



# EDITORIAL PRODUCTION GUIDE





Thank you for joining us at Dreamspinner Press and our imprints, DSP Publications and Harmony Ink Press.

### [Dreamspinner Press](#)



Dreamspinner Press seeks gay male romance stories in all genres. While works do not need to be graphic, they must contain a primary or strong secondary romance plotline and focus on the interaction between two or more male characters. The main characters of the story must end in a romantic gay relationship. All other relationships are acceptable in secondary pairings or as part of the development of a main character. We encourage tales that cross genres, and we list twenty categories of romantic gay fiction on our website.

### [Harmony Ink Press](#)



Harmony Ink Press is accepting manuscripts for Teen and New Adult fiction featuring at least one strong LGBTQ+ main character who shows significant personal growth through the course of the story. Identifying as part of the LGBTQ+ spectrum can be part of the growth process depicted in the book. We are looking for stories in all subgenres, featuring primary characters across the whole LGBTQ+ spectrum between the ages of 14 and 21 that explore all the facets of young adult, teen, and new adult life. Stories may but are not required to feature or include romance.

### [DSP Publications](#)



*Off the Beaten Path. Worth the Journey.*

DSP Publications is a boutique imprint producing quality LGBTQ+ fiction that pushes the envelope to present immersive, unique, and unforgettable reading experiences. We choose stories that beg to be told, tales that depart from mainstream concepts to create fantastic

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and compelling journeys of the mind worth your time and effort. Our books reach into a wide range of reader-favorite genres, including fantasy, historical, horror, mystery, paranormal, science fiction, and spiritual fiction. Unlike its parent imprint, Dreamspinner Press, stories published by DSP Publications may but are not required to feature or include romance.

### **Dreamspinner Press's Editorial Philosophy**

Our editorial philosophy considers your story holistically: both as a whole and as its pieces. This is a team effort. We encourage questions and discussion throughout the process.

- Your stories are like your children—we respect that and want to do our best to take care of them. Our job is to make sure those stories are as tight and polished as possible, and if that involves pointing out flaws in your logic and asking for rewrites, that's what we'll do. If you're the proud parent, we are the strict but well-meaning teacher who wants to see your child succeed.
- Nobody's perfect. It is possible your editor made a mistake. If you genuinely think that is the case, don't be afraid to disagree with a recommendation. We'll double-check it and get back to you with results of further discussion.
- If you have any questions or concerns during any stage of the editing process, please contact your senior editor or Editorial Coordinator and staff at [edit@dreamspinnerpress.com](mailto:edit@dreamspinnerpress.com). We attempt to acknowledge and then answer all mails in as timely a manner as possible.

We use our experience and knowledge to benefit your publication, and we make every effort to resolve content and technical decisions to your satisfaction. Resolution decisions made by the Editor in Chief are final. Dreamspinner's Editorial Policies concern content and how we evaluate, edit, review, and/or occasionally restrict it. You may download a copy of these policies at any time from our website.

### **Editing Standards**

Dreamspinner Press uses as its primary editing reference *The Chicago Manual of Style*, which is the publishing industry standard. *Merriam-Webster* is the CMOS-preferred dictionary. Many editors also use *The Writer's Digest Grammar Desk Reference*, which is an excellent resource

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for standard grammar and punctuation. You will often see comments referencing these sources.

### **The Editorial Process**

We designed our editorial production process from the ground up keeping ultimate flexibility in mind. The basic process is made up of weeklong blocks that can lengthen or shorten depending on the particular manuscript and author needs. The overwhelming majority of publications have no problem fitting into our standard production cycles.

Production cycles currently average eighteen weeks, but every project is tracked individually. Novellas are allocated shorter production blocks, novels longer production blocks. Novels of more than 100,000 words are also often broken into pieces so that work by editors and the author can proceed concurrently.

Books are edited in multiple rounds. Just as no single reader will catch every nuance of your story, no single editor will catch every error or see every opportunity for improvement. In each round, you will receive notes and edits that cover the spectrum of macro, structural, and technical copy editing. To finish the process, you will proofread a designed galley along with our proofreaders.

### **Editing Goals**

Dreamspinner Press edits with three goals in mind:

- To help the author tell his/her story.
- To help the author strengthen and refine his/her story.
- To help the author present as technically clean a story as possible.

