

**A Guide to  
Developmental  
Editing for  
YOUR  
Book**

*Nancy L Breuer*

# A GUIDE TO DEVELOPMENTAL EDITING FOR YOUR BOOK

Congratulations! You have a manuscript. Now you're ready to make sure it connects with your audience – an exciting stage to reach! I would like to be your companion and coach on this stage of the journey to publication.

## *My Philosophy, Your Voice*

Most of us slip into a different voice when we write, even unconsciously. Our normal, conversational voice often becomes more formal. We pay more attention to sentence structure and grammar, and some of the gnawing feelings we felt during high school English classes begin to seep into our enjoyment of communicating. Uh oh.

We all have little people sitting on our shoulders, talking into our ears as we write: our fifth grade teacher, an influential professor, a parent or grandparent, a colleague who has commented on our work—you know who they are for you. They're all talking at once, and they don't always agree.

Developmental editing helps you to quiet those voices and focus on the one that matters: yours. Not your "writing" voice, but your conversational voice. I help you to make sure you sound like *you* in your book.

## *Workbook Contents*

- My Philosophy, Your Voice
- Why a Developmental Editor?
- What Is All This about Voice?
- What Makes Editing Developmental?
- "I Don't Want To Spend the Time – Or the Money!"
- Your Elevator Pitch
- In Our First Conversation
- My First Look at Your Manuscript
- Being Edited? Or Root Canal?
- Hold On. Let Go.
- You Will Receive Coaching About...
- What You Will Get, and What I Don't Do
- What Your Colleagues Say About Working with Me
- The Path to a Contract
- Ready to Go?



## A GUIDE TO DEVELOPMENTAL EDITING FOR YOUR BOOK - CONTINUED



See this guy? He's Rob Jolles, a genius at helping you get that book out of yourself (find him at [jolles.com](http://jolles.com)). He's also very honest about where the handoff to the next professional occurs.

Once you've coaxed your book out of your head, it needs shaping before you hand it proudly to a publisher. That's where your developmental editor comes into the picture.

So here's the picture. If the authors I've worked with are telling the truth, you'll enjoy the process much more than you may be thinking—or fearing. You'll even laugh out loud sometimes.

After we complete our work, I'll be waiting to hear from you that you've reached my highest goal: that someone who knows you has read the book and told you that the book “sounded just like you!”

That's success, from my perspective. Shall we begin?



## WHY A DEVELOPMENTAL EDITOR?

Chances are you haven't heard much about developmental editing, or hadn't considered it for your book, because your book, which you just finished and just love, IS FINE. You are so eager to put it into a publisher's hands!

So why hire a developmental editor? Why slow down this train that finally arrived at a main station on the way to publication?

*Because actual publication is still one more station down the track. If you travel with a developmental editor at your side on the way to the Publication Station, you'll learn ways to make sure your book connects with your readers.*

You'll streamline your writing. Your book will be structured so that you connect with readers who start at your Introduction and readers who start somewhere in the middle. Your chapters will give readers multiple ways to connect with your voice, whether they invest an hour or five minutes each time they pick up your book. You'll (almost) eliminate the passive voice, the sludge of writing. You'll have a readable blend of longer and shorter sentences. Your book will say to readers, "Pick me up again. There's more where that came from."

How will that happen? Here's how it starts:

What is the one most important point you want to make to your readers? Write it as one clear, persuasive, complete sentence. \_\_\_\_\_

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That's not easy, is it?



When you have this one point, I'll help you thread it through your book so that its melody is in readers' ears from the moment they read their first chapter.

A great example is the book *Leaders Open Doors*, by Bill Treasurer (iUniverse, 2013). We worked together on his book during the summer of 2012. Bill knew from page one that his key message, his one driving theme, was this: leaders open doors for people. They create possibilities. They don't just open doors to walk through them themselves, alone. Bill made that point in every chapter, resoundingly and effectively. With that message firmly in mind, Bill was off to a running start.

