

CHAPTER EIGHT



Editing

Once you have revised and feel comfortable with the content, organization, and completeness of your paper, you can continue in the rewriting stage of the writing process by editing your work. To edit means to make your writing ready for presentation. Whether you are writing an article for the school newspaper or sharing a paragraph with a classmate, editing is an important step. Editing means looking at surface elements, including word usage; sentence structure, clarity, and variety; and grammar.

EDITING FOR WORD USAGE

As you edit for word usage, circle any word you are unsure of, and refer to your dictionary for clarification.

 **CHECKLIST: *Editing for Word Usage***

1. Are the words and phrases appropriate for the purpose in writing and the audience?
2. Are the words standard English?
3. Are any words informal, colloquial, slang, vulgar, obsolete, or archaic? If so, how could they be changed?
4. Do the words and phrases have accurate, precise connotations?



EXERCISE 1 ▶ Edit the following paragraph by circling any words that are not appropriate for a general audience. Then replace them with appropriate words. Use your dictionary.

Criticism from friends is not always worthwhile. Last summer I let some of my friends listen to a song I had recorded about my experiences with love. I had written the music and lyrics myself. One guy, Arnie, remarked that the lyrics were trite. “We’ve all heard it before,” he sneered. I tried to answer as politely as I could but almost lost my voice; a wimpy “Well, I guess so” was all I could utter. And I thought he was my friend. What a jerk he was! My other friends were not quite as brutal, although Ted did seem pleased with himself when he said, “It was an effort, Stan.” I suppose he meant it was a cruddy effort but didn’t have the nerve to say so. Londa seemed a little more kind in her criticism: “You show potential, Stan.” However, she failed to mention what level of potential. I assume tact is to be expected from someone who plans to be a female lawyer. Indeed, negative criticism can destroy someone’s ambitions and goals. A person should be wary of his urge to solicit criticism from friends.



COMPUTER HELP

Editing for Word Usage

1. Use the FIND and REPLACE commands.
2. Use the checklist that follows.
3. SEARCH for any troublesome words or phrases in your document.
4. If the computer moves to a word or phrase, decide whether it needs to be changed.

EDITING FOR SENTENCE STRUCTURE

✓ CHECKLIST: *Editing for Sentence Structure*

1. Are the sentences structured correctly? How can any sentence fragments, run-on sentences, and comma splices be corrected?
2. Does the piece of writing include both coordination and subordination in order to signal the relationships between ideas?
3. Can any sentences be combined where ideas are closely related?

Try editing your sentences by beginning with your last sentence and reading sentence by sentence until you reach the first one. In this way, you will have to look at each sentence out of context—a good way in which to catch common errors. Then read your sentences from first to last, as many times as necessary to test for clarity. Also, read your work aloud, either to someone else or to yourself, reading aloud is another good way to check for clarity.



COMPUTER HELP

Editing for Sentence Fragments and Comma Splices

1. Scroll up sentence by sentence from the end of your document. Reading in reverse order allows you to see each sentence out of context.
2. Use the FIND command to do the following:
 - A. FIND each period in the document. Each time the computer stops at a period, look at the group of words that precedes it to make sure you have written a complete sentence (independent clause).
 - B. FIND each semicolon in the document. Each time the computer stops at a semicolon, look at the group of words that precedes the semicolon and group of words that follows the semicolon. If both groups of words are complete sentences (independent clauses), the semicolon is used correctly. (Keep in mind that the semicolon can also be used to separate items in a series if those items contain a number of commas.)
 - C. FIND the conjunctive adverb *however*. Whenever your computer flags the word *however*, decide whether you have used complete sentences (independent clauses) both preceding and following *however*. If so, you need to correct the comma splice. Then do the same for any other conjunctive adverbs you have used.
 - D. FIND each comma in the document. Each time the computer stops at a comma, look at the group of words that precedes the comma and the group of words that follows the comma. If both groups of words are complete sentences (independent clauses), you need to correct the comma splice.



EXERCISE 1 ▶ Edit the sentences in the following paragraphs. Correct any sentence fragments, comma splices, or run-on sentences. Then combine any sentences which could be improved by either joining ideas or making some ideas subordinate. When you have made all your corrections and changes, look at each sentence out of context. Try reading your sentences from the last to the first. Is each sentence complete and clear? Are the relationships between ideas clear?

