

# Comprehensive Editing Checklist

Edit Your Work in Progress like a Pro

Write your Second Draft-building word count (50k-80K+)

During this Phase-

## **Define your story ARCs**

Read through first draft, color code your story ARCs

Build Good Primary Story ARC-For this ARC, determine your:

Stasis, trigger, The quest, Surprise, Critical choice, climax, and reversal.

To develop subplot ARCs, build good subplot story ARCs and determine: stasis, trigger, the quest, surprise, critical choice, climax, reversal, and resolution.

A few of the plot elements to consider during the editing process:

1. Where and when does the story start? location, time, and the event that kick-starts the story's engine
2. Where and when does the story end? Location, time, event
3. Where and when does the story change direction?
4. When is the protagonist's point of no return?
5. How many high points and when are they in the story?
6. How many setbacks does the protagonist have and where in the story do they occur?
7. How many major events?
8. What significant events keep the reader's attention?
9. What type of story is this? In other words, is the story dramatic, comedic, light-hearted, character driven, or plot driven?
10. Why did you choose this setting to go with this plot?
11. Why did you choose this protagonist and this antagonist and how did they play off each other?
12. What high stakes or character goals drive the story?
13. Where are the emotional highs and lows in the story?
14. Are the events possible and believable?
15. Do the secondary characters complement the protagonist and the antagonist?
16. Do the right characters people each scene?

17. What emotions do you want to induce in the reader in each scene? In the beginning and the end of the story?
18. What hook do you use to keep the reader reading with the opening hook and chapter hooks?
19. What are your sources of conflict and how do they escalate?
20. Does the story have the right pace? Is it right for each scene and is the chapter length set up to that intended pace? Have you chosen the right amount of exposition to influence the pace?
21. How many sub-plots are there? Do they complement the main plot?
22. Does the plot compel and propel characters into reactions, into doing something they never would have done without those events pushing them?
23. Do the plot events challenge your characters?
24. Does the plot change the status quo?
25. Does the plot engage the reader?
26. Does the plot take characters and readers to a new place or a new understanding of life or themselves? Plot should change your characters and your readers in the process.
27. Does the plot introduce new events and new reactions to those events?
28. Does the plot move and take both characters and readers to lands or circumstances or emotions or challenges unknown to them?
29. Does your plot entice and compel? Does your plot ensnare your readers and firmly place them in a world or circumstances that make them feel uncomfortable?

## Second Draft Character Development

### Your Protagonist's Character Sketch

What does this character want? What is his/her goal? Do you know why he wants what he wants? Do you know how far he'll go to get what he wants?

What are your character's strengths and weaknesses?

At the beginning of the story, what does your protagonist want? What are his/her strengths and weaknesses? What are his/her minor goals? What are his/her internal goals?

Further develop my main protagonist with personality traits, career and physical characteristics

Further develop main protagonist with a more colorful or emotional side. What pushes his/her buttons? What triggers these reactions?

How did that want develop? Where did it come from? How deeply is it embedded? Can it be satisfied by more than one object or person? Does he, the character, want it more at certain times of the day or year? When he's drunk or falling off to sleep or starting his day? When he sees a woman who reminds him of the one who betrayed him or the man who stole his company?

Does he have competing desires? Does he ally himself with others who have like desires? Does he care whether or not his desires are met? Will he help others with their desires?

Are his wants easily satisfied or never satisfied? What satisfies those wants? Does he accept substitutions or the satisfaction of a lesser want when what he really wants is out of his reach? Isn't socially acceptable? Embarrasses him?

~ What triggers your character's want? Do different triggers produce different levels of response? How does he hold that want in check, so it doesn't rule his life? Does he require medication? Hypnosis? Therapy? Adherence to religious rituals? Can he even restrain himself from acting out, from pursuing what he wants?

~ What do his wants lead to? Do they force him into unethical or illegal behavior? Maybe he pushes himself until he has a heart attack. Maybe he drinks, not caring that he gets behind the wheel drunk or treats others callously. Maybe he gets into fights or sleeps with other men's wives.

What kind of man is he when he regrets his bad behavior? What kind of man is he when he forgets what makes him act irrationally and he behaves as he would have had something not interfered and made him a different sort of man?

~ Which other characters know how to trigger negative (or positive) reactions in your main characters?

~ How does a character's choice of career or hobbies or locale reveal his past?

~ What are your character's coping mechanisms? Work? Sex? Breaking the law? Driving dangerously? Playing the stock market? Internet hacking? Flirting with inappropriate people? Outwitting colleagues? Getting involved with politics?