Have you ever left a movie or a musical play with the theme sounding in your ears and playing in your memory? That's what we'll do with your key message.

Congratulations! You're going to be an earworm!

## WHAT IS ALL THIS ABOUT VOICE?

Your conversational voice—the most successful option for your book—is available to you. You use it in everyday conversation. It even has variants: the cadences you use to speak to your parent, a police officer, a close friend, someone whose BMW you've just crunched (yes, I have), a child, and a client are all a little different.

My job is to help that voice ring through the written word. If you speak to groups or lead workshops, you have a distinct way of communicating in that context. Some—but not all—of that voice works as well in writing. Tone is easier in speaking than in writing, though. I will help you translate.

Which leads to your next logical question:



## WHAT MAKES EDITING DEVELOPMENTAL?

Most people are familiar with *copy editing*, the adult world's term for what your teachers did to your drafts. It's editing for accuracy—punctuation, grammar, spelling—and elements such as passive voice, sentence fragments and paragraph flow.

*Developmental editing* may include some copy editing, but in the service of a broader mission: developmental editing structures your book so that readers who've read for five or 45 minutes will want to come back for more. Your developmental editor builds a visual and aural bridge between you and your reader.

How? By making sure that every sentence has an engaging voice: your authentic voice. Your developmental editor builds the bridge by making sure that your book has a clear, engaging throughline, telling the reader at every turn that yes, we're going somewhere, and the writer is the competent designer of the journey the reader is taking.

I may suggest new or more headlines to help pace the reader's experience of the book. I may ask you to try moving an anecdote or a whole chapter from one location to another, where it could have more punch. I may suggest a different way to thread your ideas onto your throughline, which could move a great deal of text around but knit your book together more securely. There may be suggestions for repeatable sections that help orient the reader and create a sense of expectation that you fulfill in each chapter.

I will tell you when you're boring your reader, or including details that we don't need, or assuming that we know everything you know about that memory when, of course, we don't, so your anecdote is falling on its little face. In short, I will help you make your book sing. Even if you don't think you can't carry a tune.

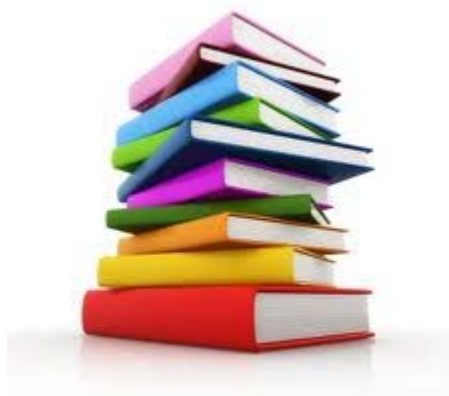


## “I DON’T WANT TO SPEND THE TIME – OR THE MONEY!”

Of course you don’t. You also don’t want to see your book on a “remainders” pile 30 days after publication.

### *Time*

Perhaps this will help: at this stage, I’ll be the one investing most of the time. I will read your manuscript several times so I can suggest ways to pave a smooth path between you and your reader. I will suggest edits to you. I will suggest edits that take your breath away because of their scope, but they will be intended to strengthen your book. Your time investment will be time deciding how to respond to the suggestions.



### *Money*

Will your investment be worth the money? You will decide with certainty only when we’re finished. To help with your decision about proceeding, read the section called “What your colleagues say about working with me.”



## YOUR ELEVATOR PITCH

Here's what Rob Jolles says about your most important point, which he calls your book's elevator pitch:

"An elevator pitch is designed to help others quickly understand the book you are writing, but it also helps *you* understand the book you are writing.

The elevator pitch is nothing more than your book distilled down to its essential hook - the core premise, situation, or theme the rest of the book is built around. It should be much shorter than a book description and should be something that both intrigues and can be easily memorized." I think he's right.

And here's good news: it's okay to write your elevator pitch after you've written the book.



## IN OUR FIRST CONVERSATION

I'll ask you:

- Who is your reader?
- What is the most important message you have for your reader?
- What do *you* think the manuscript needs at this point?



