Top fixes, in order

Found in: Full manuscript review (revision plan) · Developmental assessment

Every full review starts with what to fix first. The biggest fixes come first, the quick wins are flagged with how long they take, and the work that isn't worth your time is named so you can skip it.

About these samples. Each example is a short excerpt from a real report we prepared for a client, used with the client's permission. To protect their privacy we changed character names, places and plot details that could identify the book, and each excerpt says what was changed. "[…]" marks a cut. Nothing was added to the findings.

The reports analyze the manuscript and suggest where things may be off. We don't write or rewrite any of the book. The writing stays entirely the author's.

EXAMPLE 1 · FROM A 2026 REPORT ON AN UPMARKET FAMILY DRAMA

🎯 If you do nothing else, do these three first

1. **Commit to the genre and reshape the climax to match** (Phase 0–1). The highest-leverage move in the entire report.
2. **Rebuild the financial-legal engine** so the money is followable (Phase 1).
3. **Correct the pacing inversion** so the catastrophes breathe and the conversations tighten (Phase 2).

Everything else is real work, but these three change the *book*.

Excerpt from a real client report, shown as written (it names no characters or places). Used with permission.

EXAMPLE 2 · FROM A 2026 REPORT ON AN UPMARKET FAMILY DRAMA

📊 The matrix

	EASY FIX *(minutes to hours)*	**HARD FIX *(days to weeks)***
HIGH IMPACT	🟢 **Q1 — DO FIRST** Quick wins that measurably strengthen the manuscript.	🔴 **Q2 — DO SECOND** The heavy structural lifts that change the book.

LOW IMPACT	🟡 **Q3 — DO THIRD** Cosmetic polish. Real work — but only once the bones are set.	⚠️ **Q4 — DO NOT FIX. FINISH.** Effort the reader will never feel.

The flow is fixed: Q1 → Q2 → Q3 → FINISH.

🟢 Q1 — High impact, easy fix (do first)

Quick win	Where	Why it earns its place first
Make the **three governing decisions** — genre, title, climax path	§6, §2.4, §8 (Phase 0)	Near-zero effort; the highest-leverage moves in the report. Deciding costs an afternoon; everything downstream depends on it.
Strip the 94 leftover comment markers and delete the appended comments block	§4 (Issue 1)	A find-and-delete pass. Leaving them is an instant credibility wound.
Normalise the four malformed chapter headers	§4 (Issue 2)	Minutes of work; removes an obvious sign of an unfinished file.

> 🎯 **The Q4 test, in one question:** *Will the reader feel this?* If the honest answer is no, it belongs in Q4 — which means you do not fix it. You finish.

Excerpt from a real client report, shortened ("[...]" marks cuts). It names no characters or places. Used with permission.

EXAMPLE 3 · FROM A 2026 REPORT ON AN UNFINISHED ROMANTIC-SUSPENSE DRAFT

High-impact quick wins (do these today)

1. Fix the POV shift at line 2997.
Change "we" to "they" in three sentences. Time: 2 minutes. Impact: Eliminates the single most visible "unrevised draft" signal.

2. Search for "just" in your manuscript.
Delete every instance where the sentence survives without it. Time: 30 minutes. Impact: Immediate, measurable prose tightening across 162 instances.

3. Fix "Marsa" at lines 19 and 321.
Time: 1 minute. Impact: Removes a red flag from the very first chapter.

(The original flagged a misspelling of the heroine's name. We changed the name, so the misspelling shown here is ours.)

Excerpt from a real client report. Names and identifying details changed to protect privacy. Used with permission.