~ What aspirations does a character have? Where'd they come from? Does he understand those aspirations and why he has them and how they influence his choices? That is, is he self-aware? Whether he is or he isn't, how does that affect his behavior?

~ What makes a character laugh or cry or go speechless with wonder? What does a character do to discover beauty in her world or to hide ugliness that haunts her or that she fears?

~ What does a character fear? In what ways does that fear affect her daily activities? Where did the fear originate? Does the character know or care where it came from? How do other characters manipulate that fear? How can you manipulate it?

Did fears influence a job choice or spouse choice, the choice to have children or move across the country? Does fear keep a character close to home or does it make him move far away?

Do fears make your character overcompensate and learn ways to defeat even imagined enemies? How does a character cope with fears? Are they exposed to light and examined or are they hidden?

~ What does your character value? Good friends? A job well done? Being liked? being appreciated? being left alone?

~ What makes a character happy? What satisfies him? What enrages him? What depresses him?

- ~ Who is your character when she's alone in her bathroom or alone in her head? What does she think or worry about? What does she reveal to no one? What does she share with everyone?
- ~ What does a character avoid? Why does she avoid it? When she can't avoid people or situations or emotions, how does she handle those people, situations, or emotions? What's her go-to response when events don't go her way? What's the next response when she can't fix what's happening? And what's the next response after that, when she still can't change what's happening?
- ~ Is your character predictable? In what ways? Or if not, why not?
- ~ How does your character react to failure? To success? To the unexpected? To death? To his mother's unexpected presence in his home or office or life?
- ~ What does your character hate? Love? Find humorous? Find gross?
- ~ When is your character tender? How does he react to his feelings of tenderness? How does he respond to the tenderness of others?
- ~ Does your character trust? Under what conditions? What does he do when trust is betrayed?
- ~ What legacy does a character want to leave? Or is he so caught up in the now that there's no thought of legacy? If he's thinking in terms of legacy, how does that affect his actions and plans? If he lives only for the moment, what does that mean in terms of goals and gratification and planning?
- ~ Will your character try anything or try nothing? Why? What made him that way? What could change his mind?
- ~ Is a character honorable? Does he consider himself a success or a failure? What has influenced him more, his parents or teachers? A mentor or an uncle who used to visit once a year?
- ~ What hurts your characters? Think not only of the physical but the mental and the emotional. Who can a character be hurt by? Which other characters is a character indifferent to?
- ~ What does a character surround himself with in terms of other people and their strengths and weaknesses? Does he want strong allies or weak accomplices? Does he look for himself in others or does he search out those wholly different from himself? Does he choose friends for what they can do for him or because he can take advantage of them or because he simply enjoys being with them? Who does he seek out and why?
- ~ What kinds of other characters might a character always let get close? Children? The elderly? Those with physical or mental or emotional challenges? What kinds of characters might he never let get close?
- ~ What are your characters' weaknesses? Strengths? Who takes advantages of those strengths and weaknesses? How does your character react when he's taken advantage of? Does his response depend on who's taking advantage?
- ~ How does a character treat family members? Friends? Coworkers? Peers? Authority figures? Enemies?
- ~ Does a character like his friends because they make him a better man or because they let him be who he is without apology? Is he capable of being a friend? Why or why not?

- ~ Do a character's job and career paths reflect his interests or his parents' directives?
- ~ Does a character love in return or does he take advantage of those who love him? Does he do both at the same time? Is he capable of love?  
  
