

Graham Hughes: How I work

After you've contacted me about some possible work, what can you expect to happen next?

(Please note: this is how I generally work with *non-publishing* customers. Things are different with publishers, largely because they often have their own procedures and an author is also involved.)

First contact

I'll need you to tell me various things about the material that needs to be edited or proofread, and about your needs: please see the [Get a quote](#) page.

With the odd exception (we all need a holiday now and then), you can expect a quick initial response, usually within 24 hours during UK business days.

Once I've got everything I need from you, I'll assess it. I'll consider whether I would be a suitable person to do the work, estimate how long it would take, and work out whether it could fit into my schedule. If I'm willing and able to do it, I'll quote a fee (or, if appropriate, propose an hourly rate). I'll also ask you to accept my [terms and conditions](#) and refer you to my [data protection policy](#).

At this stage, please understand that my availability can't be guaranteed until we've agreed that the work will go ahead.

Agreement

If we agree on the work to be done, the schedule and the pricing, and you're happy with my terms and conditions, I'll book the job in my calendar and confirm that I'm planning to do it.

Getting started

First, I'll create various documents, typically including a timesheet, checklist and style sheet. The style sheet will be a record of my findings and decisions on various aspects of writing style, such as variable spellings and the use of capitals, hyphens and numbers – all with the aim of making everything consistent and in line with good practice. This is mainly for my own use, but you might find the final version useful as well.

Next, with the help of specialist software, I'll do some analysis and general checks, usually making some changes to ensure consistency and coherence. If any general concerns or queries crop up at this stage, I'll get in touch with you.

Down to business

This is where I start reviewing your material in full, word by word, sentence by sentence and paragraph by paragraph. I'll be checking for various kinds of flaws and areas for improvement, according to the type of service that we've agreed on.

At this stage, I'll mostly leave you in peace to get on with other things. However, I will get in touch if I come across any major problems, or if an issue keeps cropping up and I think an early resolution would help. Depending on the size of the job and how it's going, I also might give you some updates on progress.

I use various ways of editing or 'marking up' content, and of providing notes and queries about specific words, phrases, sentences and so on. It all depends on the type of service, the document format and your preferences. I'll use whichever of the methods outlined below is suitable, unless we agree otherwise.

Editing Microsoft Word documents

I'll edit the text and adjust the formatting as needed, mostly with [Track Changes](#) turned on. Unless you say otherwise, I might leave some basic changes (such as removing extra spaces) untracked, to reduce clutter and save time for you. I'll also provide *notes and queries* for you, usually in comment boxes but possibly in a separate document.

After I've finished, you can look through my changes and [accept or reject](#) them. You'll also need to read my notes and follow up on my queries; see 'Handling notes and queries' below.

Are you unsure about working with Track Changes or comments? You can visit the [Resources](#) page and download free guide #2, 'Working with tracked changes and comments in Word'. If you still need help, [let me know](#).

Proofreading PDF documents

Rather than actually *changing* the text in a PDF document, I just *mark up* suggested changes, and give you notes and queries.

I usually do this using the Comment feature in Adobe Acrobat, but can use stamps representing the BSI (British Standards Institute) symbols instead; [here](#) are explanations of the most common ones.

Are you unsure how to work with comments that have been provided using Adobe Acrobat? Go to the [Resources](#) page and get hold of free guide #3, 'Working with Adobe PDF mark-ups'. [Let me know](#) if you still need help with this.

You'll then need to apply my suggested changes (if you agree with them) in the source document, recreate the PDF file in your usual way, and check the results. After that, I can do a second proofread for you, if we agree on the schedule and terms.

Editing or proofreading website content

There are different ways of doing this. Usually, I'll copy the content into one or more Word documents (unless you do this yourself) and work in the same way described above under 'Editing Microsoft Word documents'. After you've accepted or rejected my changes and followed up on my queries, it will be up to you to upload or copy the changed content into your web pages.

Another method would be to 'print' each web page onto a PDF document. I would then mark this up as described above under 'Proofreading PDF documents'.

Or you could give me access to your content management system so that I could edit the content directly; however, you would then have no way of seeing what I've changed, and we'd need to agree on how I should provide notes and queries.

Other media

I can also edit PowerPoint slides. PowerPoint doesn't have a change tracking function, so it won't be so easy for you to work out what I've changed, but I can provide comments to highlight and explain my changes where needed.

Handling notes and queries

When editing or proofreading, I usually come across some points that need to be clarified and raise queries about them. There might also be some things that I want to explain to you in notes – for example, to clarify why I've made a particular change. The way these notes and queries are handled will depend on what type of content I'm working on, the service I'm providing, and your wishes.

Usually, I'll just give you my notes and queries at the end of the job, and leave it to you to follow up on them. If you prefer a back-and-forth approach to resolving the queries, please mention this when asking for a quote. Alternatively, after my initial edit or proofread, we could decide that I'll give you further help with the follow-up work, if we agree on the schedule and additional payment.

Wrapping up

After finishing the work, I'll send you the edited or proofread file, and (if relevant) the style sheet and any other useful documents. I usually send an invoice soon afterwards.

If you're unsure about any of my changes, comments etc., you can feel free to get in touch, and I'll happily spend some time clearing things up. Any feedback on my work would be very welcome; and I hope you'll want to work with me again some day.