In working toward these goals, we hold ourselves and our products to high professional standards, especially concerning technical and stylistic editing, and it's a learning experience *every day*. We will read your story, evaluate it, give you honest opinions about it and how we think readers will react.

Production of your publication will be coordinated by a senior editor, who will work hand in hand with you through each step of editing. Depending on length, your story will be edited by at least two other identified individual editors, coordinated by your senior editor for continuity. A designer will format the galley. At least three independent readers will

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proofread your story after editing. We believe very strongly that the more eyes on a manuscript, the better the feedback for you and the better the end product.

This leads to particular sets of possible outcomes throughout the editing process.

1. We may ask a question more than once. Example: Editor 1 asks you a question; you explain but decline to change the text. Then Editor 2 asks the same question. We're likely going to ask you to reconsider. We may not require an edit, but if two separate readers ask the same question, it's worth looking at again.
2. You may occasionally see contradictory edits. We work hard to prevent this, but it does happen. We believe the benefits of separate individual editors outweigh this occasional occurrence, and we hope you'll be patient with us.
3. You will see a variety of comments and notes retained throughout the edit, communicating notes from editor to editor and answering your questions.
4. You may discuss topics with your senior editor independent of the document in editing. Any results will be incorporated into the next version of the edited MS.

### **Scope of Editing**

Just as every manuscript is different, editing provided for every manuscript is different, tailored to that publication and author. Contract editors, though assigned to focus on a particular area of your story, may perform different levels of edits concurrently, depending on that individual editor's strengths.

Depending on the story's needs, levels and goals for editing are chosen from:

- **Macro editing** is the Big Picture. It includes overall story concepts like story plotting and pacing, narrative cohesion, overall point of view selection and application, writing style, author voice, emotion and tone, and opportunities for growth and development in the story. For example:
  - **Plot holes/continuity errors:** We strive to give clear explanation of problems perceived and if possible, provide

page numbers with related information, as well as offering possible solutions.

- **Style, Voice, and Point of View:** Stylistic, voice, and point of view editing is kept to a minimum in an effort to best preserve author's style. Voice and style may apply to sentence construction, character construction, percentage of setting vs. action, etc.
- **Careful consideration of complete point of view:** Editors may make comments based upon the majority of the author's extant work. Ex: If the author's work is clearly strict third-person limited throughout and an editor finds a POV slip, you'll get a comment. But if the vast majority of the text is in third-person omniscient, we respect the author's style and aim for clarity and comprehension.
- **Structural editing** includes the heavy duty grammar and technical aspects of your writing: point of view and characterization consistency, sentence structure, parallelism, word choice, necessity of elements, etc. For example:
  - **Awkward/redundant phrase construction and heavily repetitive words:** Adverbs are repeat offenders, as well as phrasing like "nodded his head," so-called "junk" words like "that," "just," pronouns, and more.
  - **Word choice** is also the author's—we do not change a word simply because we think it might "sound better." We will instead leave a comment with a suggested alternative. Dialogue is primarily the author's purview, and it will only be edited under very specific circumstances, generally concerning basic punctuation that does not affect the meaning/progress of the sentence.
- **Copy editing** includes grammar and punctuation, sentence structure, consistency of language and word choice, validity of factual material, verb tense usage, and more. For example:
  - **Incorrect grammar/punctuation:** This includes correcting verb tense, making and/or suggesting active/passive voice changes, correcting comma splices, cutting back on overused specialty punctuation (EM dashes, semicolons, ellipses), etc.

- **Formatting errors:** Spacing problems, erroneous tabs, hyphens instead of EM dashes, periods instead of an ellipsis character, etc.
- **Random errors:** Misspellings, homonym confusion, etc.
- **Proofreading** includes reading for typos, misspellings, dropped words, heavy repetitions, clarity, and more. Readers are both trained and casual, to give us a wide variety of feedback. For example:
  - **Incorrect grammar/punctuation:** This includes correcting verb tense, correcting comma splices, cutting back on overused specialty punctuation (EM dashes, semicolons, ellipses), etc.
  - **Formatting errors:** Spacing problems, erroneous tabs, hyphens instead of EM dashes, periods instead of an ellipsis character, etc.
  - **Random errors:** Misspellings, homonym confusion, dropped words, etc.

