic elements? I guide you in step-by-step development for your non-fiction Signature Book to promote your business legacy, but I don't do development editing for fiction. Do you want simple proofreading in the last stage before going to press? I do this.
3. **What genre do you most enjoy editing?** You will receive higher quality service from someone who enjoys your topic or genre than from someone who is bored by it. I especially enjoy how-to, self-help, and inspirational work. In my own process of self-development, I have nearly cleared the Barnes & Noble self-help shelves, read the books, done the exercise, and reaped steep rewards. I have a clear understanding of what works, both in the process and in the presentation. When my clients are published, their instructional books become trusted resources for me to refer to others.
4. **What is your strong suit?** As an editor, I excel at streamlining sluggish text into words that are clear, concise, and compelling. As a Certified Professional Coach, I open writers to a broader perspective, and I help self-proclaimed "non-writers" move past the doubt that keeps them from writing. I help my clients clarify their reason for writing and the focus of their content. I offer tools, techniques, and resources to better express the author's genius, to add value for readers, to invoke the author's voice of the heart, and to pique interest and enhance reader response.

5. **What is your guiding principle, and how does it show up in your work?** A go-to principle can keep an editor from getting bogged down in arduous details. My guiding principle is: *Say it simply*. I was once asked to edit a ten-page affidavit to be submitted in a divorce/child custody case. I streamlined sentences, sifted out irrelevant content, and condensed the length to under five pages, adhering to court requirements without sacrificing critical content and saving time and money for the court, for counsel, and for the parties. Crisp, clear content eliminates reader fatigue and buoys reader enthusiasm.
6. **What do your clients say about your work?** Testimonials tell you what the editor cannot. One of my clients, a seasoned middle-school teacher writing a guidebook for teachers, said *I love how you make it more clear without changing my voice*. An engineer turned writer in Houston, Texas, sent me the first chapter of his work of fiction. His sentence structure was good, he had a good command of English grammar, but his story line was very linear. His most powerful paragraph was buried in the middle of the chapter. I moved it to serve as the opening paragraph of the book. His response was:

Revising the opening paragraph was brilliant. Of the 8 or 9 other editors who have reviewed this work, you are the first to suggest such a change. I am blown away by the profound impact of moving a single paragraph. So simple, yet it makes all the difference. Absolutely brilliant!

7. **How do you charge?** You want to know this up front! Some choices include
- Hourly
 - Per job
 - By word count
 - By page count

My manuscript editing fee is generally based on word count. I charge an hourly rate for consultation and coaching. Smaller works are as agreed between me and the author.

8. **Do we have rapport?** A good author-editor relationship starts with rapport. The best way to know if you are a harmonious fit is to engage in a live (not electronic) conversation. I offer an introductory strategy session to get acquainted, to discuss your needs, and to determine if we are a fit.

Get published. Be noticed.

Contact Nina for a strategy session:

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