



Self-Editing Checklist

Tips for the first ten pages and beyond

- Make something happen!
 - Show the reader what the story will be about
 - Hook the reader
 - Show the story problem and inciting incident
 - Save inner monologue, backstory, and description for later
- Vary the sentence format
 - Look for your writing crutches and eliminate them
 - Watch for sentences all starting with the same words
 - Adjust the sentence lengths to match the tone and achieve the proper cadence and pacing.
- Eliminate “That” and “Just” where possible
- Keep punctuation inside the quotes
- Moderate your adverbs
- Know if it’s “It’s” or “its”
 - Apostrophe = It is
 - Possessive = Its
- Use ellipsis appropriately and sparingly
 - CMOS is happy to have you use the word symbol for the ellipse, which Word usually autocorrects to. That symbol can’t be broken across lines, and that’s a good thing. Now you need a space on either side of your ellipse, but regular spaces CAN break over lines, which might end up having your ellipse starting a line (and that looks weird.) So insert NON-BREAKING spaces on either side of the ellipse. On a Mac, you do this by hitting shift+option+space. On a PC, it’s ctrl+shift+Space.
- Format em dashes correctly (It’s this guy—)
 - For an em dash, you don’t want a space on either side. You can make an em dash with two hyphens, and if you add a word on the other side without hitting space first, Word will format the mark correctly. Doing it after the fact is less fun. It should look like this—see? (This is also CMOS style) On Mac, you can also use shift+option+hyphen
- Analyze your dialogue for fluidity and realism.
 - Read it out loud. Is it pretty close to the way people actually talk, or are your characters saying each other’s names a lot or conversing like robots?
- Run spell check!