



CHECKLIST FOR STARTING A MEDICAL EDITING SIDE HUSTLE

You want to make some extra income—from home and on your own schedule—perhaps to pay off those student loans. Just follow these steps. It may take a month or two, but you'll get there if you follow these steps.

By Emma Hitt Nichols, PhD

STEP 1 – DEFINE YOUR GOAL

- First of all, you want to **begin with the end in mind**. It should take between 6 to 12 weeks to get set up and get your first medical editing & factchecking clients. Ask yourself why you want to make extra money. For many of us, it's because of burgeoning student loans accompanied by relatively low pay in some healthcare and scientific positions, especially early on. Perhaps you have decided you want to stay at home to raise your kids but still want to use your scientific and medical background while working from home.

Below, list the reasons you want to do this—they can be financial, and the more **specific** and **exciting** to you, the better. Also put a date by when you want to get your first client. For example, "I want to get my first client by March 1 (eg, 8 weeks from today's date) and earn at least \$50,000 over the next year to cover my student loan payments and have enough left over to take my family on a vacation to Hawaii."

Write your reasons here:

STEP 2 – TAKE PERSONAL INVENTORY

- Even if you have a medical or scientific background, **medical editing & factchecking may not in fact be a good choice for you**. Perhaps you're a "people" person and would not be able to tolerate the silence and concentration needed to do effective work. However, you might enjoy the quietness of it all, especially if you're not having to work extra shifts to make extra money and you can fit it in around your schedule. That said, many of the skills needed for medical editing and factchecking overlap with the qualities that would be present in a competent healthcare professional or scientist.

It's best if you have some or all of the following qualities:

- You're a regular or even voracious reader of non-fiction and/or fiction

- You're a fluent and preferably native-English speaker
- You're conscientious and detail-oriented
- You're slightly obsessive about getting things right
- You're sufficiently empathetic to be able to write comments that don't offend and interact in a friendly manner with clients
- You're willing to learn and continue to learn

List here what you think your strengths and weaknesses may be for medical editing and factchecking based on the above list.

STEP 3 – LEARN OR REFRESH YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF BASIC GRAMMAR

- Make sure you know the basics of grammar.** This can be accomplished by reading any number of books available on the topic. One classic I'd recommend is Strunk & White's *Elements of Style*. Set a goal to **read (or reread) at least 3 books on grammar and writing** and take at least one online course within the next few weeks.

List here any books or courses that come to mind; block out time on your schedule for reading and learning over the next 6 weeks, perhaps allocating 5 hours per week.

STEP 4 – GET ACCESS TO THE AMA MANUAL OF STYLE

- Make sure you have online access to the [AMA Manual of Style](#) (note: this is **not** an affiliate link). The yearly subscription is currently \$49 for an individual, which is good value for what it provides: the foundation for a work-from-home, money-making activity. Navigating the AMA Manual of Style can be overwhelming, however. It has 23 sections, and some sections are more important than others for medical editors and factcheckers. My [upcoming course](#) will tell you what you need to know and provide strategies for learning the information contained within for the purposes of working as a medical editor and factchecker. You can also download the AMA Manual of Style Tip Sheet [here](#).

Block out time on your schedule for learning the AMA Manual of Style over the next 6 weeks 1-2 hours per week should suffice. Write any thoughts or to-do's here.

STEP 5 – SET UP YOUR WEBSITE AND/OR LINKED IN PROFILE

- Before you reach out to clients, make sure you **tailor your LinkedIn profile to include medical editing or set up a website** that describes your medical editing services, what you can do for your clients, and how they can reach you. It's easy to set up a website these days. A WordPress website and use of a page-building software, such as Elementor, is within most people's ability. There is a learning curve, but if you learn how to do this yourself, you can make updates anytime at no charge. Perhaps you know someone who can do it for you. There are also platforms such as Wix that make everything extremely simple for non-techies. You may be able to get by with just a LinkedIn profile, but you should do all you can to optimize that profile. If you're a working healthcare professional or scientist, you may want to be more discreet about putting yourself out there as a medical editor/factchecker on LinkedIn and just have the website to which you can refer clients.

Block out time (about 10-20 hours) on your schedule to work on your LinkedIn profile and/or Website. It doesn't have to be a massive effort.

Write any thoughts here about strategies that you have for doing this.

STEP 6 – SET UP YOUR BUSINESS NAME AND BANK ACCOUNT

- You will need a **separate business checking account**. You may also want an associated savings account so that you can automatically take out a percentage of everything you deposit to pay your estimated taxes. Note: it can be an expensive nightmare if you don't keep up with your estimated taxes, so make sure you take out a percentage from the very beginning. Example: if you make \$50,000, you **MUST** take out about \$20,000 of that to pay taxes. I know right?? It is a privilege to be self-employed, with its unlimited earning potential and self-determined schedule, but it's also very different from being an employee, where the money doesn't even make it into your paycheck much less your bank account. You may also want to take the extra step of setting up an LLC (talk to your accountant). Setting up an LLC, which is relatively inexpensive in most states, can be easily done using services like nolo.com.

Block out time on your schedule to open your bank account and decide on your business structure, including talking to an accountant if needed. Write any thoughts here.

STEP 7 – GET YOUR FIRST CLIENTS

- You will want to make yourself a list of at least 200 companies that might use medical editors and factcheckers and simply reach out to 5 of them (or more) each day. My [upcoming course](#) describes many different types of clients that use medical editing assistance and exactly how to approach them. This step should be done after your website and/or LinkedIn profile are set up in case a prospective client wants to check you out before hiring you. When you get your first project, you should of course do your very best work, and this will increase the likelihood that clients will keep coming back to you with requests without your having to ask. The typical medical editor and factchecker with an advanced degree in a science makes at least \$50 per hour, so you can decide for yourself how much you want to work, when you want to work, and how many clients you need. 😊

Block out time on your schedule to create your list of potential clients and write any thoughts here.



Hi there, I'm Dr. Emma Hitt Nichols. I do hope you found this content helpful and that you'll keep an eye out for the upcoming course if you want additional help setting things up as a medical editor and factchecker.