Does he speak love, or does he show love by his actions, either the practical or the extravagant?
- ~ At the beginning of your story, is the character living out his dream or just getting by? Where does he stand in the middle of the story? At the conclusion?
- ~ Is a character loyal? Always or only conditionally? Does he require loyalty in his friends?
- ~ What would never move your character? If he has no response to an event or news report, should you even consider that event for your story? Maybe his lack of reaction is key to something vital. But if it isn't, if he's truly indifferent, perhaps a different goad is necessary to stir a response from him.
- ~ Does your character like order or chaos? Does he crave order because he lives in chaos? Or might he live a structured life because that pleases his wife, boss, or best friend and yet yearn for a come-as-it-may life?
- ~ If a character did something out of character, what would it be? And what would his reaction be? Satisfaction? Remorse? A move toward immediate restitution? Escape?
- ~ Does your character trust? Everyone? No one? Only friends of long standing? Is he too trusting?
- ~ Has your character's life always been so troubled that she's developed a tough skin and an uncaring attitude—or maybe a highly caring attitude to contrast what she's experienced all her life? Or has she truly been blessed and content all her life until you drop something horrendous on her head, something she has no coping mechanisms to deal with?
- ~ What does your character lack in terms of emotions or skills or desires? How does this lack affect her life? Her emotional stability? Her dreams? Her relationships?
- ~ Does your character envy what she lacks, without doing anything to acquire what is lacked, or does envy prod her to precipitous actions or perhaps to unswerving effort?
- ~ How far would a character go to achieve victory? What would compel him to quit before he reached his goals?
- ~ Is your character a thinker, a feeler, a talker, or a doer? That is, what gets the biggest workout—her mind, her heart, her mouth, or her hands? Which does she use least?
- ~ Is your character practical, thinking in terms of what can be done now to solve a problem, or a dreamer, thinking in terms of what might be possible? Is he a hoarder or a giver? Does he do for others with the expectation of thanks or reciprocity, or is he selfless, acting as he does simply because it's the right thing to do or because of his own inner compulsions. Or is he unconcerned with others and their needs?
- ~ What communication skills does your character have?
- ~ Is your character modern or a throwback to the past? Or is he a visionary, looking to the future?

- ~ How does your character manipulate others? Is he good at it? Is he often the victim of manipulation himself?
- ~ Does your character bow to society's dictates or fight against them? What are the hot-button social, religious, political, moral, or philosophical issues that move her?
- ~ Does your character like to be with others or spend time alone? Is she a be-with person, content to be with others, whether they interact or not, a do-with person, one who needs to be involved in the activities of those she loves (or emulates or envies), or a loner?
- ~ What is a character's ultimate fantasy? If he can't have the fantasy, what would he settle for?
- ~ Which sense (sight, sound, smell, touch, taste, ESP) most affects your character? Which sense does he rely on? Which would he never notice?
- ~ Is the character competitive? In what ways? What makes him back down? What makes him compete more aggressively?
- ~ Does your character talk a lot or communicate with silence? Can he make his will known through a look or does he painstakingly explain every issue?
- ~ Is the character street smart, book smart, or people smart? Technologically savvy? Knowledgeable about the opposite sex?
- ~ What is your character hiding? What embarrasses her? What does she take pride in? What makes her cry?
- ~ Who does a character want to be when she grows up?
- ~ What is a character willing to sacrifice? What would she never sacrifice?
- ~ What action or thought or conversation does a character regret? What one thing does he wish he could do over?
- ~ What can your character never forgive?
- ~ Where is a character's line in the sand?
- ~ Is the character a doer or a watcher? A starter or a completer? A finisher or a quitter? A leader or a follower?

## Who or what is my main antagonist?

Ask the same questions that you asked of your protagonist. In addition, you want to know. How the antagonist stands in the way of the protagonist achieving the story goal. Is he/she seen as the villain (though not necessarily evil). The antagonist's goal must be in direct conflict with the protagonist's goal. If your antagonist is not a person, is he/she a force of nature, a group or general life condition? How can you turn this into a person?

### Your Antagonist's character sketch

What does this character want? What is his/her goal? Do you know why he wants what he wants? Do you know how far he'll go to get what he wants?

What are your character's strengths and weaknesses? What are his/her minor goals? What are his/her internal goals?

At the beginning of the story what does the antagonist want? What are his/her strengths and weaknesses? What are his/her minor goals? What are his/her internal goals?

How did that want develop? Where did it come from? How deeply is it embedded? Can it be satisfied by more than one object or person? Does he, the character, want it more at certain times of the day or year? When he's drunk or falling off to sleep or starting his day? When he sees a woman who reminds him of the one who betrayed him or the man who stole his company?

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In addition, you want to know. How the antagonist stands in the way of the protagonist achieving the story goal. Is he/she seen as the villain (though not necessarily evil). The antagonist's goal must be in direct conflict with the protagonist's goal. If your antagonist is not a person, is he/she a force of nature, a group or general life condition? How can you turn this into a person?

Why is the protagonist the protagonist and the antagonist the antagonist?

## Secondary Characters

Name the other characters know how to trigger negative (or positive) reactions in your main characters?

What are their goals? Why do they use what they know about other characters for their own ends?  
What are those ends?

Is the antagonist equal in strength to your protagonist?

Could the antagonist become the protagonist if the roles were reversed? How do the antagonist's motives appear valid and his actions justified?

Build strong character ARCs

What type of antagonist is yours?

