

# WORKING WITH AN EDITOR

## The Independent Editor & Self-Publisher

Adapted from Mary Ann de Stefano by Lawrence W. Paz  
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An editor wondered what other editors do when their editorial comments and revision suggestions are rejected by the author. It might be interesting for writers to be privy to something editors talk about.

The relationship between an independent editor and a self-publisher is critical. Many editors told stories about writers who rejected their suggestions and produced books riddled with errors or who rushed to self-publish books that were clearly not ready. It became clear some editors worried about how their customer's work would affect their reputations as editors.

There seemed to be some consensus that the reading public understands the author is responsible for the book's contents, not the editor. Experienced editors know that once they've given the writer thoughtful advice—and backed it up with standard guides along with conversations with the writer about how their choices affect the reader—that what to do with editorial remarks is the author's decision.

Editing is a diplomatic conversation, not a battle of wills. I enjoy working with a writer who challenges my suggestions. It keeps me on my toes when I have to explain myself, and my experience has shown me that a conversation between editor and author can help the writer clarify their vision and generate new ideas.

### **Whose Book Is It, Anyway?**

Editors want to help, not hinder, the writer.

The independent editor's job is to offer suggestions and other information that enables the writer to make good choices more confidently. The goal of the editor should be to help writers achieve their vision for the work. A good editor does not give orders or impose their own style or vision on the author's work. Editing is two-way conversation, not a sermon from the mount.

What do editors do when the author rejects their editorial comments and revision suggestions? The fact is the editor cannot do anything but cringe when their names appear in the book's acknowledgments and the reviews comment negatively on the editing or problems that could have been avoided had the author adopted our suggestions and taken more time to revise. The author's name is on the front of the book, not the editor's. And that's as it should be.

Editors have no control over the author's output, nor should they. Some of the saddest words in the world are, **"My editor made me do it."** The author is the decider and remains in control of the work.

Editors can offer the best experience and knowledge to their customers. They can explain the reasoning behind their revisions and suggestions and discuss alternatives. Editors can only hope writers will truly listen and carefully consider their advice before they decide to act on it or reject it. Editors hope their suggestions will not be dismissed out of hand, and hope that writers will give their work all the time and effort it deserves. Together we can help **make that happen.**