I heard the words, my brain had a hard time believing what was taking place. In early December, I asked my daughter Lori, a first grader, to read me a story, I was totally shocked! Lori could not read. Only stumble over her words. I decided an immediate appointment with her teacher, Mrs. Dixon, was necessary. I wanted to solve the problem.

With great apprehension, I met Mrs. Dixon. I was even more confused after listening to the unusually complimentary statements about Lori's school performance I asked about Lori's reading skills. Mrs. Dixon said that Lori was in a slower reading group, however, she advised me not to be concerned. Lori was an excellent math student. I curtly remarked that without good reading skills she could not continue to read instructions and remain a good math student. Mrs. Dixon suggested that I start a reading program at home. To bring her skills up to a satisfactory level.

During the long and tedious nightly reading sessions, Lori's strong spirit amazed me. Often her large blue eyes would overflow with tears. Which she quickly wiped away. Only her mule-like stubbornness kept her from giving up.

The decisive moment in Lori's progress came a month later. One afternoon Lori burst into my room excitedly asking, "Mother, do you know who Beatrix Potter is?" "Yes," I replied. It seemed that Mrs. Dixon had brought to Lori's class a set of Beatrix Potter's books to read and figurines to enjoy. Lori could not talk about anything else, she was finally coaxed to bed with a promise that we would have a Beatrix Potter book to read at our next session.

The next day, I checked several of Beatrix Potter's books out of the library. Lori could not stop until she had read all of them. At the end of the week, I bought her *The Tales of Peter Rabbit* and a figurine of her own. This started a tradition and a collection that has been continued for four years. Lori has the entire collection of Potter books, six stuffed animals, and twenty-three figurines. These books, animals, and figurines became the catalyst. That brought Lori from a poor reader to the excellent, avid reader she is today.

EDITING FOR SENTENCE CLARITY

In editing for sentence clarity, you should look at your sentences in greater depth.



CHECKLIST: *Editing for Sentence Clarity*

1. Are all adjective and adverb forms correct?
2. Are all modifiers and identifiers clear and logical?
3. Are all modifiers and identifiers correctly placed?

4. Are sentences strengthened through use of parallel structure?
5. Can any sentences be combined by inserting information? Have short, choppy sentences been avoided? Are sentences flowing and clear?



EXERCISE 1 ► Edit the sentences in the following paragraphs. Correct any incorrect adjective or adverb forms, as well as misplaced or dangling modifiers. Check for use of parallel structure, and combine any sentences that could be improved by inserting information. Then read the final version aloud to check for clarity.

Scuba diving really gets Andrew's adrenalin flowing. He takes diving serious and relishes the excitement of each dive. He is an experienced diver. When he is near ready for a dive, his expectations are high, and he is rarely disappointed.

During an ocean dive several weeks ago, Andrew found coins, pottery, and copper utensils. He was real pleased with his discoveries. Consequently, he decided to dive again and found a 17th century bottle to his surprise. Andrew's diving companion, Cindy, also found bottles and copper utensils. Because she only dives once in a while, she does not have Andrew's experience in salvaging interesting and valuable objects.

Recalling other experiences, spotting a family of porpoise off the bow of the boat was one. All the divers got into the water who were ready. They swam and dived with the school of porpoise. Hearing the porpoises make little underwater noises, exhilaration was felt. Another experience occurred when Andrew and Cindy were diving near St. Thomas. The experience was a more unusual one. Andrew would sit on the beach with about six inches of water over his legs. The fresh fish loved to be petted that were adapted to the area and unafraid of people. Marlin and squid would quick slide right into Andrew's lap, eat out of his hand, and swimming away.

Andrew has been diving for seven years. He loves it. He thinks that to be in a natural environment with fish and underwater vegetation is breathtaking. Because he enjoys the sport so much, he cannot say enough positively things about it. Whatever he says is an understatement!

EDITING FOR SENTENCE VARIETY



CHECKLIST: *Editing for Sentence Variety*

1. Is more than one sentence pattern used?
2. Are the sentences structured with enough variety to make the presentation interesting?



EXERCISE 1 ► Edit the sentences in the following paragraphs. Use sentence/idea combining to produce a variety of sentence patterns. Read the final version aloud to check for clarity.



COMPUTER HELP

Editing for Parallel Structure

1. Use the FIND command. Enter the coordinating conjunction *and*.
2. Whenever the computer highlights the word *and*, look at the words or groups of words joined by *and* to see if they are parallel in structure.
3. Do the same for the other coordinating conjunctions.