As you answer my questions, I will listen to your voice, noting your inflections, the way you use words, and your tone, in case we do work together on your book. We'll probably talk for about an hour.

In that first conversation, you'll decide whether you'd like to continue the process by sending me your manuscript for my assessment.

So far, you haven't spent a nickel.





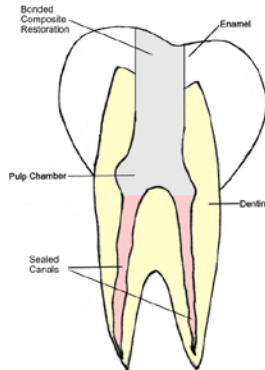
## MY FIRST LOOK AT YOUR MANUSCRIPT

When you send me your manuscript, I'll invest an hour in reading it. I'll develop a list of recommended developmental tasks for you. They'll be broad-brush, such as "adjust the chapter structure to help readers stay engaged," or "develop a character who disagrees with everything you say, to give you a voice you can dialogue with—and win over." I'll send you my list of recommendations, and you can decide:

## BEING EDITED? OR ROOT CANAL?

You still haven't spent a nickel, but here you'll decide whether you'll put your manuscript into my hands.

The great challenge of being edited is deciding to believe that editorial suggestions are potential gifts—not personal attacks. In other words, your attitude deeply influences the value of feedback, as always. If you assume that I'm tearing down your stunning, sweat-drenched work, you will draw less from the process than if you assume I'm on your side. Because I am.



My root canal guy tells me that many patients come in so fearful and tense that they generate--on their own--more pain than the procedure would inherently cause.

One of the most challenging skills an author can learn is open-hearted, open-minded acceptance of feedback, whether or not you eventually use it in your manuscript. Being non-defensive will increase the value you derive from your investment in developmental editing. I will do all I can to help you maintain that non-defensive posture.

I will be straight with you, but never harsh. You'll find, I hope, that sometimes the feedback even makes you laugh. I love when that happens. This doesn't have to be painful.

Developmental editing is not your manuscript's experience analog of root canal.



## HOLD ON. LET GO.

At this point in your work, your manuscript begins to be transformed into its most reader-friendly self. Other people will shape it, especially your publisher, who may even want a different *title!* (The nerve!) In many areas, you'll need to turn to other professionals, such as a graphic artist. Your publisher probably will ask several reviewers to read your manuscript and—*gasp*—suggest changes. You'll have to decide—with your developmental editor's help, if you wish—what to do with those changes. That's the letting go part.

The holding on part is insisting on your own voice. Every story you tell, every point you make, should pulse with authenticity. You should sound as though you're at the reader's side, narrating.

I promise you that I will never forget whose book it is. My job is to bring out your voice, not interpose my own. I make sure your readers will hear you clearly and want more.

## YOU WILL SEE SUGGESTIONS ABOUT:

- Content organization
- Structure
- Headlines
- Sidebars
- Transitions
- Ways to connect your content to your readers' worlds
- Word choice
- Flow
- Tone
- Ways to reach international and ESL (English as a second language) readers
- And yes, voice.



## WHAT YOU WILL GET / WHAT I DON'T DO

Developmental editing is an intense, intimate interaction with a manuscript. Having invested a lifetime in refining that skill, I have not developed these:

- Finding a book agent
- Finding a publisher
- Marketing your book

There are great people who specialize in these skills.

What will you have when we complete our work? You'll have a publisher-ready manuscript. Yes, the publisher will tweak it, but it will be ready for its close-up with your most influential reader.

## WHAT YOUR COLLEAGUES SAY ABOUT WORKING WITH ME

"Working with Nancy is joyous. Having partnered with her on a monthly project for the past seven years, I can attest that her love of language is matched only by her love of excellence. Nancy's feedback is precise but not nit-picky, good-spirited but not snarky. Nancy suggests and educates, she doesn't demand and hack. She has helped grow my voice for a discerning worldwide audience."

