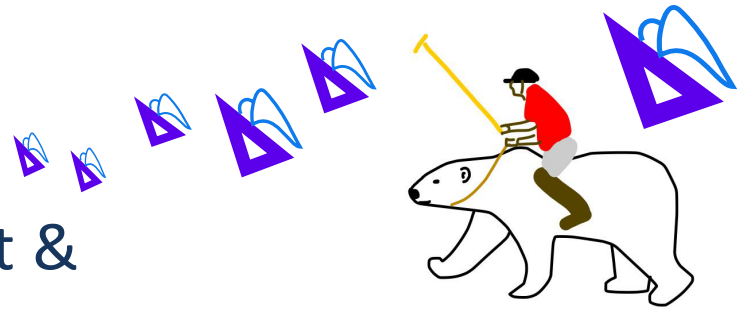


Publishing Process Checklist & Schedule



Definitions follow.

	Step	Time	Due Date
<input type="checkbox"/>	product profile		
<input type="checkbox"/>	marketing plan		
<input type="checkbox"/>	outline	1–3 days	
<input type="checkbox"/>	draft manuscript		
<input type="checkbox"/>	revisions		
<input type="checkbox"/>	visuals research	3–12 weeks	
<input type="checkbox"/>	permissions	6 months, min.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	peer review / field test	2 weeks, min.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	developmental edit	750 words/hour	
<input type="checkbox"/>	visuals selection	5 min/image	
<input type="checkbox"/>	copyedit	1,300 words/hour	
<input type="checkbox"/>	layout		
<input type="checkbox"/>	proofread	2,500 words/hour	
<input type="checkbox"/>	indexing	4 pages/hour	
<input type="checkbox"/>	printing / upload	1–4 weeks	
<input type="checkbox"/>	distribution		
<input type="checkbox"/>	launch party		

Steps in the Publishing Process

Product Profile

Jot notes or write it out long form as you brainstorm with your team. The product profile needs to define

- length
- audience: tone, reading level, purpose
- design features
- criteria to be met (such as learning objectives)
- medium/ platform (printed book, ebook, slide presentation, interactive quiz, etc.)
- budget
- timeline

*All of these considerations affect cost.

Sometimes sales price is the starting point for all future decisions. If the product you envision can only recover costs if sold for \$80 a piece, you might have to rethink its marketability.

Marketing & Distribution Plan

This goes into consideration now because

- you need to figure out your expectations and how to achieve your goals
- it can take a long time to put plans in place
- it may make you rethink aspects of the product profile

Outline

Non-fiction works especially need an outline. And products *especially* need an outline if you have to work to

- a strict word count — which affects page count, which in turn affects costs and ultimately the sale price
- design constraints — such as features, chapter lengths, number of words that will fit on each screen

Revisions

Some say this is when the real work begins. Certainly, there were times we had to wrestle a 50 page draft into a 12 page slot. Other times we found that the draft was excellent but nothing like the outline, and we had to rethink the product profile.

You might revise the manuscript yourself after putting it aside for several weeks, or workshop the piece with a writing group, or use beta readers. Your boss may be involved. It's best to use people who can be dispassionate; avoid family members. Make sure whoever you pick understands the purpose and market and will give straight feedback.

Developmental editors take on this role in the publishing process. Part writing coach, part beta reader, and all publishing pro, the DE tackles concerns with structure, flow, organization, content, and perhaps style. They ask: "Does this meet the criteria set out in the product profile?" Then they make suggestions and work with the author(s) to achieve the goals.

This is my specialty. In market-driven publishing ventures, the DE is usually involved from the idea stage, and writers are hired to produce content ("work for hire"). I prefer to be involved from the start. It saves a lot of money down the road, because the time to rework structure is lengthy. And time is money.

Visuals Research

Time: 3–12 weeks, min. Regardless of the number of images.

Tracking down images can take a long time. This includes all visuals: graphs, photographs, diagrams, or illustrations you will need to have created.

You need to find the right images, and ones that you can afford. Sometimes we find that the visual we imagined is unavailable or impossible and we need to rework that section of manuscript to work with images that are available.

There are consultants who specialize in this step. They know how to track down vendors and rights holders and they know the ins and outs of negotiating rights.

Permissions

Time: 6 months

Citing the source of what you quote or use is not enough. You need to get permission in writing. It can easily take six months to track down rights holders and negotiate permission to use their words or visuals in your book, even if they don't charge you to do so. Start this process as early as possible. Payments are not made until the product is finalized, so it's okay if you're not yet certain that a visual will be used.

In fact, the rights holder might reject your offer and you will need the time to find a suitable replacement.

There are consultants who specialize in this step. They know how to track down rights holders and know the ins and outs of copyright and negotiations as well as typical market prices for rights.

Learn why: blog.catchthesun.net/2012/02/copyright-and-permissions/

Peer Review / Field Testing

Time: 2 weeks

Sending your tidied manuscript out for a critical market opinion is invaluable. On the one hand, you get feedback from your target audience, a second set of eyes on your facts (though this is not fact checking) and insight into whether the product has achieved its goals.

