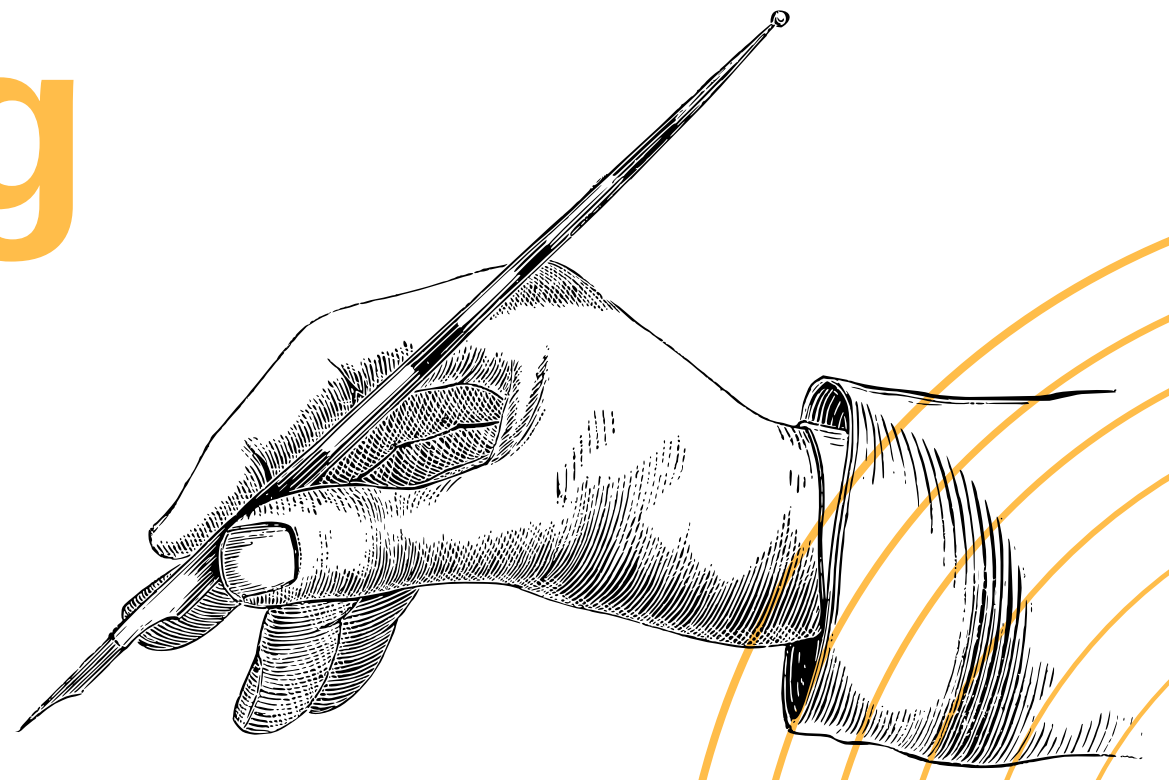# JMR LITERARY SERVICES

Editing for Writers

TIPS AND TRICKS FOR WRITERS THAT MAKE EDITING FAST AND EASY

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Owner of JMR LIterary
Services

Love writing but hate editing?

LET ME SHOW YOU SOME TIPS THAT WILL MAKE THE EDITING PROCESS EASIER!

In this ebook, you'll learn:

- The most common grammar mistakes authors make in their writing.
- How reading aloud can help you spot typos and make your writing smoother.
- Why it's so hard to edit your own writing.
- I also include tips for creating a rewarding editor/author relationship.

Get in touch with me! Visit my official website at www.jmrliteraryservices.com.
Questions or comments? Email Jessica at jmrliteraryservices@gmail.com

Grammar and Punctuation

As the associate editor of a literary journal, I regularly read over fifty short story and poetry submissions for every issue. These eager authors have usually vetted each piece carefully in the hopes of being published. Nevertheless, there are generally several grammar and punctuation issues that need to be addressed before the selected pieces can be published. The following are some of the most common grammar and punctuation mistakes I find:

• Em (—) dash misuse

This tool is very helpful when you want to punctuate your sentence with a pregnant pause or underscore an important piece of information you're about to reveal. Example: "The cat leapt from the roof—not knowing that hungry dogs waited below." The em dash is also often confused with the en (-) dash, which is used to mark numerical ranges.

• Farther vs. further

Farther is used when writing distance, while further is used when you mean "more."

• Semi colon (;) misuse

The semi colon is a tool that is often utilized in academic or business writing but it definitely does have a place in fictional prose. Use the semi colon when you are connecting two complete sentences that are related. Example: "She liked the giant's hair; it was long and fell in curls to her shoulders." One sentences doesn't need the other to be complete, but they share the same subject.

• Misuse of dialogue tags

When in doubt, use "said." Don't try and mix up your sentence tags too much as readers' eyes generally gloss over dialogue tags unless the sentence ends in an exclamation point. Example: "I don't want to," she opined. "But you have to," he intoned. Save yourself the trouble and just use "said."

