

Spiderwise's Tips for Editing your Manuscript v1

Helpful editing /writing tips for authors in the process of writing a book or who have already completed a manuscript.

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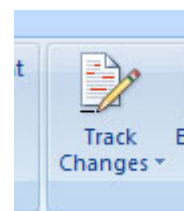
Introduction

The 'E' (Editing!) word can be a daunting one. Below we have listed some editing tips to help make the editing job a bit easier. Our tips highlight some of the most common mistakes we come across when editing.

Note: Our editing tips are best considered (or anticipated!) when writing your book. So, in a sense, editing tips are also writing tips, depending at what point you have reached. Whether you have yet to write the book, or have already a completed manuscript, we hope the following tips will help to keep you on the strait and narrow (editing-wise).

Tracking Changes

If you have finished writing your book and are about to edit it, then before you make any changes we would recommend that you either make a copy of your manuscript or turn on the tracking changes feature (if your word processor program has this feature).



This is a safety measure in case after editing you decide to revert back to an earlier piece of text. Also we find the tracking changes feature a very useful tool as it shows you in a simple manner what changes have been made and allows you to reverse a change any time easily.

If you have Microsoft Word, then you will find instructions on how to turn on / off the tracking changes feature by following the links below:

Microsoft Word 2000:

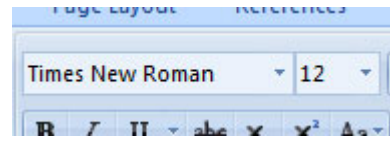
http://www.askdavetaylor.com/how_to_enable_track_changes_microsoft_word.html

Microsoft Word 2003: <http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/word/HP030829141033.aspx>

Microsoft Word 2007: <http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/word/HA012189951033.aspx>

Ensure that your text is correctly formatted

I would recommend the font be in Times New Roman at 12pt for editing purposes. Do not italicise your text, unless words or phrases (or certain sentences) need emphasis. Also, do not write in capitals, for this conveys the impression of shouting!



Ensure that you use capital letters only at the beginning of sentences, or for proper names, as you were taught at school!

Check that you have used italics correctly

- (a) Use italics when you wish to emphasise (i.e. draw special attention to) certain words or phrases, or sentences. (For example: I told the boy to kick the *ball*, not the frog!)
- (b) Use italics when you refer to the titles of newspapers, periodicals, magazines, books, and the names of ships. (For example: Whenever he sailed on *HMS The Endeavour*, he liked to relax with a copy of *The Times*, or his favourite novel, *The Comedians* by Graham Greene.)

Are your sentences too long?

Avoid writing long sentences. Short sentences are easier to control. The meaning can be lost in a long, drawn-out sentences (what we call ‘high tension’ sentences). Especially in novels, shorter sentences help the action to move forward quickly. Also, always use a verb in your sentences! Authors often think it’s fine to leave out the verb *is* or *was*. [‘Feeling tired.’] is not a sentence, unless it’s a part of dialogue. [‘The man was feeling tired.’] is a complete sentence.



The following is not a complete sentence:

So, hardly an encouraging atmosphere then, and not a very good foundation upon which to begin one’s education on the pleasures of the table.

The following is a complete sentence because it includes the verb *was*:

So, it was hardly an encouraging atmosphere, and not a very good foundation upon which to begin one’s education on the pleasures of the table.

If you are editing your manuscript and you think the sentences are too long and unwieldy, consider breaking them up into smaller sentences. (It’s like uncoupling the coaches in an overlong train! Make sure that each uncoupled part has it’s own ‘engine’—i.e. verb and full-stop etc.)

Is your writing overloaded with big words and adjectives?

Don't use too many adjectives. Even one adjective can slow down the action. ['We sped through the dark gloomy tunnel' slows down the action; it might be better to say: 'We sped through the tunnel.'] Also, do not try to impress your reader by the use of big words! You want to choose words and adjectives that will convey your meaning quickly and easily.

