hazel@thebetteredit.com thebetteredit.com

Standard terms and conditions

2026

Thank you for considering placing work with us. Throughout this document:

- **you** refers to the person, business or other entity contracting services from The Better Edit
- **we** or **us** or **our** refers to The Better Edit or its representatives (Hazel Bird and Matthew Wood)
- **edit/editing/edited/editorial work** refers to whatever editorial service is being commissioned (including but not limited to proofreading, copyediting, developmental editing and editorial project management)

In addition to the clauses below, as an Advanced Professional Member of the Chartered Institute of Editing and Proofreading, Hazel Bird is bound to adhere to its Professional Practice Code.

Where any aspect of these terms and conditions conflicts with a separate project proposal we have provided to you, the proposal takes precedence.

Acceptance

1. These terms and conditions apply to all work done for you by us.

2. You will be considered to have agreed to everything in this document once any of the following has occurred:
    a. You have paid a deposit
    b. You have sent text for editing
    c. Either you or we have proposed schedule dates and the other party has accepted

Agreeing and scheduling work

3. You are under no obligation to offer us work; neither are we under any obligation to accept work offered by you.

4. The scope, deliverables and schedule for each individual piece of editing work shall be agreed on a project-by-project basis.

5. For each piece of work, upon your request, we will provide an estimate of the fee in advance of the work starting. However, it is in the nature of editorial work that unforeseen issues can arise, given that it is not possible to assess the entirety of a text before work commences. If the editorial work reveals unforeseen issues, we will advise you of your options and the associated costs.

6. We may provide you with a spreadsheet to enable you to calculate estimated costs for yourself. Any such calculator is provided for information only. Although every effort will be made to ensure that the calculator produces representative estimates, no estimate should be considered final until approved by us.

7. Late delivery of a text may cause the schedule to be delayed. Where possible, we will adjust the schedule by the same number of days as the delay in delivery. However, sometimes our other scheduled commitments will not allow this, in which case we will advise what schedule is possible.

8. When we send you queries or a request for information, we will request a return date that will enable us to meet the agreed schedule. Late or incomplete replies to queries or requests for information, or replies that do not follow instructions that we have asked you to follow, may cause completion of the work to be delayed in the same way as outlined in the previous clause.

Payment

9. If the project's duration extends beyond 28 days, we may invoice portions of the total fee periodically up to a limit of one invoice per month ('interim invoices').

10. The balance of the fee (minus any interim invoices) will be invoiced once we have provided you with the final files.

11. Unless agreed otherwise, payment of invoices is due within 30 days.

12. We reserve the right to claim statutory interest at 8% above the Bank of England reference rate in force on the date any debt becomes overdue and at any subsequent rate where the reference rate changes and the debt remains unpaid in accordance with the Late Payment of Commercial Debts (Interest) Act 1998 as amended and supplemented by the Late Payment of Commercial Debts Regulations 2002.

13. Late payments will also be subject to an administration fee in line with the UK government's late payment legislation.

14. We retain copyright of the edits and any content created by us as part of the editing process until payment of the final invoice.

Cancellation

15. Once work has commenced, if you cancel a project where we are providing you with a single-stage service (i.e. we edit the text and send it to you with queries for you to resolve without further input from us), the full fee is always payable.

16. Once work has commenced, if you cancel a project where we are providing you with a multi-stage service (e.g. we edit the text and send it to you with queries, and you then send back your answers for us to finalize the text):
    a. If you have not yet received all of the queries, 75% of the full estimated project fee is payable.
    b. If you have already received all of the queries, the full estimated project fee is payable.

Communications

17. Our standard availability is Tuesdays to Fridays. We are unavailable on Mondays, during the evenings and at weekends except by prior arrangement.

18. We aim to respond to all messages within two business days of receipt (i.e. excluding Mondays, Saturdays and Sundays).

19. A reasonable level of email correspondence is included as standard for all editorial projects.

20. For projects quoted at £1,000 or higher, one live consultation (phone, Zoom, etc.) of up to 30 minutes is included. Otherwise, live consultations are charged at £50 for the first 15 minutes and thereafter £25 per 15 minutes, unless otherwise agreed.

21. We ask that live consultations are booked in advance. This is because we are often working on multiple projects at once, and scheduling allows us to ensure we are dedicating focused time to your project and those of our other clients.

Change control

22. The text sent to us for editing must be final. Any changes requested by you or individuals you nominate as points of communication (e.g. an author) after editing has begun may attract an additional fee.

