

Editorial Assistant: Job description

Editorial assistants provide assistance in all stages of the publication of books, journals, magazines and a broad range of publicity materials. They support senior editorial staff with the administration of the commissioning, planning and production.

The level of responsibility and the range of tasks depend on the size of the organisation and the type of publication. This is the starting point for careers in editorial work. Progress may be possible, but in small organisations it may be necessary to move to another employer once basic skills and experience have been acquired.

Typical work activities

Editorial assistants perform a range of administrative and editorial tasks necessary to get publications published. They act as the liaison for the many people involved in a publication, from the receipt of texts from authors through to the handover to production staff.

Typical work activities include:

- supporting editorial staff in all activities leading to a publication, including acting as a personal assistant to commissioning editors and overseeing
- tasks such as issuing contracts and dealing with royalties;
- liaising with other in-house teams, writers, photographers, printers, designers and production staff to negotiate and monitor timescales for stages in the publishing process;
- dealing with the administration of work commissioned to freelance writers, picture researchers, photographers, stylists and illustrators;
- organising and researching projects to tight deadlines;
- summarising written material;
- correcting manuscripts;
- obtaining rights to use materials from other publications;
- using computers for word processing, desktop publishing and email;
- filing, photocopying and other routine administrative tasks.

In some areas of editorial work (e.g. for an in-house company publication) the work may also involve:

- writing articles and reports;
- amending articles;
- collating the work of several authors;
- using specialist electronic publishing packages (i.e. QuarkXpress).

As expertise develops, the role may involve:

- assessing manuscripts and making recommendations on their publication to senior editorial staff;
- updating and rewriting material;

- using your own specialist knowledge to contribute ideas;
- sourcing freelancers or other authors to produce new materials;
- assisting with the art direction and design of publications;
- writing your own material.