• Then vs. than

Then should be used when describing something happening sequentially, while than is used in comparison. Examples: "I went to the store then I went to the bank." "That park is better than the one next to my house."

• Ellipses (...) misuse

Ellipses are three periods that suggest a pause. The biggest mistake I see in its use is inserting four or more periods. Example: "I'm pregnant...and the baby's yours."

The best way to spot those pesky typos...

Read your work out loud! When we reread our writing the normal way (quietly, in our heads) we tend to see what we're *supposed* to have written, rather than what's really there. Your when it should be you're, their when it should be they're, were when it should be we're—these are some examples of tricky words that spellcheck either doesn't pick up on or takes upon itself to change for you. But when you read aloud, these mistakes are more readily apparent, making them easier to catch and fix.

One of my clients does something I think of as being an ingenious way to catch typos: he uploads his document into an audiobook feature that provides an audio rendition of his manuscript. So instead of reading aloud to himself, he listens to his writing being read to him, which is a timesaving way to check your writing for typos. You can listen in the car, while working out, or before bed—just be careful to make notes on what you hear and where corrections need to be made.

Ready to practice? Read each of the sentences below out loud and figure out where the hidden typos are. Let's go!

- **When we went to the store, we say lots of greet toys!**
- **Were not the same age, he's older.**
- **There aren't many tops in my writing, I'm very careful.**
- **You're dog just chased my cat.**
- **When it reigns, it pours.**
- **Their weren't any strawberries, so I got mangoes instead.**
- **She said "the cats out of the bag".**
- **The whether outside is frightful.**
- **The horses mouth was covered in grass.**

Find them all? Great job! If you think these were easy, that anyone should be able to spot them, keep in mind that these are some of the most common mistakes I find in manuscripts—even in the work of seasoned authors.

Why it's so hard to edit your own writing and how to create a productive and enjoyable author/editor relationship.
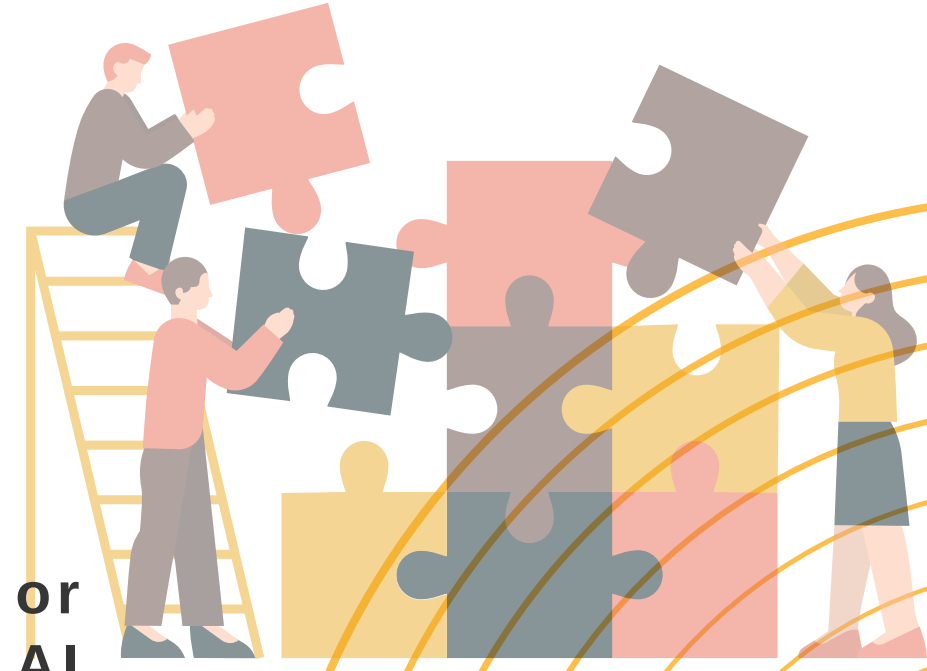
Maybe you're saying to yourself, "I don't have the time or money to hire an editor. I'll go over it myself or use an AI editor." While I can't say that programs like Grammarly or Word Editor won't help you edit your writing, they often miss the subtleties of our language, the nuances that make it beautiful. It's been documented that editing your own writing is notoriously difficult; check out this article from The Write Life to learn why.

If you want to send your work to literary agents or have dreams of self-publishing, you'll need an error-free manuscript if you want to be taken seriously. And the best way to get a professional manuscript is by sending it to a professional editor. I've been an editor for over six years—and I ALWAYS send my work to an unaffiliated editor! Believe me, it's worth the investment!

The following are some tips and tricks to getting the most out of working with an editor.

