

Self-Editing Checklist

Congratulations! You're done! Or are you?

A lot of sweat and tears have gone into your writing, but you're not done yet.

Before you submit your work to an editor, there are a few things you can do to save your editor time and, in turn, save yourself some money.

Take a look at this list, grab the proverbial red pen, and dive in!



Before starting anything!

Take a step back from your work. Put it in a drawer and walk away. If you can afford the time, a month is good; however, if you can't, try a week. This step will give you time to remove yourself from the depths of your work; you will come back to it with a fresh pair of eyes and some newfound clarity.

On the Starting Block

Editors appreciate receiving documents that have already been formatted for easier editing. So if you are going to do it anyway, best do it now because it will make your self-editing tasks simpler.

Here is my preference for an easy-to-edit format:

Times New Roman, 12 pt.

or

Calibri (Body), 11 pt.

and

Double-spaced or spaced 1-1/2



Tip: Read aloud as you are editing. This will help you notice missing words, overused words, and narrative flow.

Alternatively, you can use Read Aloud (found in the Review menu in Word for both Windows and Mac).



Checklist: Writing

Structure

- Create a timeline/outline to help you examine logical flow.
- Organize your material for your reader. Are there enough headings and navigation aids?
- Confirm you have met your length requirement.

Content

- Remove repetitive and irrelevant material.
- Check that the information is presented in the most effective form (e.g., in-text, bullet lists, descriptive material as a diagram or infographic).

Style

- Where appropriate, divide longer, complicated paragraphs/sentences into smaller ones.
- Use a variety of sentence lengths, as appropriate for your audience.
- Avoid the use of clichés.
- Replace negative constructions with positive ones. (e.g., “I forget.” vs. “I can’t remember.”)

Readers are visual. Paragraphs serve as visual blocks, providing breaks between main ideas. Paragraphs of more than five to seven sentences may lose your readers.

Language

- Eliminate wordiness. This includes deleting redundancies (e.g., *advance* warning) and filler words (e.g., basically, really)
- Ensure that your language is appropriate for your audience.

Accuracy

- Double-check calculations.
- Verify the accuracy of quotations.

- Ensure that the table of contents matches the headings.
- Double-check the accuracy of references, including URLs.
- Check that table and figure callouts refer to the appropriate table or figure and are in consecutive order.
- Double-check the spelling of proper names.
- Check that references to other information within the document are correctly directed.
- Verify numerical and alphabetical sequences.

Consistency

Check that the following are consistent throughout your text.

- Abbreviations
- Headings and subhead styles
- The use of capitalization
- Sentence structure for image captions
- Treatment of numbers (i.e., written out vs. numerals)
- Initial capital letters in names (e.g., C. S. Smith / C.S. Smith / CS Smith)

- Ensure that the information in visual elements matches the surrounding text.
- Stick with one method of spelling (i.e., Canadian, British, American).

Completeness

Check that

- all images have captions,
- all tables, graphs, etc. have titles, as appropriate,
- all quotations are attributed,
- all sources cited are listed in the reference list, and
- all items in the reference list appear in the text.

- Click on any links you have included to ensure they function.

Checklist: Mechanics

- Remove double spaces between words and after periods. (F&R) *
- Use hyphens in compound words.
- Use en dashes in number ranges.
- Use em dashes for parenthetical information.
- Ensure that quotation marks, parentheses, and brackets are in pairs.
- Check that commas and periods are inside quotation marks (North America).
- Remove spaces at the beginning and end of paragraphs. (F&R) *
- Remove unnecessary spaces before punctuation. (F&R) *
- Ensure proper spacing between initial capital letters in names, as per your style guide. (F&R) *
- Check that sentences begin with a capital letter. (F&R) *
- Use page breaks where necessary (instead of hitting Return several times).

New to typing!

Word processing programs will insert a wider space after the end of a sentence automatically. Gone are the days of double spacing after a period!

* Find and Replace (F&R) (Ctrl H on a PC) (Control H on a Mac)

To remove double spaces between words and after periods:

Find what: type two spaces in the Find box

Replace with: type one space in the Replace box

To remove spaces at the end of paragraphs:

Find what: type a space followed by **^p** in the Find box

Replace with: type **^p** in the Replace box

To remove spaces at the beginning of paragraphs:

Find what: type **^p** followed by a space in the Find box

Replace with: type **^p** in the Replace box

To remove rogue spaces before periods, commas, question marks, exclamation marks, semi-colons, colons, and closing brackets:

Find what: type a space followed by ([.,;:\?!\)\]])

Replace with: type \1

*** Be sure to click *Use Wildcards* in Options.**

*** Ensure that *Tracked Changes* is off.**

To add a space between initial capital letters in names:

Find what: type ([A-Z]).([A-Z])

Replace with: type \1. \2

*** Be sure to click *Use Wildcards* in Options.**

*** Ensure that *Tracked Changes* is off.**

To close up space between initial capital letters in names:

Find what: type ([A-Z]). ([A-Z]).

Replace with: type \1.\2.

*** Be sure to click *Use Wildcards* in Options.**

*** Ensure that *Tracked Changes* is off.**

To check that sentences ending with a period begin with a capital letter:

Find what: type . ([a-z]) (note the space after the period)

*** Be sure to click *Use Wildcards* in Options.**

*** Ensure that *Tracked Changes* is off.**

The Inside Page

