

**2016 SC NEW WRITERS CLASSES –
Editing: Write It...Read It...Rewrite It...Repeat**

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Let's say you've finished the novel/memoir/book . . .

- 1) Put it aside for a week MINIMUM, and let it hibernate . . . your brain heal.
- 2) Have someone else read it and give you notes. Put those notes aside after reading them.
- 3) After the hibernation period, read your book like a reader, swiftly, to see the big picture.
- 4) Note the sections that work well and don't work at all. Not about grammar here. Find the big holes and the sagging middles. Where are the big problems?
- 5) Consider options to parts of your story. Don't be afraid for major changes. Those willing to make big changes write the bigger and better book.
- 6) Find a person to bounce ideas off of. Doesn't have to be a writer, but has to be someone who can play WHAT IF with you. Do NOT defend your book to this person.
- 7) Outline your book. Yes, it's after the fact, but outline it as it sits now.
- 8) Using your notes/suggestions/what if ideas, create a new edited outline. This will keep you focused and sane.
- 9) Start wherever you like:
 - a. With the biggest change needed
 - b. With a character
 - c. Beginning to end
- 10) Save your changes in a folder.
- 11) Print it out and read it again ALOUD. (Or have someone read it to you.) Keep a notebook. Write all over the pages.

NOTE: **There are several levels of editing.** Your beta readers or hired editors can be used at any of these levels.

- **Developmental** – big picture, storytelling level, plot strength or holes, characterization, character arcs, secondary characters, order of scenes, theme, organization, coherence, logic, pacing.
- **Line-editing** – focuses on sentence and paragraph level flow, wordiness, readability, word usage
- **Copyediting** –grammar, repetition, punctuation (often combined with line-editing)
- **Proofreading** –spelling, typos, missing words, errors

The big stuff to look for in your manuscript:

- 1) What is the theme? Is it apparent throughout or lost along the way?
- 2) Are there secondary plots and are they brought full circle and completed?
- 3) Does the story start at the right place?
- 4) How does each scene move the story forward?
- 5) Is the opening hook compelling?
- 6) Are the characters distinguishable from each other?
- 7) Is there too much backstory? Is it woven well into the story?
- 8) Does the dialogue propel the plot?
- 9) Are the moods, atmosphere and revelation moments intriguing?

The little stuff to look for in your edits:

- 1) Spelling
- 2) Consistency in names, places, cars, eye color, etc.
- 3) Typos
- 4) Punctuation
- 5) Fragmented sentences
- 6) Duplicated words (keep a list and use Ctrl-F to find and correct them at the end)
- 7) Point of View shifts/issues
- 8) Poor word choice – unclear meaning, too awkward, too cumbersome
- 9) Lazy words – little, very, really, get/got, thought, began, push, pull, had, etc.
- 10) Ambiguous words – that, thing, it
- 11) Trouble words – affect/effect, they're/their, farther/further, its/it's, lay/lie, that/who, your/you're, who/whom, less/fewer
- 12) ING words
- 13) Verb tense
- 14) Paragraph errors
- 15) Adverbs – sign of telling in most cases
- 16) Excess adjectives
- 17) Passive voice/verbs
- 18) Clichés
- 19) Dialogue – tags vs. beats, clarity in speaker
- 20) Crutch words – your personal repetitious words/phrases
- 21) Strings of prepositional phrases – diluted writing
- 22) Too much physiology – too many body parts

What is Passive Voice?

- Passive voice isn't a grammatical error
- However, it often inhibits clarity and diminishes action
- Passive voice is when the object of the action is turned into the subject.
- *The road was crossed by the chicken* – instead of – *The chicken crossed the road.*
- Look for a form of *to be*: is, are, am, was, were, has been, have been, had been, has been, will be, will have been, being
- *The city had been scorched by the dragon's breath.*
- *The fish was caught by the seagull.*
- Sometimes there is no subject and a sentence lacks precision.
- *Women were not treated as equals.*
- *Mistakes were made.*

What is Showing vs. Telling?

- You want to show 90 percent of the time.
- Characters do things that excite the reader's interest
- Story becomes more visual
- Reader feels he is learning moments firsthand
- Is the reader "seeing" what's going on?
- Can the reader sense the character's feeling?
- Are you naming emotions instead of conveying by actions?
- Is any character telling another character what they already know?

Examples of Showing vs. Telling

Telling – He was tired and took a walk. -or- He walked slowly.

Showing – He walked the four blocks as if it were the last mile.

Telling – Polly loved to dive in her swimming pool.

Showing – Polly hurtled from the rattling board and surfaced grinning through the kelp of her own hair.

Telling – He was nervous.

Showing – He tapped his fingers on the desk blotter.

Telling – Helen was a wonderful woman, always concerned about her two children.

Showing – Helen parked her car when she drove her children in the morning, and with one hand for each, accompanied them to the door of the school.

Telling – His hair was dark and limp.

Showing – Dark hair draped thin and limp on his shoulders.

Telling – Jeb was afraid and searched for his mother.

Showing – Jeb beat his way through the throng and threw himself into his mother's arms.

Telling – Her sleeve was on fire. Firefighters were on the scene and tried to tend to her shrapnel wound.

Showing – Two firefighters smothered her burning sleeve, careful not to hit the jagged piece of shrapnel.