Tips for working with an editor:
• Format your manuscript so that it's easy to read.
• Make sure you sign a contract stating the deadlines and agreed-upon fees.
• Double check to ensure that your writing is as clean as you can get it.
• Be open to revisions.
• Communication is key! Be available while your editor is working on your manuscript as nothing slows the process down more than unanswered questions.
• Make sure you have the time to go over your editor's suggestions and edits. It's not only a time commitment for your editor, but for you as well.
• Pay your editor on time. This will differ depending on who you work with, but most editors require half of the fee before starting on the project and half upon finishing.

*Pro tip: Vet your editor by asking for client recommendations and a free sample edit before signing a contract or agreeing to work with them. Sharing you manuscript is a very personal thing and you should make sure that the working relationship you have with your editor reflects that.

Resources & Tools
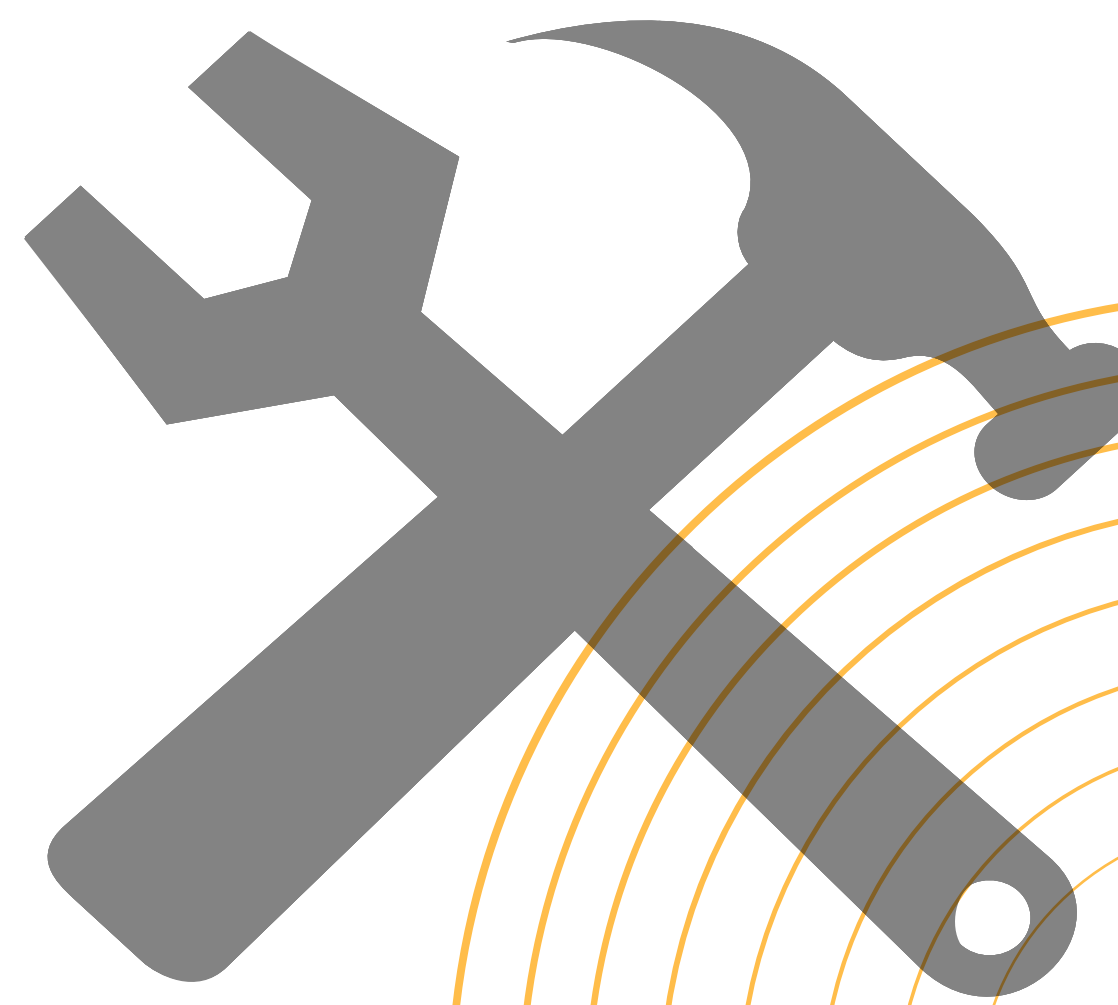
Finding editors:

- **Editorial Freelancers Association**

 Use this link to find editors through the EFA

- **JMR Literary Services**

Of course I have to throw my own hat in the ring! Here is my EFA profile and here is my website.

- **Upwork**

You get what you pay for and some of the quality you'll find on Upwork is a little...questionable. But it can be a great option if you're working on a tight budget.

Writing tips:

- **Writer's Digest**

 A print and online publication that focuses on writing and writers.

- **Reedsy**

A great resource to find contests and open submissions.

- **The Writer's Workout**

Offering contests, a literary journal, and regular, helpful blog posts The Writer's Workout is a great resource for writers.