

By Jennifer Lawler

How to write a thorough project quote

Project Quote Template

Dear Potential Client:

Thank you for contacting me. I would love working as a freelance developmental editor for your company!

I’ve had a chance to take a peek at the manuscript you supplied (1), *Love Lies Bleeding on the Ground.* I would be happy to provide a complete developmental edit on this manuscript. Please note that the following quote refers to the full manuscript of 80,535 words that you sent on October 1. I can’t promise the quote will stay the same if the ms has changed (2).

As we discussed, you want me to identify problems with the narrative arc, such as plot holes and threads that aren’t tied up, as well as to provide suggestions for creating a more believable character arc for the protagonist. My edit will include these elements. In addition, I will look for related developmental problems, such as a scenes that contain unnecessary exposition, a central conflict that could be sharpened, and concerns with world-building/setting (3).

This edit will include queries and limited line edits on the manuscript itself to help the author see where the problems are cropping up and how to fix them, plus a five-to-seven page revision letter that will provide a plan for the author’s revision. It does not include copyediting, although I will correct egregious errors that I spot. I will review the author’s revision and make a final set of edits to reconcile any outstanding problems (4).

The edit includes up to three hours of email/phone coaching and meetings to answer questions about the edit and to support the author’s revision process. Any time required beyond these three hours is billed at my hourly rate of $X an hour (5).

My fee for providing this service is $X. I do require half on contract signing (6). I will be able to complete the edit within thirty days of receiving a signed contract and the ms to be edited (7). Final payment will be due at the time I complete the initial editorial round and send the edited ms to the author (8).

Thank you very much! I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Smart Editor

1. I never suggest that I have done any serious examination of the ms because then the client will want to know what all is wrong with it before I’ve even done the edit. Sometimes you won’t see the full ms, just a partial, or a synopsis, or a brief description, if the full hasn’t been delivered by the author yet.
2. Authors are notorious for saying, “Wait, wait, read this version!” I can’t promise that my assessment of “Oh, this is in fairly good shape” will remain the same if the author takes it into their head to completely start over. If you’re giving a quote over a partial or a synopsis, you’ll want to rephrase this along the lines of, “If the full ms requires significantly more work than the sample suggests, I will need to amend this project quote. Therefore, please do not consider this the final quote. I will be able to provide that once the full ms is supplied.” Or something along those lines.
3. This paragraph describes what the edit—in this case a developmental edit—will include. It’s notable for what it isn’t: looking for incorrect comma placement and other sundries.
4. This paragraph defines the deliverables—what the author/client can expect to receive.
5. This paragraph defines what happens when the allotted coaching/meeting time is exceeded. It’s a good reminder your time is not limitless but that the client can pay for additional time if desired.
6. Some corporate clients may balk at paying half before you’ve delivered the edit, so you’ll have to decide what your policy about this will be. If you insist, you will reduce the number of potential clients you can work with—but it never hurts to ask.
7. This section specifies the conditions to be met before you’ll begin the edit plus states how long the edit will take you. Remember that publishers aren’t going to book your services six months in advance. You’ll be lucky to get a couple weeks’ notice. If you’ll be unavailable within the next few months, you might mention that here as well: “I’ll be out of the office from August 8 through 12, but will be able to take on the ms before or after that time.” Just a plain statement of fact will do the trick.
8. Always, always, always make it clear when the final payment is due.