1. The malevolent villain
2. The ally-antagonist
3. The interfering authority figure
4. The force of nature
5. The inner saboteur

## Five Key Backstory Hacks

- 1: Backstory is not the main story so don't let it dominate
- 2: Use backstory to explain your character's development and raise the stakes
- 3: Make sure the backstory isn't more interesting than the main story arc
- 4: Avoid the dreaded 'info dump'
- 5: Pace the release of backstory information to sustain the reader's intrigue

Do your secondary characters balance the protagonist or antagonist's character traits

Does this story contain a sidekick? What characteristics does this character have that are opposite the protagonist or antagonist?

Does your protagonist have an adversary who puts obstacles in the protagonist's path? (this is not the antagonist.) In a mystery sleuth novel, this is a good-guy character who drives the sleuth nuts. It might

be an over protective relative, a know-it-all coworker. It might be a police officer or detective who plays by the book. It might even be a micromanaging boss or a flirt.

Have you fleshed out the supporting characters?

What is the character's relationship to the protagonist? What baggage does this character carry?

What role does this character play in the story? What was this character's original stereotype? Flesh out this character beyond that stereotype especially if this character plays a bigger supporting role. How does this character differ from the stereotype? What makes him/her unique?

However, don't overdo it. You don't want the character to steal the limelight, but you don't want him/her bland either.

Have you named your supporting characters with a name that matches who they are and helps the reader remember who is who? Do they have nicknames that remind the reader of his/her personality or appearance? Have you avoided boring and exotic names?

Nicknames are easy to remember, especially when they provide a snapshot reminder of the character's personality (Spike, Godiva or Flash) or appearance (Red, Curly or Smokey). Throwing in some ethnicity makes a character's name easy to remember, too (Zito, Sasha or Kwan). Avoid the dull and boring (Bob Miller) as well as the weirdly exotic (Dacron).

## Scene-action and dialogue

### Block out Primary Scene Actions and dialogue

Decide Setting for each scene

Dig deep into the scenery in major scenes

Dig deep into the scenery of secondary scenes-introspection

Developing scenes on the move-scenes in transitional scenes

Develop Effective Dialogue

### Block out secondary scenes-introspection

Decide Setting for each scene

Dig deep into the scenery in major scenes

Dig deep into the scenery of secondary scenes-introspection

Developing scenes on the move-scenes in transitional scenes

Develop Effective Dialogue

### Block out transitional scenes-getting from Point A to Point B in time and space.

Decide Setting for each scene

Dig deep into the scenery in major scenes

Dig deep into the scenery of secondary scenes-introspection

Developing scenes on the move-scenes in transitional scenes

Develop Effective Dialogue

## Second Draft to Third Draft (Content Editing)

During this draft, you will be fixing Your Character and Point-of-View Problems by analyzing and pinpointing problem areas and discovering multiple revision options in each area. You choose the options that best fit your writing process. It's an easy-to-follow guide to crafting compelling characters, solid points of view, and strong character voices readers will love.

Include the right amount of backstory to enhance, not bog down, your story

Determine the best point(s) of view and how to use them to your advantage

Eliminate empty dialogue and rambling internalization

How are you addressing the reader? What can you change from narrative to character driven?

In each scene, is the point of view obvious to the reader? Are you throwing in other POV?

What is your style? Is it casual or formal?

How much of the story do you want to cover?

Develop character voices and craft unique, individual characters

Who are your minor characters? Do they make an impression when they come on scene with a flash of description, action and dialogue and then retreat from the scene without a splash? What is notable about their actions as it relates to the protagonist or antagonist and the plot? A name, a few quirky details and a bit of action or dialogue are more effective than a long, drawn-out description. The purpose of minor characters is to bring realism to the scene and give context to what your protagonist is doing.

## Starting your Story in the Right Place

Do you have your story starting in the right place?

Does your lead in capture the readers and hold them through the first word, the first sentence, the first paragraph, the first page, the first chapter?

What is the first dramatic event?

What is your first major plot point?

The most important elements are action, character and setting.

Do you have a perfect first line?

Do you have the perfect first paragraph?

Does your first paragraph answer the important questions of 'Who?', 'What?', 'Why?', 'Where?' or 'When?'

### Finishing in the Right Place

Does your story end where it needs to end?

Have you considered:

1. Using a plot twist?
2. Turning an "oh, no!" to a Aha!
3. Going back to square one
4. An open-ended ending
5. The close the book ending.

Do you have a dynamic ending and?

