

Questions Students Should Ask Regarding the Hiring of Typists

Questions students should ask themselves:

What types of services do I want from a typist? For example, general copyediting and corrections of grammatical errors? Adherence to APA (or some other) format? Adherence to UNC's required dissertation/thesis/capstone format? Creation/formatting of tables? Other?

What is my timeline for a typist's services? For example, how quickly do I expect (or need) turn-around from a typist? At what point during the semester do I need the final product completed? (Keep in mind that typists' availability might be more limited toward the last month or so of a semester.)

How much decision-making power do I wish to retain over my document? Specifically, do I want someone who assumes all control over changes to the document, or would I prefer to share editing tasks in order to potentially save costs? Am I realistically able to perform the edits in the time allotted?

How much am I realistically able to pay? Are my expectations of a typist realistic given my budget? For example, if I need a "rush" job or my document requires extensive copyediting, am I willing to pay extra?

Questions students should ask prospective typists:

What computer platform do you use? PC or Mac?

What version of Microsoft Word are you using? (Running newer documents in "compatibility mode" from an outdated MSWord version can create more errors than it will fix.)

What types of services do you provide? For example, do you copyedit and if so, how extensive? (typographical, grammatical, other)

What is your usual turn-around time for a job? How far in advance should students submit their documents to you for a given deadline?

How much do you charge for your services? Is the cost per hour or per job?

If my budget does not allow you to complete all the work needed, what can you do for \$xxx [where xxx is your bottom-line budget]?

At what point in the process will you provide an estimate of the overall cost as well as how long it will take you to complete the work? Will you keep me apprised of how much time you've

spent on my document? (especially if you are close to the “bottom-line” amount of time I can afford?)

Do you expect students to grant you complete control over the document or are you willing to share in the editing tasks with students? In other words, how much “back and forth” exchange do you allow with the students with whom you work?

What is your preferred mode of communication (e.g., email, phone) and how do you prefer to share files (e.g., Dropbox, Google docs, USB drive, etc.)?

In what format(s) do you deliver the final, edited document to students? For example, PDF Word, other? How flexible are you willing to be if the format in which you prefer to deliver documents differs from the format the student prefers, e.g., you prefer PDF whereas the student needs the document in Word.

General advice to students considering hiring a typist:

Be clear with the typist, from the beginning, about your “bottom line” cost limitation. Make sure the typist understands and is willing to abide by your cost limit.

Do not accept vague responses regarding the price they will charge you for the job; this is a business transaction that should be clearly specified.

After talking with a prospective typist, consult with other students/former students/your advisors and mentors regarding whether or not the deal seems reasonable. Recognize you are making decisions during an emotionally stressful time. You should try to avoid impulsive choices related to hiring a typist that you will regret later if the typist is not a good fit in terms interaction style, standards of quality, deliverable final product, and cost.

Be clear about the format of the final document you prefer and make sure the typist is willing to agree to your request. For example, some students prefer the entire document in Word format whereas others might prefer separate pdf documents for each section of your dissertation/thesis/capstone. Remember that you are the client who is paying for the typist’s services and thus, should have the right to make reasonable requests of the typist, such as document format, number of hours maximum you are willing to pay for services, etc.