*Tom Henschel, President, Essential Communications. His Executive Coaching Tips helping professionals achieve The Look and Sound of Leadership are at [essentialcomm.com](http://essentialcomm.com).*"

"I've worked with Nancy on seven books over a 17 year timeframe. I would never write a book without her! She knows and values my voice...and she waves some kind of magic wand to improve my work, while retaining that voice. Nancy brings fun to every project and oh-so-gently suggests just the right changes to a page you're pretty sure was perfect already. Her instincts, her command of the English language and her collaborative approach make for the most amazing partnering in this fascinating process of creating a book."

*Sharon Jordan-Evans, co-author with Beverly Kaye of Love 'Em or Lose 'Em (5 editions, 600,000 copies sold), Love It, Don't Leave It and Hello Stay Interviews, Goodbye Talent Loss, all published by Berrett-Koehler. [www.jeg.org](http://www.jeg.org)*



“Nancy Breuer is not only a great developmental editor...but she brings a wonderful sense of humor, an amazing collaborative manner, and a ton of background and experience from her own work in this field over several decades! And, she is kind to her authors! I’ve never known anyone to give feedback (the good, the bad, and the ugly) in a manner that makes it easy to digest and, most importantly, do something about! Nancy has worked on all five editions of *Love ‘Em* and we know the end result is always better when she wraps her mind around it!”

*Beverly Kaye, co-author with Sharon Jordan-Evans of Love 'Em or Lose 'Em (5 editions, 600,000 copies sold), Love It, Don't Leave It and Hello Stay Interviews, Goodbye Talent Loss, and co-author with Julie Winkle Giulioni of Help Them Grow or Watch Them Go: Career Conversations Employees Want, all published by Berrett-Koehler.*

“Working with her is a joy. She makes the work fun, is quick, and is extraordinarily competent. The result: we are better writers and our books are more accessible to our readers.”

*Dick and Emily Axelrod, co-authors, Let's Stop Meeting Like This (2014), published by Berrett-Koehler. Dick is the author of Terms of Engagement (2000, 2002, 2010) [www.axelrodgroup.com](http://www.axelrodgroup.com)*

“While I was initially concerned about paying an hourly rate, more often than not, it took me more time to work through her comments than she invoiced. Her technique for directly correcting, offering suggestions, or teeing up thoughtful questions to my manuscript was exactly what I needed – and she has a fabulous way of motivating me forward. Incredible value, and one incredible developmental editor!”

*JV Venable, Former USAF Thunderbird Commander, and author of Breaking the Trust Barrier, forthcoming from Berrett-Koehler.*

“Talented editor Nancy Breuer is a genius with the English language and gently guided me towards crisper writing while honoring my voice and my schedule. She also served as a provocative thinking partner through all stages of the book creation process. A key reason for my satisfaction with this book [*Genius of Opposites*] is Nancy!”

*Jennifer Kahnweiler, a certified speaking professional, is the author of Genius of Opposites (2015) as well as Quiet Influence: The Introvert's Guide to Making a Difference (2013) and The Introverted Leader: Building on Your Quiet Strength. (2013), both published by Berrett-Koehler. [www.jenniferkahnweiler.com](http://www.jenniferkahnweiler.com)*



## THE PATH TO A CONTRACT

Once we have an agreement, I will read the book multiple times, trying to anticipate challenges to your work by those mouthy critics who will be your readers, not to mention your reviewers. I will likely question every decision you made about where to put what and how to say those things. My job is to get your voice ready to leap from a smaller stage to your version of Carnegie Hall.

Is it worth the cost? See the comments in the preceding section to help you make up your mind.

## READY TO GO?

Here's my contact information:

[nancy@clearmagic.net](mailto:nancy@clearmagic.net)

Office phone: 805.581.0544 (Pacific time zone)

Call me. Tell me about your project. As we talk, you can decide whether you'd like to take the next step.

Helping your book to sound like you and connect powerfully with your reader is the work I love, and I'd love to do it on your behalf.

*Nancy*

