

THE EDITING PROCESS: ADDENDA

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2. Your Editing and Publishing Timeline

Time estimates for editing

If you want quality editing, schedule sufficient time. With new self-publishing, e-book, and print-on-demand (POD) options, writers sometimes think they can quickly write and publish their books. But quality writing and self-editing requires a lot of work and time to start with, and then you must allow a reasonable amount of time for professional editing and continued self-editing. After that comes either a search for a traditional publisher, or the self-publishing requirements of design, proofreading, and publishing. Throughout this process, you also must plan for marketing before and after publication.

Traditional publishing timelines

Traditional publishing companies say writers should expect an average two-year period from the time a manuscript is accepted until it is published, as their editors work with you on more editing, not to mention work by their designers, marketing team, and more. And that's after you submit query letters and probably wait through multiple rejections until your manuscript is accepted—if indeed it is. If you work with an agent, finding one can take quite some time, and then the agent requires time to submit your work to publishers.

Self-publishing timelines

If you self-publish, be as strict with yourself about the freelance editing, design, publishing, and marketing process as you would expect a traditional publishing company to be. The self-publishing timeline can take as long as a traditional publishing timeline, as you seek and work with the best people who can help you make your product the best it can be. With a million plus books published each year, the competition is fierce—and you're better off spending the time required to compete successfully in the writing marketplace.

Touch-ups or a lot more work

Don't rush! You may believe your manuscript only needs a few touch-ups, but chances are it requires more work on your part—and probably more helpers—than you think. If you rush, you'll end up with the sort of book vanity publishers are infamous for—which will neither sell well nor garner you a reputation as an excellent writer.

Writing a series

If you plan to write a series, it is wise to write at least two or three books in the series before publishing any of them. That way, as you publish each one separately, but not too far apart, reader enthusiasm from the previous one will still be strong for the next one.

Marketing

Don't forget to include in your timeline pre-marketing activities, so you can build your readership platform and create momentum through your website, blog, social media, and other marketing methods long before you're actually ready to publish.

What about writers who publish frequently?

It is true some writers pump out several books a year. But they are usually experienced writers who already have editors and publishers working with them, who write as their full-time job, are experts in their topic or genre, are self-motivated and self-directed, have high energy, focus on one topic or genre or series, and make their writing income through quantity versus quality, plus engaging in non-stop, aggressive marketing.

Don't forget to place this exercise in your binder or Duotang. And now go on to part 3 in this series: Editing Contracts.