The art of procrastination is an art I have long studied. It is one I have finally perfected. It takes many years of practice. It takes dedication. It takes quick thinking to avoid the work required of a person by those astute individuals who expect a job well done. The different types of work to avoid are physical work, emotional work, and schoolwork.

Physical work is generally easy to avoid. First one must remember that avoiding back-breaking, knuckle-scraping work requires a full schedule of excuses. It is never a good idea to resort to feigned injuries, however, because one might end up with a doctor's appointment rather than an afternoon of leisure. For example, if I have some yard work that Dad wants me to do, I normally say, "Oh, I gotta go over to Joe's house. Didn't I tell you?" While Dad considers this news, I say, "Yeah, I'm supposed to help him move today." Then I zoom out of the house before Dad has a chance to protest.

The second form of procrastination is avoiding those questions that make a person examine his or her soul. This self-induced mental anguish can be avoided by only one means of escape. One can escape to another person's life. One can become the CEO of a major corporation. One can become a wealthy and famous person on the soap opera *General Hospital*. Becoming someone else helps one to neglect those silly considerations such as one's happiness, one's responsibility to others, or one's purpose on this planet. A good imagination is a prerequisite for this form of procrastination.

Avoiding assignments in school can be done in several ways. One can miss school. How can one be expected to do anything if his or her absence precludes any work? Another method is to distract the teacher. The simplest method of doing this is with conversation. A person can ask about the symbolism in "The Boat." It is an interesting story. One can request another explanation of the quantum theory. It is very complicated. One can ask for a summary of the information the teacher has been discussing for the last thirty minutes. The main point is to keep the teacher from having enough time to make an assignment.

When a person perfects procrastination, he or she will be what I am: a skilled artist. I can get out of doing just about anything except those things I really want to do anyway. Oddly enough, I usually end up doing physical work, emotional work, and schoolwork. I wonder where I am going wrong!

EDITING FOR VERB USAGE

CHECKLIST: *Editing for Verb Usage*

1. Do all subjects and verbs agree?
2. Are all verbs complete and in the correct tense?
3. Are there any inconsistencies in verb tense? In other words, have you shifted tense without a good reason?
4. Have any sentence fragments been caused by incorrect verb usage?
5. Are the verbs primarily in active voice? If passive voice is used, is it used appropriately?

Reading aloud is a good way to check for standard verb usage.



EXERCISE 1 ► Correct any errors in subject-verb agreement or verb tense in the following paragraphs. In addition, look for any sentence fragments caused by incorrect verb usage. And check for inappropriately used passive voice. Read the corrected version aloud to check for clarity.

When I first open my closet door, I notice a wall of clothing and papers. Yes, my closet is a firetrap, a pyromaniac's dream. I thinks to myself, "I never realized so much stuff could be crammed into such a small place!" Apparently, it can. My closet was a place full of surprises, orderly chaos, and banished objects.

Hidden surprises are revealed as soon as I turned the closet doorknob. If I am unlucky—and I usually am—a huge tide of papers, shoes, and clothes hits me. The papers flow out like a small Niagara Falls. Several pairs of shoes hit the ground with the sound of hail in a thunderstorm. The finale consists of a pile of old sweatshirts from the top shelf, along with jeans and shirts, blanketing me where I stand. I then realize opening the door may not have been such a good idea.

Orderly chaos best describing the insides of my closet: orderly for me, chaotic for others. It is an order that only I had known, an order that dictates every object is placed where I want it, whether the place is logical to someone else or not. If someone moves something, my order is upset, and the closet contents is forever lost in the regions of peril and dismay. It takes me too many years to build my huge mountain of clothing, years to perfect the flowing rivers of paper, and years to create a haven for unused objects. As I look at the clutter, I am proud of myself; in a fraction of a second I can locate any old frisbee and every new pair of jeans.

My closet is also the place in which books, shoes, papers, and clothing is banished. The things I no longer wore, such as the old Nike's and the Bugs Bunny tie, lie in the clothing graveyard, neglected and sullen. The childhood articles of clothing I should get rid of but cannot rest comfortably in dark corners. The unwanted artwork from my high school days snakes though my closet like the Amazon, run from the graveyard to a small shoe box on the floor where the river recede. Everything is waiting for that one moment in the future when it will be needed again.