23. Unless agreed otherwise, the expectation is that in responding to the editorial queries, you will simply answer the queries and not introduce unrequested rewrites or other changes. Any such rewrites or other changes may attract an additional fee.

Error rates

24. We strenuously endeavour to identify as close to 100% of the errors in your text as possible. However, in sending work to us to edit, you acknowledge that:
    a. The industry standard is for editors and proofreaders to find and correct 80–95% of the errors in a text.*
    b. Many editorial decisions are subjective. What some people consider to be an error may be accepted by others. You are encouraged to let us know if there are any style rules or editorial decisions that you would especially like us to follow or disregard. Where relevant, you are also encouraged to provide feedback on desired and undesired changes as the work proceeds.
    c. The heavier the changes to a text, the more likely there are to be residual errors. The traditional publishing workflow is for text to first be developmentally edited, then copyedited and then sent to a proofreader. While nowadays this strict separation of work is not always followed nowadays, we always encourage clients to arrange for at least two stages of checks wherever possible.

- See Adrienne Montgomerie, ‘Error Rates in Editing’ (Right Angels and Polo Bears, November 2013).

Exclusions

25. It is your responsibility to check that all changes made by us are acceptable to you before the text is published or otherwise released to its intended audience.

26. We accept no responsibility for changes introduced into the text after the editorial work has been completed.

27. We will not act as an agent, promoter, publisher, marketer or commercial advisor for your text.

28. We make no guarantee whatsoever that the editorial work will lead to (a) your text being accepted for publication, (b) your text receiving improved reviews or reader engagement, or (c) any additional benefit to you (as applicable). Similarly, where applicable, we (d) make no guarantee whatsoever regarding improvements to academic grades.

29. We will advise to the best of our ability on copyright issues relating to any extracts and/or artwork in your text that may require permission from copyright holders for reproduction. We will also highlight to the best of our ability any content that appears to be libellous or offensive, or that it may be risky to publish. However, it is not always possible for an editor to identify such content. You agree to indemnify us against any legal claims including but not limited to copyright of others' work, libel and defamation. You are encouraged to engage a specialist sensitivity reader or a legal professional if any of the mentioned issues is a particular concern in your project.

Use of AI tools

30. You agree to disclose any use of AI to us before a project is agreed.

31. We may use AI tools as editing supports (but on the strict principle that the AI is a tool, just like a spellchecker, and a human remains in full control of the editing process*). We will only place your text into AI tools that have a setting to forbid use of text for AI training or where we believe that the AI tool provider does not use text for AI training. However, the field of AI moves very quickly and we cannot guarantee staying fully up to date with the changes made by the AI tool providers. Before a project is agreed, you must tell us of any restrictions you wish to place on our use of AI on your text.

- For more information (not to be considered part of these terms and conditions), see our AI and copyediting manifesto.

Confidentiality and security

32. We will not share the whole or a substantial part of your text or correspondence with any third party. Occasionally, we consult with editorial colleagues for advice on issues relating to a text. In such cases, information and examples provided to fellow editors are as brief as possible and anonymized.

33. We use software to protect against viruses and other malware. However, we cannot accept any responsibility for viruses or malware transferred to you by any means.

34. We may use your name and logo, the titles of projects worked on for you, and cover images of projects worked on for you in our promotional material unless you notify us not to do so.

35. We may quote any feedback provided by you in our promotional material unless you notify us not to do so.

Legalities

36. Hazel Bird and Matthew Wood are self-employed, are responsible for their own income tax and National Insurance contributions, and will not claim benefits granted to your employees.

37. The work will be carried out unsupervised at such times and places as determined by us, using our own equipment.

38. We reserve the right to subcontract work without notifying you. We guarantee that any such work will be completed to the same standard, schedule and budget.

39. The information that you and we may keep on record is covered by the terms of the General Data Protection Regulation. No more such information will be held than is necessary, at any time, to comply with those terms and with any compliance statement or privacy policy published by you and/or us. Both you and we agree that, where consent is required to hold or process such data, such consent has been requested and obtained and both facts can be demonstrated. Either may view the other's records to ensure that they are relevant, correct and up to date.

40. Either you or we have the right to terminate this contract if there is a serious breach of its terms.

41. This agreement is subject to the laws of England and Wales. Both you and we agree to submit to the jurisdiction of the English and Welsh courts.

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