

Editor

Take somebody else's draft and make it clear, correct and worth reading, then put your name nowhere near it.

TYPICAL PAY

\$77,920

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$41k to \$154k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

4 to 7 years

after high school

DEMAND

Limited

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

Newsrooms, magazines, book publishers, marketing teams, freel...

How you get there

- 1 High school diploma** Grade 12
Write constantly and get edited. Work on the school paper, the yearbook or a website where somebody else changes your words.
- 2 Bachelor's degree** 4 years
English, journalism or communications is typical, but a science or history degree plus proven writing is worth more in specialist editing.
- 3 Student paper and internships** During college
The actual qualification. A summer on a real copy desk or at a publishing house beats any course.
- 4 First job: writer or editorial assistant** 1 to 3 years
Fact checking, proofreading, chasing permissions, writing headlines. This is the apprenticeship and it is badly paid.
- 5 Editor** 3 to 5 years in
Copy editor, section editor, managing editor. From here the ladder runs through specialty or management.

Pros and cons

- + You get paid to read all day
- + Remote and freelance work is normal
- + Any degree can lead here if you can write
- Starting pay is low and the junior market is crowded
- Newsrooms have cut copy desks hard, so jobs are shrinking
- The work is invisible when done well and blamed when not

Good to know

A missing comma cost a dairy \$5 million

In 2017 a federal appeals court sided with delivery drivers at Oakhurst Dairy in Maine because a state overtime law had no comma before the last item in a list. The wording was genuinely ambiguous, the drivers...

There is a rulebook newsrooms argue about every year

The Associated Press Stylebook, first published in the 1950s, decides things like whether to write percent or the symbol. New editions land regularly and editors genuinely fight about the changes.

Optional boosts

Technical editing. Medical and scientific editing. Developmental editing. Video and newsletter editing.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Editors (27-3041.00)

ACES: The Society for Editing

The Poynter Institute: journalism and editing training

USAJOBS, the federal government's official hiring site

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in United States dollars, based on Bureau of Labor Statistics wage data and published pay scales. They vary by state, employer and experience. Tuition is for in-state students at public schools unless the card says otherwise. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/us/careers/editor>



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