

# How much does editing or proofreading cost?

The short answer is ... it depends.

You may have wondered why I don't have my prices on my website. That is because there are many variables to take into consideration when estimating the probable cost of a job. It's rare I can give you a firm price until I know exactly what the job will entail. You can get an idea of what professional editors and proofreaders charge by looking at the Chartered Institute of Editing and Proofreading's [suggested minimum rates](#).

## How much will it cost to proofread my writing?

Here are the questions you'll need to answer before I can give you a firm quote:

- What level of editing do you need?
- How long is your text?
- Can I see a sample of your work?
- What is your schedule? How quickly do you need it?

Let's look at why these factors have a bearing on the price you'll pay.

## What level of editing do you need?

This is a big consideration. While developmental editing, copy-editing and proofreading are defined steps in the traditional publishing process, if you are a self-publisher, business owner or large organisation that produces content, you may need help deciding what level of intervention you need.

For example, it's very common for me to be approached for proofreading, but when I have a chat about how the document had been put together and then look at the material itself, it's often clear that the writing would benefit from copy-editing. If you're not sure about the difference between the two, have a look at the [FAQs](#) published by the Chartered Institute of Editing and Proofreading.

This is particularly true when there are multiple contributors to the document, for example from different departments for a company's annual report, or when different members of staff write blog posts. In this case your editor will need to bring together the writing to ensure a coherent, consistent tone of voice and standardise a style of usage across the board.

## How long is your text?

Some editors will usually use the number of words as a starting point, while others will go by the number of pages. It's vital that you both have a clear definition of what a standard page is. For example, it's not unusual to have a page defined as being prepared using 12 point Times New Roman, double spaced with 2.5cm margins. Don't think you'll get a better deal by cramming everything in single-spaced 8 point font. We're one step ahead of you there!

Many editors base their quote on an industry “standard” of 250 words per page (so a 10,000 word article would be calculated as 40 pages and a quote would be prepared on this basis). But not all of us use this definition, so make sure that it’s very clear in your discussions that you are both talking about the same thing.

- I work on the assumption that a page is 350 words.
- Your word count means I can calculate the number of pages.
- I use that calculation – and a sample of your text – to arrive at a price.

Some editors prefer to quote you a fixed fee for the project, or a day rate. They may use the above methods to help calculate that fee, but present you with a figure that will cover the project within a defined set of parameters, such as the maximum length of the text and the number of rounds of editing included.

- I am open to negotiating an agreed fixed fee or day rate.

### Can I see a sample of your work?

In order to give you an accurate quote, I will ask to see the material, or at least a representative sample of it, so I can assess what you need. This is even more necessary if English is not your first language. Without an assessment of your work, I cannot judge how much intervention it needs. As I said above, a client asking for a proofread will often benefit much more from a copy-edit.

I can then advise you whether, in fact, your writing is in good shape and simply needs a proofread to tidy up the punctuation, spelling and grammar, or whether it would be better to make deeper changes to word choice and sentence structure, and perhaps re-order your writing to bring clarity and consistency.

- I always ask for a sample from a new client.
- I will quote for both proofreading and editing, if the client asks.
- I will not upsell for editing when it’s clear only proofreading is needed.

### What is your schedule? Do you have a fixed deadline?

Editors are generally busy. They may be able to fit in short projects with little notice, but bigger pieces of work will have been booked into their schedule months ahead, so if you're writing a novel, don't wait until you've typed “The End” before looking for the right editor for you. And if you know you’ve got an annual report to be published on a fixed date, don’t decide the week before that you need an editor to whip it into shape – you could end up either paying a rush fee to get a good job done, or worse, going with whoever can take on the work, and they won’t necessarily be the best-qualified person for the job. Don't risk getting a substandard result.

- I can sometimes take on jobs at short notice, but it really is better to give me as much notice as possible, so I can book you in.



**LOUISE BOLOTIN**  
FREELANCE EDITOR

If you need work to be completed urgently, and it involves your editor working outside of normal office hours – in the evenings or over a weekend – you can expect a premium of anything from 20% to 200% to be added. So it pays to be organised!

Remember the maxim: **GOOD, FAST, CHEAP – PICK ANY TWO.** (Three is not possible.)

REMEMBER – it takes longer to proofread than you think. It didn't take you an hour or two to write a 20,000 word white paper, so it stands to reason it'll take more than a day to turn around a quality job for you.

For rush jobs, I charge 150% for evenings, and 200% for weekends.

So, what will an editor charge? Is there a recommended rate for editing?

This really is hugely variable. The Chartered Institute of Editing and Proofreading has [suggested minimum rates](#), but these are only suggestions, and you may find that an experienced professional will charge more, particularly if their work is in a specialist field where their knowledge of a subject or their technical expertise is in demand.

On average, you can expect to pay around £20–25 per hour for proofreading and £30–40 per hour for copy-editing, depending on the factors we've talked about.

Like most things, you get what you pay for. How would you feel about a hairdresser who offered to do a really great job – for a fiver? Or an electrician wiring your house for £50? You don't just pay someone for the time it takes them to do something, you pay them for their skills and experience, and the value they bring.

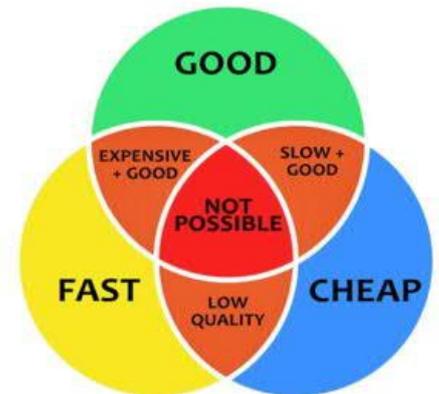
You want to avoid being ripped off by someone who offers a lot but doesn't deliver, who makes extravagant claims about providing perfection, but on the other hand doesn't provide you with evidence of their ability to do so.

It is wise to use a professional directory such as the one published by the CIEP, which lists its most experienced members. (Others are available!)

- I am an [Advanced Professional Member of the CIEP](#), the highest membership tier.

When do I pay my editor?

For most projects, such as editing an annual report or book for a publisher, I invoice on completion. For a one-off job, such as proofreading a dissertation or thesis, be prepared to pay a deposit or the full amount in advance. For a very large job over several months, for example editing and updating website content through several iterations, I may invoice monthly, or at agreed stages.





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FREELANCE EDITOR

If your job is small, for example proofreading a blog post, I charge a minimum fee based on my typical hourly rate. If you know you're going to produce this type of work on a regular basis, it may be more cost-effective for you to negotiate a monthly retainer rate.

- For business and publisher clients, I invoice on completion of a project. For ongoing work, I may invoice monthly by agreement.
- For masters and PhD students, I ask for 50% upfront and 50% on completion, to be paid within 7 days.
- For self-publishers and independent authors, I have the same terms (open to negotiation).
- I charge a minimum fee for small one-off jobs.