On the other hand, you get an early version of your product out into the market. Since you target / hand pick these readers (or testers, as the case may be) you know that you're making the movers and shakers, the influencers in your field/ market aware of your forthcoming work. Ideally, this starts creating some market buzz.

Bottom line, people. Bottom, line. If it doesn't do what it's supposed to, or isn't going to make the sales you need to cover its costs, I suggest some serious rethinking. Take whatever time you need.

The time required reflects both how long your reviewers will need to read the manuscript and how long they will need to fit this task into their busy schedules. In some fields it is customary to review peers' work as a collegial favour; in others a token payment of a couple hundred dollars is customary. Sometimes a token gift is offered, such as a gift certificate for coffee.

Developmental Edit

Time: about 750 words per hour for straight narrative

This is the big picture, get-your-hands-really-dirty kind of editing. The developmental editor (DE) works closely with the writer (or team) to work out any structural issues and incorporate suggestions from reviewers/ field testing. They may also work out the schedule of deliverables, liaise with the copyeditor and design team, and work on visuals selection as well as other project-management-like tasks. They might also coordinate with a production editor to handle design, proofreading and other end-product details.

Time varies a lot for DE work. Slides, apps, and products with a lot of visuals (especially graphs and diagrams) do not translate well to a words/hour equation. If there are learning outcomes to match or the writing is very rough, that further slows down the process.

Editing is faster when material is well written and organized, done by a single author, has familiar content, and has no references, cross-references, tables, or figures.

Visuals Selection

Time: 5 minutes per image

You or your DE might do this stage, depending on your skills (and budget). Considerations include content of the image, cost for rights, and fit for design (colour and other aesthetics).

If graphs, diagrams, and infographics are part of the visuals, editing these will be necessary. Time required varies with so many variables and so few words.

Cover art selection may happen now, or during layout and proofreading.

Copyedit

Time: about 1,300 words per hour for straight narrative

Sometimes called line editing, this stage of editing addresses consistency, word use, language/reading level, and style. Captions will be adjusted or drafted based on photos.

Copy fitting may occur at this stage, with the goal of having the best fit possible when it goes to layout. It's common to have to tweak some page overruns after the initial layout.

Slides, interactives such as apps and worksheets, and products with a lot of visuals do not translate well to a words/hour equation. Working within special software (such as a CMS) rather than a word processor further slows down this process. Editing is faster when there are few errors, the content is nontechnical or familiar, there are no references, cross-references, tables or figures, and when working onscreen vs on paper. Editing is not complete until the figure and tables have been edited.

Note that top-quality copyediting cannot be done more than 3–5 hours per day.

Layout

Time: varies enormously by product design and length, ask for an estimate during the design phase

Finally, you will see your words and images as you envisioned them back during the product profile stage. Cover art may be created during this phase.

*The copyeditor may be involved again after the very first layout, in order to deal with copy fitting. Tweaking some page overruns after the initial layout is common. A pro might do it much faster than the writer since they know tricks and requirements, and (especially if they did the previous copyediting phase) they appreciate and mitigate the repercussions of certain cuts and moves.

Proofread

Time: about 2,500 words per hour for straight narrative

The laid out document is checked for completeness, accurate application of the design, and any lingering errors. This is the final quality control step.

Apps and products with a lot of visuals do not translate well to a words/hour equation. There are many other factors that make this process faster or slower. Pace speeds up when there are few errors, format is simple, content is nontechnical or familiar, no style queries are required, there is no other markup, and there are no equations, symbols, or foreign characters.

Ask your proofreader about timing since she will have to fit your project into her existing workflow. Some design houses have in-house proofreaders.

*A second proofread is required if there are many changes requested from the author or proofreader at this stage. It's a quality control step, to make sure that changes were input correctly and without introducing any new errors.

Indexing

Time: 4 pages per hour

This can only happen once pages are finalized. It could happen at the same times as the proofreading.

Indexing speeds up when the material is not very factually dense and contains few names or places. Pace also depends on whether you want a very detailed index or a very light one.

This is considered a specialty in editing. Pros follow a specific set of principles and use indexing software for efficiency and accuracy. Authors may instead write (or pay for) the index if it is part of their publishing contract.

Printing / Uploading

Time: 1 to 4 weeks

Make it so. There are consultants who specialize in this process. Usually they work with the designer to ensure a smooth transition. Small snags at this point are common; an experienced pro can lessen the pain.

Digital, local, small-run printing should be given at least three days. Even digital uploads can take a week or two to clear the supplier's quality checks and become available for download.

Large print runs, off-set printing, binding and cover requirements, and anything requiring shipping time needs a buffer of four weeks, minimum.

Confirm the time required with your supplier.

Distribution

Yay! It's really a book/ app/ podcast. Refer to your marketing plan and get it out there!

Launch Party

Cue the confetti cannon! Seriously, take the time to appreciate your accomplishment. At the very least, call your editor and your mom; they know what this means to you.

For an instant estimate of time and cost tailored to the word count of your project, go to estimate.CatchTheSun.net.

At all phases, get a time (and cost) estimate from whoever you hire, based on the product profile and a written sample from the project.

For a detailed description of everything an editor checks at each step, read [Editors Canada's](http://EditorsCanada.ca) Professional Editorial Standards, available free at editors.ca.