Ways to avoid *Telling*:

- 1) Use dialogue.
- 2) Use the five senses.
- 3) Use description.
- 4) Use less adjectives.
- 5) Avoid adverbs (the -LY words).
- 6) Use more precise nouns. (cat vs. feline vs. tomcat) (soldier vs. sergeant vs. Marine)
- 7) Use metaphors (avoiding clichés).
- 8) Avoid SEEMS/SEEMED, FEEL/FELT/FEELS, NOTICED/COULD SEE – *He noticed Nancy coming VS. Nancy lumbered toward him.* REALIZED – *He realized he left the door open VS. He spun around at the cold wind on his back. Crap. The back door.*
- 9) Avoid IN before a noun – IN FEAR, IN TIME, IN LOVE – He screamed in fear VS. He screamed, his knees buckling.
- 10) Be careful of WHEN and AS – When he turned, As he heard...
- 11) Be specific instead of vague.
- 12) BUT...does not give you permission to overwrite (purple prose).

What does “kill your darling” mean?

- First, you love it . . . think it’s some of your best writing
- Second, it slows the pace
- Third, it doesn’t aid the tension
- Fourth, it can be cut out and not missed other than the fact it is darn good writing – you are seeking darn good storytelling first and foremost

What should your word count be?

- What is the norm for your genre?
- What is the preference of the publishers you hope to write for?
- You should write with a goal, but write to exceed it.
- During edits, you WANT to cut words and tighten, like cinching a belt

Why read ALOUD?

- Your eyes deceive you.
- Your tongue trips.
- You run out of breath on long sentences.
- You realize when dialogue isn’t clear who is speaking.

- Awkward phrasing sticks out.
- Passive versus active voice becomes more clear.
- Examples of text to speech tools
 - <http://www.naturalreaders.com/index.html>
 - <http://www.text2speech.org/>
 - <https://acapela-box.com/AcaBox/index.php>

What is a Beta Reader?

- A volunteer reader willing to give serious feedback
- A member of your targeted audience
- Someone not afraid to be honest
- Someone reliable
- You need three to five – more if available

Who is NOT a Beta Reader?

- Best friends
- Significant others
- Family
- People who are too nice
- People know you so well they can figure out your meaning

How to use a Beta Reader?

- Give to them when you are tackling big edits for second opinion
- Give to them once you've completed all your edits
- Give a list of items to pay closer attention to (your weaknesses)
- Optional, ask them to comment a chapter at a time
- Ask them for WHYS, not SHOULDs – they don't tell you how to fix
- Give them the book in whatever format they wish – DOC, PDF, paper
- Create an ARC on CreateSpace, if you like
- Give them a deadline with a cushion
- Don't freak at their remarks. Be glad you have them.

What about writing/critique groups and where to find them?

- www.absolutewrite.com
- www.bookcountry.com
- www.critiquecircle.com
- www.fanstory.com – small membership – also runs contests for members
- www.googlegroups.com – search for writers group
- www.yahoogroups.com – search for writers group
- www.internetwritingworkshop.org
- www.ladieswhocritique.com
- www.meetup.com – search geographically for writers group
- www.scribophile.com
- www.thenextbigwriter.com

- www.wattpad.com
- www.writerscafe.org
- www.myscww.org
- Library or bookstore for existing – or post about starting one
- Good place to find beta readers
- Nothing wrong with asking members of existing groups to join a new one with you
- Search Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and Goodreads for writers group

Resources

<http://www.quickanddirtytips.com/grammar-girl> - Grammar Girl
<http://grammar.about.com/od/words/a/UsageGlossary.htm> - Commonly confused words
<http://grammar.about.com/od/words/a/redundancies.htm> - 200 common redundancies
<http://www.voicedream.com/> - Have your work read to you online
<http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html> - The Chicago Manual of Style
<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/owlprint/539/> - Passive voice
<http://editorialdepartment.com/> Author of Self-Editing for Fiction Writers
<http://writingcenter.unc.edu/> The Writing Center at UNC-Chapel Hill

Finding a Freelance Editor

<https://janefriedman.com/find-freelance-book-editor/>
<http://www.the-efa.org/> - Editorial Freelancers Association
<http://thewritelife.com/how-to-find-an-editor-crucial-questions/>
<http://the-efa.org/res/rates.php> - Standard rates to pay for a freelance editor
<http://thewritelife.com/freelance-writing-rates-resources/> - 5 resources on costs of editing

Just about everything I learned about writing a good book I learned from reading lots and lots of good books.
 ~Joe Hill

I would advise anyone who aspires to a writing career that before developing his talent he would be wise to develop a thick hide. ~Harper Lee

Write something that people might not “enjoy” but will never forget. ~Chuck Palaniuk

The finest writing not only reveals true character, but arcs or changes that inner nature, for better or worse, over the course of the telling. ~Robert McKee

Never use the passive where you can use the active. ~George Orwell

Try to leave out the part that readers tend to skip. ~Elmore Leonard

The more subtle and elegant you are in hiding your plot points, the better you are as a writer. ~Billy Wilder

Don't tell me the moon is shining; show me the glint of light on broken glass. ~Anton Chekhov

Help for writers from Hope

There's something about being alone with your thoughts that makes ideas **pop**. But, alone at home it can be hard to find answers.

Find the **encouragement** you need to **keep the flow going**.

Let Hope help with...

- Writing Habits
- Writer's Block
- Character Development
- Editing Questions
- Publishing Advice
- and more!



Submit your questions here:
tiny.cc/helpfromhope

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