

Editing Review Sheet

Don't give your readers information – give them experiences.

- *Self-Editing* by Browne and King

☐ First Read Through Check List

1. Beginnings

- Check the implicit promise (you will see the world differently, you will verify your view of the world, you will be introduced to a new world).
- Character – do we care?
- Conflict – why are we here?
- Specificity – leads to credibility.

2. Middles

- Whose story is it?
- Who is the POV?
- What is the through line?
- Is there appropriate planning for the climax?
- Is there sufficient character development? (Beginning must provide enough so that the reader believes the decisions the MC makes and so the middle needs to provide lots of evidence and opportunities for change. If the motivation changes, it needs to be set up here.)

3. Ends

- Does the climax satisfy?
- Does it deliver emotion?
- Is it logical?
- Are the character changes appropriate and believable?
- Does it match in strength to the opener?

4. Determine **theme**. Does it match the story as is?

5. Verify that all **characters have unique personalities**.

6. Does the **hero perform the action** that resolves the conflict?

7. Does the **beginning hint at the ending**?

8. **Motivation check**. What does the MC want overall? Why can't they get it? Are the obstacles sufficient and interesting? What/How must they do/change to get it?

☐ Write a synopsis for the novel as it is. Is this what you want? Identify changes.

☐ Evaluate each scene. (See the scene checklist below.)

☐ From the above analysis, identify scenes to be added and which to cut or combine.

☐ Re/write those scenes.

Scene Checklist

1. A scene should accomplish no fewer than two of the following: advance the action, develop characters, add complications or raise the stakes, solve a problem, set up later scenes, or create atmosphere/worldbuild.
2. Apply the three O's to action scenes: What is the **objective**, the **obstacle** and the **outcome**?
3. Apply the EAD for reaction scenes? (**Emotion**, **Analysis** and **Decision**)
4. Do a **motivation check** for everyone in each scene.
5. Do a **stakes check** for everyone in each scene.
6. Do a **trouble check** for everyone in each scene. Too nice?
7. Do a **tension check** for each scene. Boring?
8. Is there too much expository at the beginning of each scene or chapter? Does it read like, "In last week's episode..." If so, trim it.
9. Verify that the ends of the scenes aren't all the same, that there is a mix of cliffhangers and rewards.
10. Is there a **hook**? Enough **intensity** and a **prompt** to the next scene?
11. Enrich **imagery** via the five senses and be sure to show don't tell and remember specificity lends credibility

☐ **Settings Check:** Is there enough? Too much? Have you used all five senses? Again, be sure to use telling details (specific and evocative). Make sure the **characters INTERACT** with the setting. Get a twofer by showing the personality of the characters and what the setting is like.

☐ **POV Check**

1. Are the descriptions things the POV character would notice?
2. Are there things the POV character can't know or wouldn't care about (i.e. s/he's just a tool for the author)?

☐ Dialog Checks

1. Must be essential to story
2. Must be from one character to another and not a data dump
3. Has to have conflict or tension
4. Matches style of character
5. Sounds different for each character but not too much slang etc.
6. Is compressed
7. Rich with subtext
8. Act it out, is it possible?
9. Eliminate dialog tags that explain the dialog content or tell emotion

☐ **Line Edits:** (These come last. You don't want to have to delete the best sentence ever written because it no longer fits the story.)

1. Do a **word analysis** and make appropriate changes.

• Watch for too many: had, very, suddenly, that, to be verbs, looked or seemed • Watch for too many adverbs • Search for emotion nouns (angry, happy, sad) outside of dialog and put them in action. George was angry. George punched the wall. • Watch for R.U. E. (Resist the Urge to Explain) where you	- have a great show but tell us about it anyway. • Cut filter words (She watched the birds fly overhead. The gulls soared overhead.) • Cut weak adjectives and add strong verbs • Do a dialog attribution check • Search for repetition, echoes, alliteration etc.
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2. Check for sentence variety (length and pacing).
3. Do a punctuation check and look for excessive exclamation points.

☐ Final Edit Read Through

1. Check for **white space**.
2. Check that **chapter lengths vary** and that the ends have a mix of cliffhangers and rewards.
3. Have you **read it aloud** to check for voice and smoothness?
4. **Foreshadowing** check, too much? Too little?
5. **Check for focus**. Kill your darlings if they aren't germane.

6. Repeat the keys points of the First Read Through analysis:

- Is the **implicit promise kept**?
- Is there **appropriate set up** for the climax?
- Is there sufficient **character development**?
- Does the **climax** satisfy both emotionally and logically?
- Are the **character changes** appropriate and believable?
- Are the **themes** maintained?
- **Motivation, conflict and obstacles check.** What does the MC want overall? Why can't they have it? Are the obstacles sufficient and interesting?

☐ **Send it out!** (For publication or just to friends, but please share. After all this work, you deserve that!)