1. Have you built an intriguing climax?
2. Is your ending earned, but not improbable
3. Did you leave room for readers' imaginations
4. Do you need to review the best novel endings for insight into how to end a book?
5. Did you bring home how your characters have changed?
6. Did you use the '5 W's' to create finality?
7. Were you careful to keep in mind how not to end your novel?
8. Did you think about types of story endings that would suit your book best?

Have you avoided these issues?

1. Anti-climax
2. Runaway train
3. Contrived
4. Developmental
5. Dribble out
6. Epilogue

Does your last chapter, last page, last paragraph, last sentence, last word satisfy the reader?

If there's a sequel in the works, have you properly set up the reader to crave that next book?

### Editing Dialogue

Three Rules for Editing Dialogue

1. Insert double quote marks around the beginning and ending of the spoken portions within your story.

2. Place the comma on the inside of the quote mark, before the dialogue tag.

3. Watch for inconsistent structure in dialogue.

### 1. Wooden dialogue

Go through your manuscript, remove or revise speeches in which a character is doubling as narrator.

In dialogue, unless there is a good reason to include a person's name being addressed, eliminate naming.

### 2. Insignificant dialogue

Remove small talk from conversations unless we have a reason like betraying our nervousness.

Eliminate speeches that recap what is already known to every character in the scene. If the speaker has nothing new to say about the past even, consider it insignificant to the story. If a conversation doesn't move things forward, delete it.

3. Repetitive dialogue--Trim out repetitive speeches of dialogue Read each speech aloud; repeated words and idea echoes will pop out at you.

Remove entire scenes are repeated in dialogue, by a character who has experienced an event in an earlier part of the story and proceeds to describe it in detail to another character. Sum it up in a sentence.

4. Add subtext to Naked dialogue-speaker's posture, physical actions, facial expressions, and tone of voice.

5. Eliminate Overdressed dialogue-look to remove tags that chop up a scene. Look for tags that describe action rather than voice.

Ruthlessly Cut the chitchat that doesn't serve the story.

Instead of saying everything, we allude, suggest – we try to persuade and negotiate, often to clumsy effect, when interacting verbally with others. There's a difference there between negotiation and deceit, but we don't tend to spill all the fine details of our thoughts or intentions within the heat of the moment.

See your full cast of characters from the POV character

Are your characters' conversations vivid or are they just talking heads? What is their body language? Replace tags like "said angrily" with activity that demonstrates what they are doing. Have them putting something down or gesturing for example.

How is your POV character relating to everything that is said?

Read your dialogue aloud to see if it flows naturally from your mouth. Fix what doesn't work.

Meaningful conversations

Here are 10 ways to make a conversation bring impact to you and others.

1. Does this piece of dialogue achieve what you want it to achieve toward moving your story forward?

Does it give some information?

Does it help the reader get to know a person more?

2. Is it wooden or contrived?

3. Is the dialogue based on a topic that moves the story forward? Is it purposeful? How does this dialogue affect each person present?

4. Use dialogue to demonstrate common interests between the characters.

5. Avoid talking about the weather unless the weather has something to do with moving the plot forward.

6. Create empathy or animosity between characters. Does the dialogue create polarization between people involved in conversation?

7. Have other characters demonstrate whether they are listening to what other characters are saying.

8. Break up long monologues or interview sounding dialogues.

9. When dealing with complex issues, provide quick background, explain the situation or what happened and a bit of impact. Having your listener ask for clarification or further explanation is a way to show your character's interest in the topic being discussed. It also shows that he or she is paying attention.

10. Do your character's conversations express real interest (or not) in a follow through of what was discussed.

Creating Deep POV-Get inside your POV character's head and eliminate dialogue tags.

Does everything that happens in the scene reflect what the POV character feels, sees, hears, smells, and perhaps even tastes.

Have you eliminated enough dialogue tags to make the story more interesting?

Have you left in enough dialogue tags so that your reader knows who is talking?

Are you showing, not telling? Are you raising emotional responses and questions in the readers' minds?

Can you see the scene through your character's eyes when you read back what you've written?

Have you limited Your Character's Knowledge?

Have you cut Filter Words?

Have you limited dialogue tags?

Have you made the most of showing and telling?

Have you delved deep into your character's voice?

Have you avoided passive voice?

Where necessary, create more narrative distance, however, add thought tags.

Don't have your Characters in deep POV don't need to explain in their thoughts. They're not talking to someone, they're living their lives. They don't need to explain in their own heads.

Reduce explanations in your POV character's thoughts.

