



Editing

There is a lot to be said for just writing on your first draft. Go with the flow, get it down on the page and see how it looks. For me, I always read back as I write – short sections at a time. It is something I have always done, even with emails and letters. I know of others who get it all down and then take a look or read back at the end of the day. Whatever suits you is the message, I would say.

There is a danger of 'over-editing' and sometimes you read it back and you go 'word blind' – meaning you are so familiar with it you would not spot the mistakes. I edit for two purposes, although sometimes they inevitably overlap. They are obvious really: I edit for grammar / punctuation and I edit for content and quality. My advice is to be clear what you are editing for and make sure your writing is the best it can be before you present for publishing or to agents. Poorly written writing is easy to reject, even if the concept and idea is the best ever.

And ask yourself this question: is it really better after the twelfth full edit?*

I had one of my books – *Maggie Matheson: Back in Service* – professionally edited. Grammar and punctuation was already good generally so Petra, someone who ran the writing course I went on, (www.thewriterscompany.co.uk) edited for content and structure. It cost several hundred pounds but it was worth it on two counts for me:

Firstly, it made it a better book. Petra suggested things I could take out, improve and tweak, making it clear it was my choice at the end of the day as it was my book. Having that independent critical look, on top of opinions and feedback from family and friends, was invaluable. I did a lot of what she suggested but not everything. It was a much better book by the time I had taken on board her feedback.

Secondly, I saw the edit as a development opportunity. I have been writing, more-or-less full time, for less than 2 years and I know I still have a lot to learn. I am a better writer now than I was when I started. I know that because I took a deep breath and did a rewrite of my first book – *Quarton: The Bridge* – and it is miles better now (I think so anyway). So I saw the money I paid for the edit as an investment in my future too. You can easily spend that sort of money on a writing course. I would recommend doing courses too, if you have the time and money – sharing ideas and learning the basics of writing does no harm at all.

* I did actually do 12 versions of my first book.