

Technical Editing & Document Production

Turning a dense, inconsistent draft into a clear, correct, usable document.

This sample shows how I edit: what I change, why, and what a finished engagement produces. The excerpts below are fictional and no client material appears in this sample.

What editing actually involves

Good technical editing is more than fixing typos. It is developmental work: getting the order right so a reader meets ideas in a sequence that makes sense, defining terms before they are used, cutting the words that hide the meaning, and making the same thing get called the same name every time. The goal is a document a real reader can follow on the first pass.

Before and after

BEFORE

Utilization of the aforementioned system necessitates that end-users undertake configuration of their environment variables prior to the initialization sequence being executed, and it should be noted that failure to do so may result in the occurrence of errors which are difficult to diagnose.

The functionality, once enabled, is such that it will operate in the background without further user intervention being required.

AFTER

Set your environment variables before you start the system. If you skip this step, you will hit errors that are hard to trace.

Once you turn it on, it runs in the background. You do not need to do anything else.

Same information, half the words. The edit moves the action to the front, replaces abstraction with plain verbs, and tells the reader what to do and what happens if they do not.

The editorial pass

- **Structure and order:** put what the reader needs first, and group related steps so the document flows the way the work does.
- **Plain language:** cut filler, break long sentences, and replace jargon with the clearest accurate word.
- **Consistency:** one term for one thing, applied everywhere, with a running list so it stays that way.
- **Definitions before use:** a term is explained the first time it appears, not three pages later.
- **Accuracy:** every claim, number, and instruction is checked against the source, not assumed.
- **Accessibility:** headings, alt text, and reading level suited to who actually reads it.

What a full engagement produces

On a complete document, the deliverable is more than a cleaner draft. It includes tracked changes so every edit is visible and reversible, a short style guide and a glossary so the language stays consistent after I hand it off, working cross-references and a regenerated table of contents, and a clean, correctly formatted file ready to ship, whether that is a polished Word document or a print-ready PDF.