

Editing Checklist

All of the reviewing, reworking, and refining that you do will naturally bear the stamp of your personal style. But you must also look closely at your revised writing to make sure that all of your ideas speak clearly and correctly. The following list of basic reminders will help you check your writing for style and correctness.

OVERALL STYLE

1. **Read your revised writing aloud to test it for style.** Better yet, have a writing peer read it aloud to you. Your writing should read smoothly and naturally from start to finish.
2. **Check for these stylistic reminders:**
 - Be Purposeful* ● Does your writing sound like you genuinely care about your subject?
 - Be Clear* ● Are the ideas expressed concisely and directly?
 - Be Sincere* ● Does the writing sound authentic and honest?



The best stylists write in an invisible style. That is, their thoughts and ideas always come first, and their language, though it may be engaging or colorful, never draws attention to itself. (See 046-067 for more information on style.)

SENTENCE STRUCTURE

3. **Carefully check your sentences for correctness.** Does each one express a complete thought? Have you used the most appropriate subordinate conjunction (*although, because, etc.*) or relative pronoun (*that, who, etc.*) in your complex sentences?
4. **Watch for sentences that all sound the same and ones that limp along.** Rely on your writer's sixth sense to sort out the good from the bad.
5. **Examine your sentences for variety:**
 - Vary the Length* ● Are any sentences too long and rambling? Are there too many short, choppy sentences?
 - Vary the Beginnings* ● Do too many sentences begin with the same pronoun or article (*There, It, The, I, etc.*)?

WORD CHOICE

6. **Replace any words or phrases that may be awkward or confusing.** Substitute overused words and phrases (cliches) with words and expressions that are specific, vivid, and colorful. (See 053-054.)
7. **Check your writing for the appropriate level of diction.** In most cases, academic writing should meet the standards of formal diction. (See 027.)

NOTE: To edit your writing for usage, mechanics, and grammar, use the check-

Proofreading Checklist

The following guidelines will help you check your revised writing for spelling, mechanics, usage and grammar, and form. Also refer to the "Proofreader's Guide" for additional help. (See 552-851.)

SPELLING

1. Check your writing for spelling errors using these tips as a guide:

- Use the spell checker on your computer. (It won't, however, catch all of the spelling errors.)
- Read your writing backward to help you focus on each word.
- Circle each spelling you are unsure of.
- For help, consult the list of commonly misspelled words in the handbook (663-667) as well as an up-to-date dictionary.

MECHANICS

2. Review each sentence for end punctuation marks.

3. Also check each sentence for proper use of commas: before coordinating conjunctions (*and, but, or, etc.*) in compound sentences, after introductory clauses and long introductory phrases, between items in a series, and so on.

4. Look for apostrophes in possessive expressions and in contractions.

5. Examine quoted information or dialogue for proper use of quotation marks.

6. Review the text for proper use of capital letters: for first words in sentences and in written conversation, and for proper names of people, places, and things.

USAGE AND GRAMMAR

7. Look for misuse of any commonly mixed pairs of words: *there/their/they're; accept/except*. (See 669-757.)

8. Check for subject/verb agreement problems. Subjects and verbs should agree in number: singular subjects go with singular verbs; plural subjects go with plural verbs.

9. Review for pronoun/antecedent agreement problems. A pronoun and its antecedent must agree in number.

FORM

10. Check the title. Does it effectively lead into the writing? Is it appropriate for the writing task?

11. Examine any quoted or cited material. Are all sources of information properly presented and documented? (See 300-361 and 372-429.)

12. Look over the finished copy of your writing. Does it meet the requirements for a final manuscript?