These elements are included in all edits to some extent:

*Global Notes:* Editors will often provide summarized notes. A separate document or extended comment at the beginning of the MS could list praise, explain plot holes, and make overall suggestions/directions such as active/passive voice changes, attribution construction (ex: constantly splitting dialogue with actions), name change suggestions, etc. Anything that would require consideration and rewriting by the author would also be featured here.

*Comments:* We strive to keep all comments short but concise with clear questions and/or explanations of suggestions made, professionally phrased. Comments may also be set up in a discussion-style manner. Comments are often retained (and color-coded) from one edit to the next so that subsequent editors are aware of previous discussions or decisions.

*Functional Editing:* The Track Changes function is used to record editing.

## How It All Starts

You will receive an introductory e-mail from your senior editor. This editor will work with you personally through each editing stage, reviewing contributors' work and helping you with questions and suggestions. We recommend you add addresses from @dreamspinnerpress.com, @harmonyinkpress.com, and/or @dsppublications.com to your Contacts, especially edit@dreamspinnerpress.com and your senior editor.

## About Confidentiality

While the standard steps of Dreamspinner Press's editorial publication process are available upon request, any specifics related to a manuscript is strictly confidential. For instance, we strip all personal information except pen name from all manuscripts. All editors and proofreaders sign a confidentiality contract. However, we do ask that you leave the privacy functions in your document off so that comments will track who typed them. You will see that we often facilitate this by noting comments and color-coding.

Generally, contributing editors are not in direct contact with an author. Communication passes through your personal senior editor, which also aids continuity and quality control. This guideline may be waived in particular cases, but only with your agreement.

## What You'll See in an Edited Document

Now you have in front of you your first (or fifth or twenty-fifth) edited manuscript. Where to start? There's a ton of **red**, and **strikethrough**, and **bubbles** all down the side, and **four** **different** **colors** **of highlighting**, and *what* are you supposed to *do* with all that?

You will notice that any changes the editor has made are marked in a different color. This is so that you can see the work that has been done. You will also have comments from your editor inserted into your document. For example, an editor might point out a continuity issue. Occasionally, an editor will recommend that you reword a section for clarity. With Track Changes on, please address these comments.

*Note: If you're not familiar with using the Track Changes function, please e-mail your staff editor. We can provide how-to instructions.*

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Working on your edits may be as simple as omitting a few words or as involved as rewriting a page. If the editor asks you a question in the comment, you may reply in that comment or a comment of your own. You can use this as an opportunity to ask questions and discuss the point/question—sometimes talking out ideas can bring out great alternative options—and we'll maintain the dialogue throughout the editing process.

*Note: Please don't delete comments that begin with **FORMAT**. Those are helpful bookmarks we use to format your galley.*

Specialty notes:

- We'll often highlight **foreign language** so it can be checked by a native speaker. You can ignore this highlighting unless we're asking a specific question.
- Some comments will only be [links](#) to source information for confirmation of spelling, etc. Please leave them for future reference throughout editing.

### **What You'll Be Doing**

During editing, your most basic instructions are:

1. Check all edits and comments. We recommend you do not Accept All or Reject All changes. We recommend you process edits one by one. If you choose to decline a particular edit, please mark it with a comment bubble so we can explain the reason for the edit and discuss.
2. This is time for you to make any additional edits you discover/desire. Leave Track Changes on so that it will record any changes you make to the document.
3. Feel free to answer/make comments in comment bubbles. Please do *not* type comments directly in the text. We do not want to risk extraneous text inserted into your story.
4. Ignore comment bubbles marked **FORMAT**. Those are notes for formatting your galley at a later stage.
5. Return the edited manuscript with your comments/edits no later than the deadline.

## **Other Details**

- Editorial Materials

We'll contact you about other material associated with publishing the MS (as applicable), including the blurb and front matter: dedication, acknowledgments, author's note, etc.

- Cover Art

Your cover art will be handled through the Art Department, and you will be contacted separately by them. Questions about cover art should be directed to [art@dreamspinnerpress.com](mailto:art@dreamspinnerpress.com).

- Publication Date

Questions about specific publication dates should be directed to Editor in Chief Lynn West at [lynnwest@dreamspinnerpress.com](mailto:lynnwest@dreamspinnerpress.com). Please note that specific pub dates are generally *not* set until later in the publication process. All dates are tentative and depend upon both editorial and cover art production.

