

Fiction Novel Self-Editing Checklist



- Step Away and Come Back:** After you finish your manuscript, take a break for a few weeks or even a few months. This will allow you to come back to it with fresh eyes and catch errors you might have missed before.
- Read Out Loud:** Reading your work out loud can help you identify awkward phrasing, pacing issues, and inconsistencies in dialogue.
- Utilize Software and Tools:** There are many grammar-checking software programs and online resources available that can help you catch errors in your manuscript. However, it's important not to rely on these programs alone.
- Focus on Specific Areas:** Break down the editing process into smaller tasks, such as focusing on character development in one session and grammar in another.
- Seek Feedback from Beta Readers:** Ask trusted friends, family members, or other writers to read your manuscript and provide feedback. You can also search online for beta readers. Independent Book Review has professional beta readers who will read your manuscript and give you feedback for a fee. Scribophile is an online writing community that focuses on getting you feedback through a points-based critique system.
- Vary Sentence Length:** Avoid using too many short or long sentences in a row. Varying your sentence length helps create a more natural reading experience.
- Use Strong Verbs:** Strong verbs can help to make your writing more vivid and engaging.

- ❑ **Eliminate Unnecessary Words:** Eliminate words that don't add meaning to your writing. This helps make your story more concise and clear.
- ❑ **Read Your Work Backwards:** Reading your work backward can help you identify errors in grammar and sentence structure that you might otherwise miss. It's also easier to spot typos!
- ❑ **Create a Style Guide:** Create a style guide for your novel to ensure consistency in your writing. This can include how you handle punctuation, capitalization, character names, etc.
- ❑ **Fact-Check Your Work:** If your novel includes any factual information, be sure to fact-check it carefully for accuracy.
- ❑ **Consider Your Target Audience.** Keep your target audience in mind when editing your manuscript. This will help you ensure that your writing is appropriate for them and that they will be able to understand and connect with your story.
- ❑ **Don't Be Afraid to Cut:** Sometimes the best way to improve your novel is to cut sections that don't work. This may only be a single sentence, but it could also mean cutting an entire chapter.