You cannot see the POV character's reactions, so edit these out. He can however tell you how he felt.

Your POV character cannot report on what he or she does not know. The POV character can make guesses, but not to know everything (except paranormal beings, of course.)

Word choices in thought and narrative should reflect the viewpoint character's experiences, knowledge, passions, education, motivations, and emotion levels.

Hiding a character's thoughts becomes difficult with deep POV. If we're inside a character's head and he doesn't know we're there, would he hide his thoughts? However, is it possible that he is kidding himself? Instead, write around the issue by changing the subject with an interruption.

Did you use thought or internal questions in deep POV? Is it possible that it may appear that the character is talking to the reader? Very few characters ask fully formed questions. We are more apt to mutter them under our breath rather than just think them. How can your character express it in a better way? Curse another person for his actions? Whisper the question? Shout the question to another character?

Get rid of characters speaking to readers. Keep the readers engaged as an audience, not a participant. Never remind readers that the events they're reading about is fiction.

### Third Draft Scenes

Look through key scenes from the POV of several characters then rewrite it from the POV of the character that you are using as the POV character of your novel.

Look for scenes that are out of character's POV and fix them.

Look through other scenes that may appear wooden but are necessary to the story. Use the same treatment as you used for the key scenes.

### Set the right Pace

Active Voice vs passive voice

Find passive voice and apply various ways to change it

Kill your darlings, "cute" lines that take from the story rather than contribute to it.

Cut superlative words where simple words are better

Add missing words or phrases

Read through your book and ask yourself, "Could that really have happened that way?"

Research facts. What are the usual procedures? Was the weather rainy at that location on that day? There are numerous details in almost any genre that require research.

If you're using a dialect are you using it properly?

Do you have too much description When is description too much?

## Final Proofread

Keep paragraphs short, especially considering the attention span of today's readers

To write a good paragraph, you must understand the four essential elements of paragraph writing and how each element contributes to the whole. The four elements essential to good paragraph writing are: unity, order, coherence, and completeness.

Read through every paragraph and eliminate overused words. You may not be able to find these words on your own, so you may not be aware of these words if you are writing your first book, therefore, when you have beta readers reading your book, ask them to point out overused words and create a list of them.

Are the paragraphs structured properly? Do they flow properly.

Have you varied sentence lengths to make the paragraphs flow?

### **Sentence Structure**

Have you eliminated run-on sentences?

Have you used past tense throughout your book?

Do your subject and verb match numerically?

Did you write in Complete sentences? Dialogue can be an exception.

The quickest fix for a difficult sentence is to eliminate it.

### **Word Usage**

Eliminate long words when short words will do. Determine the exact right word for the passage.

Are you using active verbs instead of passive ones?

Replace adverbs and weak verbs with active verbs. Eliminate qualifiers: very, a bit, a little quite pretty much, in a sense, too (as a quantifier like in the phrase too much) and dozens more. Every qualifier whittles away some of your reader's trust. Make your adjectives work for their inclusion.

Remove presumptuous words unless it is in dialogue and it is part of the character's personality.

Eliminate unnecessary adjectives

Remove redundant phrases

Are you using 'which' versus 'that' correctly. Always use that unless it makes the sentence seem ambiguous. Which speaks of something specific or is singular. Therefore, if your sentence needs a comma, use which. For example: "Take my car, which is in the garage." Rather than "Take my car that is in the garage." (Which sounds as though you have one that is not in the garage?)

Get rid of concept nouns that have vague meanings like: response, hostility. Change to “show the people responding or showing hostility

Avoid stringing fifty cent words nouns together. Find a more precise single word.

Avoid overstatement (unless it is in dialogue and that is part of the character’s personality.)

Are you using correct spelling?

Too, two, to;

there, their, they’re;

your, you’re

where, wear, ware,

its it’s;

accept, except;

Did you use the right form of lie and lay?

### **Capitalization**

Are proper names capitalized and words that aren’t proper names not capitalized?

Is the first word in every sentence capitalized.

### **Punctuation**

Avoid run on sentences, and, for best results, uses long sentences sparingly.

Are your commas used properly?

Are you using semi-colons, colons properly? Avoid them in fiction.

Use exclamation points only when necessary. Make the words show emphasis rather than using an exclamation point to do it.

Use dashes to get you out of tight corners and can be used in two ways. One is to amplify a second sentence. The other use involves two dashes, which set apart parenthetical thought within a longer sentence.

Contractions lead to a more relaxed relationship within a novel. Be sure that you have written this form of punctuation correctly.