

The Editing Floor

When it comes to editing, the cutting room or editing floor can be your closest ally in writing your manuscript and publishing your book. During the editing process at FLuidity, we often read manuscripts that, in a word, are unnecessary. If you have ever received an editorial critique or review, you have likely been advised to leave some of the details on the editing floor. Many of my clients can attest to this, which is a good thing because they will be the first to admit the editing process is where having “sandpaper people” in your corner is a good thing. (For those of you who do not know, “sandpaper people” scrub your work the right way to smooth out those rough spots in your writing—thank us later.)

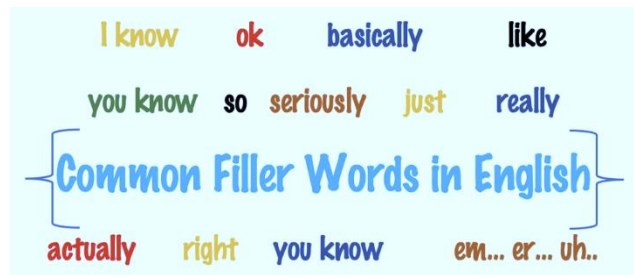


Think of your book as a movie reel. From the title page to the index, from the climax to the back cover, each part of your manuscript is in a filmstrip. When attached together, it creates the whole book. A movie is edited before the final product is released into theaters. There are parts cut out, whether it is a deleted scene, a “bloop,” or a scene an editor deems unfit for the final product. In the end, after editing, there are filmstrips left on the cutting room floor—and the final product is as clean and concise, and hopefully, as near to perfection as possible. The beauty of the editing process is that even the “bloopers” find their way into comic theater, so nothing about this process is wasted.

The challenges with editing material from your book boil down to determining what content to remove, what is unnecessary, and what doesn’t add value to the overall arc of your story. This applies to any genre of writing—fiction and nonfiction.

On our editing floor, there are three main areas we find are starting points to cutting away excess from a story, which adds brevity and levity:

- **Ditch the filler words.** The most superfluous and often-used words are—really, very, just, like, then, sort of, seem, and so. These words add no additional meaning or emphasis to your overall sentence, and therefore, they can



be removed. Your audience will still understand your intent without the use of these words. Example: “I just really love your hair” can easily say, “I love your hair.” The words “just” and “really” add nothing pertinent to the overall message, contribute to a high word count, and disturb the flow of the work.

- **Defining words your audience likely knows.** This has become a trend amongst many nonfiction writers. For instance, I explained the meaning of “sandpaper people” because it is not a term some people will know. This can be especially true depending on demographics and culture. I recently edited a book where the author included the Webster dictionary definition to the words: prayer, nothing, and private. If someone is reading your book, one can surmise they are literate in the basics of grammar. Defining words that they already know is not only unnecessary, but it may also frustrate the reader and feel condescending, albeit unintentionally.
- **Scenes that do not add to the storyline.** When thinking of your book as the movie reel, remember that not everything will contribute to the overall message of your story. Each scene and each detail you show should be relevant to the story and



should contribute to your message. Scene breaks and transitions should afford the reader an opportunity to experience different narrative timeframes and situations involving different characters in short succession. Writing good scene breaks and transitions will keep your story moving, even as you switch between settings (places and times) and viewpoints.

Less may equal more when it comes to a book’s overall word count. Because a book has a high word count does not mean it is good. Leave those words, definitions, and scenes on the editing floor, and your book will be clearer and more concise.



FLuidity’s editing floor is the polish to help your work shine. Schedule your consultation at:

<https://www.fluiditywriting.com/consultation>.