COMPUTER HELP

Editing for Pronoun Reference

1. Use the FIND command.
2. Enter the pronoun *it*.
3. Whenever the computer highlights *it*, make sure you have used the word correctly.
4. Do the same for *they*, *this*, and *that*.

Suddenly, I hear my mother's call echoing through the house. I know what she was going to say before the sound escaped her mouth. Only two words will enter my ears, "clean" and "closet," two words that should be illegal to use in the same sentence. My last thought is to calculate how long it will take me to clean and organize my closet only to re clutter and reorganize it in my own unique way.

EDITING FOR PRONOUN USAGE

✓ Checklist: *Editing for Pronoun Usage*

1. Do all pronouns and antecedents agree?
2. Are there any inconsistencies in person?
3. Are all demonstrative and reflexive pronouns used correctly?
4. Are all pronouns in the correct case?
5. Are there any vague pronoun references (especially *it*, *they*, *this*, *that*)?
6. Are any pronouns repeated immediately after their antecedents?

Reading aloud is a good way to check for standard pronoun usage.



EXERCISE 1 ► Correct any pronoun usage errors or inconsistencies in the following paragraphs. Also look for vague pronoun references. Read the corrected version aloud to check for clarity.

One of my favorite short stories is Flannery O'Connor's "Good Country People." It says that we should question who is the fool and whom is doing the fooling. O'Connor encourages us to know ourselves well before we judge others.

"Good Country People" takes place in a farming community. Mrs. Hopewell is the mother of Joy, a thirty-two year old Doctor of Philosophy. Joy is dowdy looking. She lost a leg in a hunting accident during her childhood. Unable to find happiness in an intellectual community, Joy, with her new name, Hulga, returned to her mother's farm. Her new name, it reflects her negative attitude and bitterness. The hired help is Mrs. Freeman, someone who know everything. Joy cannot stand Mrs. Freeman or her know-it-all attitude. Joy does not seem to realize that she has a similar attitude.

Manley Pointer, a Bible salesman, visits the Hopewells. Manley is invited to stay for dinner even though Mrs. Hopewell cannot buy a Bible from him because of Hulga's professed atheism. At dinner, Manley notices Hulga and seems to like her. He has a more sharpened sense of capitalizing on people's weaknesses than her. He uses Hulga's sensitivity about her leg, as well as her other inferiorities, to entice her to meet him in the hayloft of the barn the following day. During the night, Hulga plots a scheme to seduce Manley. She thinks this will make him feel remorse for his actions. She thinks then she will be his savior, showing him the pointlessness of his religious beliefs. Her main goal is to convince him life has no meaning. However, in the end, Manley shows his worldliness. He coaxes her into giving up her wooden leg. And he feels no remorse.

Each turns out to be the opposite of what they seem. Hulga thinks that she is the one who are going to show poor, unworldly, and innocent Manley that there is no point in regret and that there is no outer force compelling him to feel guilt or shame. Manley, on the other hand, is the one who teaches Hulga that there are people who truly believes in nothing and that she is a hypocrite. Manley, he steals Hulga's most treasured possession, not her knowledge, which she thought made her better than others, but her artificial leg, a symbol for her vulnerability.

"Good Country People," it shows me people living side by side and wondering who is the manipulator and whom is being manipulated. You can focus on interpersonal relationships and ask the same questions. In the end, Flannery O'Connor wants us to beware of the Flim-Flam Man—in us and in others.

CHAPTER NINE



Proofreading

The last step of the writing process is *proofreading*. Proofreading involves careful consideration of every line in your paper.

Guidelines for Proofreading

- If you know that you have certain trouble spots, read your paper for only one type of error at a time. For example, if spelling and use of commas give you trouble, proofread once for spelling only, then once for comma usage only. In this way, you can concentrate on each problem separately. In addition, try reading your work from the last sentence to the first so that you look at each sentence out of context. Then you can concentrate on the errors you are trying to spot, rather than the content of what you have written.
- Use the checklist in this chapter.
- Review the revising and editing guidelines and checklists one more time.
- Proofread when you finish the final draft; then set your paper aside for several hours and proofread again.
- Make a copy of your final draft, or keep your rough drafts as insurance just in case you should lose the final draft.



