

# Self-Editing Checklist

## Give it a rest

Allow your manuscript to sit in the drawer for a while. It will give your brain a chance to rest and your manuscript a chance to mature.

## Identify your crutches and common mistakes - then eliminate them.

Work out which words and phrases you rely on a lot and which mistakes you make over and over. Then keep a careful eye out for these when editing.

## Read it aloud - and backwards!

Reading your manuscript aloud will make your mistakes much more obvious. When you've done a few passes, read it from the end to the beginning, so you're focusing on the words and not the plot.

## Do different things on different passes

Each time you read through your manuscript, pick a new thing to focus on - characterisation, typos, word usage, etc. That doesn't mean you can't still correct other things during that particular pass, but it will give you greater focus.

## Check for repetition

Not just repeated sections but over-used words or repetitive sentence rhythms. Try not to use the same descriptive phrases twice.

## Eliminate unnecessary words

For every word, ask yourself: "is this word strictly necessary to understand this sentence?" If it's not, remove it. If you think you've removed all the unnecessary words, check again! This will make your writing much tighter.

## Avoid Clichés

Check your work thoroughly for clichés. They're not as evil as some people think, but they're not a replacement for imagination or good writing. Don't use too many of them.

## Use software, but don't rely on it

There's loads of great software out there that promise to check your work for errors. They're useful and they can help, but they're no replacement for the human eye. Take them for what they are, make use of them, then check your work again yourself.