Punctuation

Do not be lazy when it comes to punctuation. Always ensure that sentences end with a full stop, or (if it is a question), with a question mark, or (if it is an exclamation), an exclamation mark. If you have a quotation in a sentence, the punctuation marks should be *inside* the quotation marks if the words are not an integral part of the sentence, as in:

A top window of the house opened and a lady shouted down: 'Used to come to school here, did you? We get quite a few come around to have a look!'

In this example the exclamation mark is inside the quotation marks.

The punctuation marks should be outside the quotation marks if the quoted words are an integral part of your sentence, as in:

The other truth that I had to face was that I wasn't much good at 'sums', especially 'problems'.

He told me categorically that I was '*not* to do that again'.

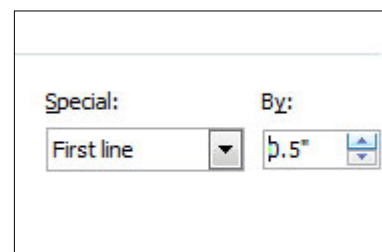
Here the comma and full stop are *outside* the quotation marks.

Paragraphing

Paragraphs should not be too long. It is intimidating for most readers to open a book and be confronted with pages of solid, unbroken text.

Clear divisions should be made between paragraphs, not necessarily by a space, but by indenting the first line of each paragraph.

Many writers make the indentation by using the space bar—every time by tapping about five times on the space bar. This is incorrect—you should use the tab key. In MS WORD set the tab for new paragraphs at 0.5". [Highlight all of the paragraphs that you wish to have the first lines indented. Go to Format menu and choose 'paragraph' from the drop-down menu. Then in the window marked 'Special' choose 'First line' and set the tab at 0.5".]



Look at the paragraphs under this heading. These illustrate the abovementioned method.

Spelling

Check for incorrect spelling. The MS WORD program may be helpful here since it tends to underline in red words that it ‘thinks’ might be spelt incorrectly. By right-clicking on the word underlined in red, the program will suggest the correct spelling. However, ensure that you have set the language in which you want your manuscript to appear—U.K. English or U.S. English. (Under ‘Tools’ on the menu bar at the top, select ‘Language’, and then click on ‘Set Language’ – and then select U.K. or U.S. English. (Further down in the drop-down menu you have other selections, like English (Canada), or English (South Africa), etc. If you are publishing your book in the UK, then clearly you will want to select U.K. English (U.K.))

Note if you are using a newer version of Microsoft Word: Instead of clicking tools menu the language that your word is currently set to in your manuscript should be shown at the bottom left hand side of your screen. If you click on this you will then be able to change the language.

Consistency

It is important to check that your spelling of words is consistent throughout the book. Do not use the word ‘program’ and later spell it as ‘programme’. Consistent use of punctuation is important too. Do not refer to ‘Mrs Brown’ and later to ‘Mrs. Brown’ (with the full-stop after Mrs). Always write dates in the same, consistent manner. (Do not mix different styles, like ‘July 4th, 2007’, and later ‘4 August 2008’.)

A second opinion

We would highly recommend that you also get someone else to check through your manuscript. Generally, it is better for you to ask someone else to check your manuscript for typos, for instance, since you will have a mind-set about what you expect to see. When you read, ‘Please give me a massage,’ your brain may automatically register ‘message’, which is what you wanted to convey. Someone else is more likely to spot the error!

Spiderwize Book Publishing

At Spiderwize we call our service “Assisted” Self Publishing. This is because we will help the author throughout the publishing process. As a Self Publishing Provider we can take your finished manuscript, professionally format it so that it's ready to print, design a great looking cover, assign an ISBN to your book, send it to our printers, and add your book to a US and UK distribution list. Your book will then be available to amazon.com, amazon.co.uk, Book Depository (Amazon UK Marketplace) and many more online shops and wholesalers. We do of this without you loosing control of your book production. You have input at every stage and you keep all rights to your book.

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