COMPUTER HELP

Proofreading

1. Use the checklist that follows.
2. Scroll down one line at a time. Read each line slowly before proceeding to the next one.
3. Begin at the end of the document. Read your sentences in reverse order.
4. Read the document aloud from the screen.
5. Keep in mind that you will still need to proofread a paper (hard) copy.

**CHECKLIST: Proofreading**

1. Is all end punctuation (periods, question marks, exclamation points) used correctly?
2. Is all internal punctuation used correctly?
 - Commas
 - Semicolons
 - Apostrophes
 - Quotation marks
 - Colons and dashes
 - Italics
3. Are capital letters used correctly?
4. Are all words spelled correctly?
5. Are correct words used?
6. Are numbers that can be expressed in one or two words spelled out (sixty-two students)? Are figures used for large numbers (4,220 fans) or exact references (May 30, 1990, 9:00 A.M., 75.6 percent)?
7. Are abbreviations avoided except for titles (Mr. Taylor, Dr. Brackett), designations after names (Randall Stuart, Jr., Marna Hawkins, Ph.D.), dates (420 B.C.), times (3:30 P.M.), some businesses (IBM)?
8. Is the handwriting legible?
9. If the paper is typed, is it free of typographical errors?
10. Were any words omitted, repeated, or wrongly copied while you were recopying or typing the final draft?
11. Does the word at the top of a page correctly follow the word at the bottom of the preceding page?

**EXERCISE 1** ▶ Proofread the following paragraphs.

The southwest has some of the most spectacular regions in the United States. One place that attracts visitors is the beautiful Canyon de Chelly in northeastern Arizona. The name Canyon de Chelly is derived from the Navaho word *tsegi*, which means “rock canyon”. The Canyon de Chelly National Monument was the vacation spot that my mother and I decided to visit last summer. Our trek into the canyon was an unforgettable experience.

We arrived at the monument at noon and were ready to see the many prehistoric Indian sites, including many cliff dwellings. We parked our car and carefully began to hike 1 mile down to the canyon floor. The August air was filled with the pleasant smell of juniper. The cottonwood trees whispered in the afternoon breeze as we made our descent. As we walked to the bottom of the canyon on our trek to White House ruin we became aware of what was omitted from the park ranger’s handout: the trail was almost straight down! We moved downward with cautious steps to avoid falling and were passed by an old Navajo woman going in the opposite direction. Although burdened by a sack of corn from a field at the canyon’s floor, she assumed the posture and gait of a person who could not be delayed. She was, after all, not a tourist, and she was at home in the place of timeless beauty. Like all those who live out their lives on the reservation, she had learned to make every step in life as efficient as possible.

Finally, the canyon floor spread out in front of us as we neared the bottom, and we began to see signs of vegetation other than the pinon pines that grew along the rim of the canyon. Willows and cottonwoods reach their tallest height at the bottom of the canyon near the river. It was cooler in the canyon bottom and the light canyon breeze pushed the boughs of the willows, like huge brushes against the sandstone canyon walls.

We were always within hearing distance of flocks of goats that are owned by the Navajo. The goats do not get their food from a barn or manger but by foraging for it along the canyon or wherever their better judgment tells them they can find a blade of grass or a weed. Every once in a while, the Navajo round up the goats and decide which ones belong to whom. A man we met at the bottom of the canyon said "if the Indians aren't careful with those goats, they will eat everything green in Arizona." He also said, "if they had planned their goat business better, they wouldn't be overstocked with animals, and the goats would have more food to go around." We had not asked for his opinion or anything else but found out he worked for the large coal company that was not too concerned about conservation when it denuded West Virginia three decades ago.

Eventually our trek continued to the bank of the river, which was in flood stage because of a thunderstorm many miles away. We were becoming somewhat discouraged because the ruins were a mile downstream, and it seemed that we wasted a great deal of mileage to get so close and fail to reach our objective. It was then that we noticed some others with our dilemma. A group of Indian children from a school in Utah had the same objective in mind. They were trying to convince their teachers to wade or swim to the ruins. Soon all of us, seemingly from some command pulling us along, began arranging our cameras and clothes to keep them from getting wet and made our way to the ruins. When we finally got there, wet and muddy, the beauty and history of White House ruin dissolved our exhaustion as we spent a wonderful afternoon in a place that seemed sacred.

Our vacation to Canyon de Chelly was special to both mother and me. The treacherous journey to the canyon floor the exchanges with other tourists and the nature around us made memories we would not trade for anything.

