

Andrea Merrell/Pet Peeves That Drive Editors Crazy
AndreaMerrell7@gmail.com
www.AndreaMerrell.com

Pet Peeves That Drive Editors Crazy

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Editors see all types of mistakes on a regular basis. And although most editors love what they do, they all have pet peeves, and there are certain things that drive them crazy. If you're an editor, you understand. You'll probably laugh as you read through the list, shaking your head and thinking, *Yep ... I can definitely relate.*

On the other hand, if you're a writer—especially a new writer—the following list will help you by pointing out common mistakes that can easily be avoided. These items can save you a tremendous amount of time, money, and frustration. If you'll pay close attention to each point made by a variety of professional editors—who shall remain nameless, other than literary agent Chip McGregor—you can gain as much knowledge and instruction as you would in a writing workshop.

Chip McGregor

We'll begin our list with some comments from Chip's blog post, *What Drives an Editor Crazy?* <http://www.chipmacgregor.com/2014/02/page/2/>

- Someone wrote to ask a favorite question: "Are there certain editing errors that drive you crazy?" Yes! Of course! Here's one! Novelists who use exclamation points as though the period key didn't work on their keyboard! I hate this! Really! What's worse is the writer who needs to use several at once!!!!
- Occasionally you'll find "authors" who feel a "need" to put any emphasized words in "quotes," since they think it makes them look "official." This is particularly tiresome when a "funny" author decides to put his "punch line" in quotations. An "idea" – cut the quotation marks.
- Print out a copy of your proposal or manuscript and look it over. If the FIRST WORD of every paragraph is the same, you need to go back and change it. (Unless the first word of every paragraph is the word "I," in which case you need to be slapped by the person sitting next to you, THEN go back and change it.)

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Various Professional Editors (Editing)

Here are a few other things that drive editors crazy:

- Incorrect formatting
- No hooks
- Too much telling
- Too many *-ly* and *-ing* words
- Redundant words and phrases
- Mixing tenses
- Lots of typos
- The incorrect use of I/me
- Chapters written as one giant paragraph
- Knowledgeable folks who continue to spell nonfiction with a hyphen and freelance as two words
- Your when it should be you're; affect vs effect; their/they're/there
- Very simple mistakes that are SO obvious
- Punctuation and syntax issues
- Strange and unusual POV (point of view) shifts
- Misplaced apostrophes
- Too much backstory
- Writers who forget to finish their sentences
- Writers who use a speech to text program that mangles their words
- Plot shifts for no discernable or viable reason
- Inconsistency with capitalization and spelling from one line of copy to the next

Various Professional Editors (Working With Clients)

Here are even more issues that drive editors crazy:

- Clients who argue about every little change
- Return clients who seemingly learned nothing after the first edit and submit a manuscript with all the same mistakes throughout
- Clients who ignore the word count

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- Clients who say they want to learn, pay me lots of money to teach them, and then take none of my advice and keep making the same mistakes
- Finding out—especially after the fact—that one or more other people are editing the book at the same time
- Writers who need something urgently and tell me it'll only take a few minutes when it actually takes hours
- When I have started working on a document and the writer sends me another copy of it because they suddenly realized the one they sent me was not their final version
- Writers who believe they're in complete control of how the edit is going to go down
- Writers who tell me not to edit any of the words because they were all inspired by God
- Writers who demand my attention daily
- Writers who send me paragraphs to insert or change in the middle of the edit
- Writers who ask me to move scenes around and rewrite them in another character's POV (for free)
- Authors who don't do thorough research and don't bother to learn the craft
- Friends and acquaintances who expect you to do editing favors for them for free or at very little cost
- Authors who write 100,000-word novels and then post a request for proofreading on Thumbtack without having received a professional critique or a copyedit
- Authors who think they know how long it will take an editor to do an edit
- Lazy clients who just send a manuscript and expect you to work magic

Wow. That's quite a list, but we can gain a lot of knowledge that will move us forward if we pay attention. We should always be striving to be better writers. The best way to do that is to heed advice from the professionals.

Things That Make an Editor Very Happy

- Clients who are open and teachable
- Clients who learn and improve with every manuscript
- Clients who are team players and easy to work with
- Clients who don't get offended over every correction
- Clients who work hard to take their writing to the next level
- Clients who succeed

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It's important to remember that the editor's job—and desire—is to make you, the writer, look good. The goal is to make your words shine. Professionals are trained, and they keep up with industry standards and changes. Stay open and teachable. Trust your editor and allow him or her to help bring your writing to the next level.

An editor can be your best ally and biggest supporter. Find someone who is a good fit for you and your project, and work as a team.

Remember: we're *all* a work in progress—learning and growing as we hone our craft. As I like to say, even the best editor needs an editor.