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# Introduction

You've finished your book! Enjoy that feeling of accomplishment. You've done something that most people only dream about. You set out to write a book, and you finished it. Whether this is your first novel, or your sixty-first, you never quite lose that euphoric moment, the pride that comes from completing a challenging task. Go ahead and enjoy it! Take a break. Relax, grin, smile and dance a jig with your dog, if you wish. But don't stay away too long. Allow yourself about a week, two at the most. Then roll up your sleeves and come back, because now the real work begins.

Anyone can publish a book these days. Amazon has made it incredibly easy. Through their kindle format, you can upload your manuscript yourself and hope it sells. Amazon offers support every step of the way, with webpages and videos from how to create the table of contents to finding a cover artist—or even how to create the cover art yourself. They have marketing strategies built right in to their kindle select program. Because of this, thousands of people are now published authors! They no longer have to wade through months—or years—of rejection slips, as they struggle to perfect their craft. Anyone who has a computer and can plunk out a couple thousand words can publish online and even charge money for their effort.

But how many times have you bought an eBook and felt that you wasted your money? Have you tried to read an eBook with so many punctuation errors in it, that it just wasn't enjoyable? Ever ask for your money back? And then what did you do? If you're like me, you made a note of that author's name so you wouldn't make the mistake of buying from him or her again.

So it is with your book! You need to revise, rewrite and reread your novel, to make sure that it is the best it can be. Even if you are going to send your book to a publisher—online or in print—you should still do your own rewriting, and submit a clean, carefully crafted story, that is original, creative and thoroughly enjoyable.

You are an author! You will be a published author. Take pride in that, and present only your best work. Then, continue to improve, so your best gets even better. The eBook market is exploding! There are millions of titles now available in the various eBook formats, and for a fraction of what their hardcover counterparts cost. Indie authors are out-selling mainstream traditional print publishers, so much so, that the major book publishing companies struggle to hold their financial heads above water.

With all that competition, though, what can you do to increase your sales and build your fan base? Building a successful writing career is not that different from any other profession. Become a great writer. Improve your skills, hone your craft. Develop your story. Perfect your dialog. Have a great story to tell and tell it exceptionally well. Wow your readers and they will add you to their list of favorite authors. What's more, they will advertise for you. They will tweet about you to their friends, recommend your book at Goodreads, and maybe even like your Facebook page.

I am an editor for one of the oldest eBook publishers on the web. I have edited books since 2008, but I have been an author for longer than that. I have thirty published books—this one will make thirty-one. I graduated summa cum laude with a dual degree in education, and a minor in language arts. I worked as a reporter for a small newspaper, where I perfected my

editing skills, as it was too embarrassing to let a typo get by and have all my readers point it out to me when I met them in town.

Recently, I had the joy of working with a fairly new author. Her books were good... but she lacked experience. Her books had long, run-on sentences, some repetitive dialog, in short—they were good enough that my publisher bought them, but they needed editing. The author was very willing to work with me, and took all of my suggestions to heart. Her first three books saw really good sales, especially for a new author. Then, her fourth book did it. It made it to #1 on a kindle list, and stayed there for days. A month later, it was still holding at #36 in its category.

This is what rewriting can do for you.

This is what this book is about. I will walk you through the steps of taking your completed story through the rewriting process. You will learn why, and how, to do each step, and then your assignments will be to apply what you've just learned.

You could just publish your finished book as is... it is what many eBook authors do. But if you don't rewrite it, edit it and polish it up to make it the best it can be, you open yourself to negative advertising. Readers expect you to do your homework. If they come across too many typos or bloopers, they will say so in their reviews. They may post to all their social media that your books are unprofessional and not worth purchasing.

So anyone can publish an eBook. But if you want to build your career and publish a second, third, or fiftieth book—you will edit your story before you publish.

