



Easy Editing

Significantly improve your writing in 5 simple steps.

Preparation

Something really important is required before you edit - you must reset your brain. How? By sleeping... believe it or not. Of course, if you procrastinate (like me) or write on tight deadlines, you might find sleeping between writing and editing nearly impossible. But honestly, this one step will have a huge impact on your writing. So, let me encourage you to intentionally plan to edit one or more days after you write. You'll quickly see the benefits of preparing this way!

Step One :: Read your writing aloud.

Magic happens when we hear our voice reading what we've written. Suddenly errors become obvious and it gets easier to evaluate the pace and tone of what we've written. So, take a few minutes and actually read your writing in your normal speaking voice. Print a copy of your writing, if you can, and grab a pencil so you can take notes as you read.

Tips:

- **If you have to take a breath in the middle of a sentence, it is too long. Break that bad boy into two (or even three) shorter sentences.**
- **If a sentence feels awkward, repetitive, or out of context... IT IS. Make a note to change it.**
- **Do you feel confused as you read? Make a note to clarify.**
- **Does the section of writing feel super long as you read it? Look for places to cut.**
- **Would you speak like this in person? If not, you need to work on tone a bit.**

Step Two :: Edit for meaning (copy editing).

Time to get serious about what you're trying to say and the purpose of your writing. This step is all about editing to make sure you've made your point - and done it in the way you intended when you thought about the post or article.



This is also the step where you correct the things you noticed during step one. Break up those long sentences, add a story or two, and clarify places where things got twisted and confusing. Oh, and work on taking out academic language (places where you sound like a lawyer or college professor) and replacing it with the casual, conversational tone you'd use with a close friend.

Tips:

- **Edit so the post is in 1st person (I, you, we, us) instead of the more informal 3rd person.**
- **When making a negative point, talking about pain, or sharing an obstacle or struggle, use “I” or “we”. You want to walk with your reader in pain or share your own story - not call them out or give them a reason to be defensive.**
- **When sharing positive points or providing encouragement, use “you”. Help the reader feel that each victory is theirs.**
- **Odd numbered points are ideal - and much more engaging than even numbered points. So, give 3 (or 5) reasons or share 7 steps, rather than 10.**

Step Three :: Cut, cut, cut.

Compare how you feel after a huge feast (such as Thanksgiving) with how you feel after a simple, nutritious lunch. Feasts always leave me feeling heavy, bloated, and in need of a nap. There's simply too much to digest. A healthy lunch, on the other hand, is fuel that empowers me to continue a pleasant and productive day. I am ready to take action and start my next adventure.

Each blog post or article (or chapter in a book) is intended to empower and energize. This is why you need to cut out all the empty words, extra points, and bloated language from your writing. Make each word as meaning-rich as a nutrient-packed salad and cut out the elements that just add bloat (empty calories) to your writing.

Step Four :: Add headings + white space.

Time to make your writing engaging and well organized by adding headings and white space. In today's fast paced world, we are all champion skimmers and scanners. Your reader needs headings and formatting cues like bold text and italics to help the words pop off the page. Give them what they need to scan your writing quickly.



Add white space too. Long paragraphs feel heavy - making readers hesitate before digging into your brilliant words. But short paragraphs (2-4 sentences) feel light and easy to consume. It's okay to break up a long paragraph into two or even three.

Step Five :: Check mechanics + grammar.

At this point, you've already read through your writing four times. If you're like me, you've already corrected all the obvious typos, spelling snafus, and grammar issues you can easily identify. This thing is close to perfect already, trust me.

In this step, I want you to simply take a last read through to grab anything you might have missed. You can use a tool for spelling or grammar checking if you like. There are some good ones out there you can explore if you're nervous (Hemingway, Grammar Girl, etc.)

Resist the temptation to feel stuck here. Why? Because your reader isn't any better at grammar than you are. That obscure comma rule isn't their top priority, and they are no better at semicolon usage than you. Moral of the story - if you can't find it, your reader can't anyway.

AND - in the rare instance when an English major or composition teacher corrects you via email or a comment on your blog, be grateful. They not only read your writing, they took the time to help you improve it by offering free editing services. Thank them, make any suggested corrections, and move on to your next bit of writing. :)

That's it! You're done editing and you're ready to publish. Easy, isn't it? Once you're familiar with this system, you will discover that editing takes about an hour of your time... and you will find yourself writing (and publishing) more often!