

Selecting an editor or writing coach who meets your particular needs for your writing project(s) is clearly important. You may already have someone in mind who you know will be a good fit or whom a colleague has recommended. If not, this quick tip sheet should help you begin the process.

As you select a coach or editor, think about what specific issues you would like feedback on and what kind of working relationship you'd like to have with an editor. Consider, for example, the questions and suggestions in the following categories:

- **Services offered:** Would you prefer a writing coach, an editor, or someone who does both? Writing coaches often focus on psychosocial issues related to writing—finding time for writing, balancing a writing schedule with other work and life demands, working through writer's block, perfectionism, etc. Editors typically focus on the writing itself, though they may also offer tips for writing efficiently or effectively.
- **Interaction:**
 - Nature of the exchange: How frequently would you like to meet with the editor/coach? Would you prefer someone you can meet with in person, by phone, or via email?
 - Focus: What kinds of feedback would you prefer? That is, do you want someone to help catch sentence-level details and to focus on grammar or mechanics? Or, do you want someone who can help polish your writing style or catch idiomatic expressions? Would you prefer someone who will look at the larger or conceptual issues—argument, transitions, ideas, and so on?
 - Interpersonal skills: How easily do you communicate with this individual? Would you prefer someone with a more blunt, straightforward approach or someone who uses a kinder, gentler tone to convey his or her comments?
- **Experience:** Do you need an editor who is familiar with your specific field to understand the nuances of your argument, writing style, or data? Will someone with a more general background work to help improve your writing style or grammar? To determine whether the editor has the kind of experience that will best fit your needs, interview potential editors using questions such as the following:
 - What are the differences in editing an academic manuscript versus a popular/trade manuscript?
 - How do you approach editing a manuscript outside your field of expertise?
 - What experience do you have working on a manuscript/grant proposal/journal article in my field?
 - What experience do you have with scientific or technical writing/writing for an academic journal in X field?
 - What publications have you worked on or written for? What are your own areas of research?
 - How would you describe your editorial style? What aspects of writing do you focus on?
- **Compatibility and Trust:** To confirm your compatibility, you can also ask each to edit a page or short piece of your work to see how each approaches the task. Consider how their

insights do or don't improve your manuscript or weaknesses you want to address. Many editors will perform such a trial for free or a reduced cost. If not, as one grant winner discovered, "It is well worth the additional cost to see concretely how each person works as an editor since editing styles and strengths vary widely." Other former grant winners offer the following suggestions for finding the optimal fit:

- Trust your instincts: "The first coach I hired was not a good fit. I really had to trust my instinct on this, as there wasn't really anything up front which seemed to be wrong. Feel empowered to ask for and get exactly what you want and to make sure the person is a good fit...In my case, I needed someone relatively conversant in my topic, so it was important to make sure of that."
 - Interview potential candidates: "To confirm my compatibility with the editor I worked with, we spoke for two hours about my goals for this PAW Grant and her role, and discussed a book chapter I drafted the previous summer."
 - Interview more than one editor before deciding: "I spoke with 5 editors and emailed more until I found the initial match with the editors/coaches I worked with."
 - Check references or solicit recommendations from trusted colleagues: "The editor I worked with came highly recommended to me from a colleague who had worked with him several times before, so the interview process was quite simple. I sent my two essays to him in advance of our meeting with a note about I would ask of him. He came to the interview having already read the material with suggestions about how we might work together."
- **Fees:** Many people are surprised at the rates charged by editors and writing coaches. Your initial impulse may be to hire the most inexpensive editor or to limit your search to individuals who fit a specified fee range. After following this impulse, one former grant winner remarked, "I wish that I thought to ask why most of those I interviewed charged so much. It might have helped me to get a better sense of what I would be getting." Consider how much you are willing to pay to get the best possible writing assistance you can. To gain a better sense of current rates nationally, visit the Editorial Freelancers Association website at <http://www.the-efa.org/InfoResources/Rates.htm>

For further tips, see the on-line articles listed below:

Cypher, Sarah. "Choosing Your Editor"

http://threepennyeditor.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=24&Itemid=3

Carr, Michael. "How (and Why) to Choose an Editor"

<http://www.book-editing.com/carr1.htm>