This book is laid out in clear, easy-to-follow steps. Each step covers part of the rewriting and editing process—from tweaking your plot to improving your characters to perfecting your dialog. There is a section on grammar, explaining the rules simply and with examples, then teaches you how to fix that grammar gaffe—if you are guilty of it—by using your word processor's find and replace feature.

You will learn the difference between passive and active phrases, and when to use them. You will learn exactly what is meant by the age-old advice to "show, don't tell" and never make that mistake again. You will learn, once and for all, about point of view and how to avoid the nefarious head-hopping affliction of the amateur author. And finally, you will learn how to use the spelling and grammar checker effectively. It may come as a surprise to you, but the grammar checker is not always right! It is, after all, only a program. English has too many rules and exceptions to the rule, for a program to be without fault. It takes a human touch—a professional editor—to make the final decision. And that's where this book comes in.

Throughout this guide, you will be given assignments. These are the steps you will take to rewrite and polish your book. Do not skip the assignments! If you just read this book from cover to cover and put it down, nothing will change. Read the guide up to the first assignment, and then do the assignment on your finished manuscript. When you are satisfied with your work on that step, continue with the next section.

When you finish Do It Yourself Editing, your book will be revised and polished and ready to share with the world.

*Part One: Structure*

*"Books are not written. They are rewritten."*

*~Michael Crichton*



## Step One: What is Plot?

A good plot is more important than great characters. You can create the most original characters imaginable. They can have thorough back-stories, detailed histories, clear descriptions and enjoyable personalities. But if they don't do anything, they are boring.

### Without Plot, Your Characters Don't Have Anything To Do

Simply put, plot is what the characters do in your story. It's not who they are, or what they are, but it is action and reaction. Think about a book you've read recently. If someone were to ask you what it was about, would you tell them that it was about a blonde woman with long curly hair, and creamy complexion, and a stylish wardrobe? That she had her nails painted a bright pink, and wore a dusty rose lipstick, with blue eye shadow and incredibly long eye lashes? No! Your friend would look at you like you were very strange indeed. You would say what that character did in the story—or what happened to her.

If your friends know you've been writing a book, undoubtedly they've asked you what it was about. What did you tell them? Did it take you ten minutes—or longer—to tell them what your book was about? Did they shift uncomfortably from foot to foot and wish they'd never asked? How many times can you tell someone what your book is about, before even you lose interest in it?

You should be able to answer that question in one sentence. One very clear, well-crafted sentence. This is called the story statement.

I can see you rolling your eyes right now. Oh yeah, you groan. If you could tell your story in one sentence, then why did you waste 80,000 words or more to tell it? Because one sentence is what your story is *about*. The remaining 80,000 words *is* your story.

Let's look at a few story statements.

A young boy joins a Jedi master to save the rebellion from the Death Star, a massive weapon capable of destroying entire planets.

Most of you, if not all, should recognize that immediately as Star Wars IV, A New Hope. Some of you might ask if "A battle of good against evil" would also be a story statement, but no—that is the theme. A story statement tells us who, what they want and what is keeping them from getting it. Who—a young boy and a Jedi master. What—save the rebellion. What is keeping them from it—the Death Star. Where the story takes place isn't that important in a story statement. Specific names are not important either. We don't need to say "Luke Skywalker joins Obi-Wan Kenobi...." That really tells us less than the original, "a young boy and a Jedi master." We know Luke is a young boy because we've seen the movie. But in writing your story statement, don't tell us your heroine's name. Tell us who she is. Is she a career woman or a stay-home mom? Is your hero a soldier or a rancher?

Here is another example of a story statement. Do you recognize this book?

A teenage girl falls in love with a vampire who is torn between his love for her and his lust for her blood.

Here again, "a teenage girl" gives us more information than a name, Bella Swan. "A vampire" is more informative than "Edward Cullen." Notice the colorful, million-dollar words like "lust, torn, blood." These make the story statement come alive. When you can reduce your novel to a story statement like this, then you really, really know what your book is about.

Assignment 1: Write a story statement for your book.

