



Editing Checklist

Don't start editing just yet...

Follow these rules before beginning the revision process.

1. Approaching your story with fresh eyes is essential to the editing process. That's why the first rule of revision is to step away from your work for a while. Give yourself several days (or more, if you're editing a novel or memoir) without looking at the pages. When you return to your manuscript, you'll be able to engage more objectively.
2. Now you have the opportunity to read your manuscript the way a reader will experience it. So read from beginning to end without stopping. Don't change words. Don't cut and paste. Don't tinker with the dialogue. If you need to take notes, keep a separate notebook and jot page numbers and potential problem areas. Then get right back to the story. This is the best way to zero in on plot issues, gaps in character motivation, and key missed opportunities.

Once you read through your story on a macro level, you'll have a better idea of what areas need your attention.

Then you can move on to the checklists below.

Books aren't written; they're rewritten.

~Michael Crichton

Checklist

Plot / Suspense

- Does the main plot point capture readers from the beginning of the story?
- Is the pacing correct for your genre? Is it consistent?
- Are momentous events given the weight they deserve?
- Do you have enough conflict?
- Do each of your scenes move the story forward?
- Does your story come to a satisfying conclusion? Does it feel rushed?
- At any point are you bored?

Characterization

- Is it clear what is at stake for your main characters?
- Do your characters have backstories and histories? Do these impact the plot?
- What do your characters want? Is it apparent to the reader?
- Are your characters distinguishable from one another?
- Do your main characters change in some way by the end of the story?

Description

- Is there enough description so that your reader feels grounded in the world of the story?
- Is there too much description?
- Are the descriptive passages bogged down with too many adjectives and adverbs?

Details

- Is the verb tense consistent?
- Do you repeat adverbs, adjectives, metaphors, gestures, or facial expressions?
- Do you overuse certain words or phrases?

Dialogue

- Are there any dialogue tags other than "said" or dialogue tags with adverbs attached? (*She admonished gravely.*)
- Does the dialogue ring true? Does it sound like something that character would say?
- Do you have any commonplace dialogue?

POV/Narration

- Is the POV consistent? Or do you notice any headhopping?
- Are you overusing the character's POV? Common offending words are seemed, looked, knew, thought, and wondered. For example, *The nurse looked like she was about to laugh.*

Questions? Let's chat.

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