

How to Edit Your Story

So you've finally finished writing your dream novel. Congrats! Now what?

Maybe you succeeded in making your protagonists' love for each other sizzle off the page, or you nailed that scene where your hero fights the monster. You might have even snuck in a clever joke here and there. But whatever world you've created, chances are you're gonna need to do some editing to make sure that love really does sizzle off the page as intensely as you thought it did.

This can be a very intimidating part of the process. You just spent all this time writing your first draft - are you really ready to jump back into your story all over again? Editing can be overwhelming, but if you take it one step at a time, it should feel more manageable.

Here are some tips for tackling edits and revisions in your story:

- 1. Look out for Spelling and Grammar:** This one seems like a given - and it should. Proper spelling and grammar is what helps establish the quality of your work. While most word processors catch most of these mistakes, they can't read your mind nor do they understand your story, and why you've worded things the way you have. Making a habit to go back in and read everything over is the best method of checking for accuracy. If you struggle with this, there are plenty of resources and courses that will help you develop your skills. The better your own personal spellchecker becomes, the more professional your story will appear.
- 2. Consistency Is Key:** You probably had a lot of different ideas while you were writing, which is part of the fun. However, there's always one problem that seems to arise whether you outlined your story or not: consistency. While revising your work, it helps to pay attention to all the details you touch on throughout. Does a character with blonde hair in Chapter 1 randomly have red hair in Chapter 7? Maybe her crush was named Derek in Chapter 2 but is now called Randy in Chapter 5? Or maybe Sally and Logan embark on a quest in Chapter 10, which doesn't make sense if she killed him in Chapter 4? Revisiting these details will not only avoid reader confusion but will also strengthen your plot overall.
- 3. Read It Out Loud:** If you're not sure about the flow of your story, this is a very helpful tip. Some phrases might look good when they're on paper, but what do they actually sound like when spoken? Try reading over pieces of your work for consistency and authenticity. Does this sentence flow with the rest of your narration? Does this line sound like something your teenage character would actually say? More importantly,



does what you've written have a natural flow or does it sound jumbled? If you've identified any issues, try rephrasing your wording so that it sounds more natural.

4. **Keep Things Eventful:** A lot happens in a story - and when you're first writing, it can all feel important. Now's your chance to take a critical eye and examine what actually matters, and what actually does not. It helps to pay attention to the main events within every chapter and ask yourself these questions: 1) Do these events advance the plot? 2) Do these events help your character grow? 3) Do these events make readers want to know what's next? If you answer "no" to all of these questions, you might want to consider cutting this part out of the final draft. You want to keep your readers engaged throughout the entire story - so critically examining what's important in the story will help keep them that way.

5. **Seek Out Constructive Criticism:** This part of the editorial process is often the scariest, and why some writers choose to forego it. At the end of the day, it can be difficult to determine everything that needs cleaned up or altered within a story on your own. You're so close to it, and might be attached to certain story elements (or characters!) that don't actually belong. That's where getting a second look can be beneficial. Do you have a group of fellow writer friends? A colleague with a sharp editorial eye? Consider reaching out and asking them to take a look at your work, or set up a writers' circle and swap stories. Sometimes the best changes to any work were suggested by someone who wasn't the author. It's okay to be a bit uncomfortable in these situations, but try to remember: critiques aren't personal. Whoever is reading things over just wants the best for your story.

Lastly, take things at your own pace. It's okay if you need a little time, if you miss something the first time around, or if you end up rewriting most of your story. What's important is that you write the best story you can, and taking time for a proper edit will help you do just that!