### **10 Things Editors Wish Authors Knew (in no particular order)**

*by the ever-blunt Lynn West, Editor in Chief, Dreamspinner Press*

1. We *honestly* are here to help. Publishing is a partnership. We want you to come to us with your writing hopes and dreams, with your editing angers and sorrows. We're not here to tear your story to pieces just for kicks. We're not ravenous dingoes. Truly. We only sharpen our teeth on alternate Thursdays.

2. You need to read your work out loud. *Especially* dialogue. Better yet, read it out loud to someone else, or print it out and have someone read the dialogue with you, like live theater. You'll find dropped words, mixed-up sentences, and dialogue that just doesn't make sense. And while you're at it, you should have someone who is *not* family or a friend read your story before you think you're done with it. Get unvarnished feedback. As the author, you are very attached to your baby, and you know her very, very well. But a stranger doesn't and will be able to point out, among other things, ideas you've overlooked or assumed understood.

3. The editorial process is a two-way street. It's *your* story; we need your help to make it happen. That means you need to stay involved, ask questions, and consider suggestions. You can tell us what you like best and hate most about your story. What's strongest? What's weakest? This isn't the time to defend yourself on principle. It's the time to take a hard, honest

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look at both mechanical and structural feedback to determine how it affects your story. Some things just *are*—grammar, House style, spelling conventions, content policies. But the rest? Let's deal, my friend.

4. There's no law against retaining a freelance/professional editor to go over your work before you submit it to us. It won't hurt our feelings. We may even send you a fruit basket.

5. You're allowed to take some time before replying to questions or edits (after an acknowledgment of receipt). In fact, we strongly encourage it. For an author, working with edits is a highly emotional process. You may be angry or upset. We understand the difficult job you're undertaking, and we don't expect immediate answers, explanations, or rebuttals. We recommend you never, *ever* shoot an e-mail off right away. If you really need to get your anger out, compose a mail in your drafts folder—without the To: filled in—and write out everything you need to get off your chest. Then save it, turn off your computer, and leave it overnight. Take another look in the morning. Time brings perspective. First and foremost, this is a professional relationship. We can be—and *should* be—friendly, but that doesn't mean we'll suffer abuse when you lose your temper.

6. Sometimes you're right about that comma. If we're wrong, we'll apologize and do what we can to fix it. But the opposite applies: "You keep using that word. I do not think that it means what you think it means."<sup>1</sup> We will endeavor to offer explanations and support for editing and suggestions. We're not trying to embarrass you or make you feel stupid. We want you to know that we care enough about your work to spend time and search resources to make sure it's correct.

7. We go to the movies, watch TV series, listen to all kinds of music, and yes, we even read fan fiction. How else can we hope to recognize where your inspiration came from? There *is* a difference between inspiration and homage, and a difference between homage and lifting ideas. Your work should be *yours*, and no one else's. It doesn't have to be whole cloth; inspiration is great. There's *nothing* wrong with that. Homage can work. Anything more than that and you've got a lot of work to do.

8. We can tell if you did your research. If you have favorite words or phrases. If you love or hate a character. If you used Babelfish. If you are a romantic at heart. If you refused all our edits and suggestions and sent back the original manuscript. If you write because you love it. If you took

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<sup>1</sup> *The Princess Bride*, (1973 novel) William Goldman, (1987 movie) Rob Reiner.

the time to read our submission guidelines. If you actually read the e-mail we sent instructions in for reviewing your galley proof PDF.

9. Personality clashes happen. Writing styles don't always mesh. Written meaning can be wildly misinterpreted. If you think you've run into irreconcilable differences in editing, we don't expect you to just sit and take it. We encourage you to contact your senior editor, an executive editor, or even the Editor in Chief to discuss your concerns. Publishing your book should never be demoralizing or send you careening into the Pit of Despair<sup>2</sup>. If the situation warrants it, editors *can* change, revisions *can* be dumped and redone, hands *can* be held.

10. You can feed the monkeys. Editors love feedback too.

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<sup>2</sup> *The Princess Bride*, (1973 novel) William Goldman, (1987 movie) Rob Reiner.