

EDIT CHECKLIST

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Overall story

1. Make it clear at the beginning what the main character's goal is, and what the stakes are. Then periodically remind the reader.
2. Characters
 - a. Is every character needed, or can some be dropped?
 - b. Are characters given appropriate weight?
 - c. Too much time and attention given to insignificant characters?
 - d. Are the characters well portrayed?
 - e. Believable?
 - f. Complex?
 - g. Are they compelling and intriguing?
 - h. Any stereotyping?
 - i. Does the character have discernible motivations and obstacles?
 - j. Do they grow or change?
 - k. Are they better revealed by the story's end?
3. Plot: Does enough happen in the story? Does it start and end at the right time?
4. Is the story plausible enough to suspend disbelief? If not, why?
5. Is the pace right throughout the story? Where does it drag? Can key events/turning points be identified?
6. Is the story well structured, with appropriate weight given to different components?
7. Are flashbacks or back story details essential and well placed? Any of them unnecessary? Anything missing?
8. Any issues with chronology?
9. Does the end feel like the natural culmination of all that's gone before? Is there a twist that's unexpected, but hinted at enough to make sense?
10. Theme: What is this story really about? Should this be expanded on?
11. Are there unnecessary explanations? Omitted explanations that are needed?
12. Facts straight? Placement of people and objects, movement through space, time of day or season, and the weather, all internally consistent?
13. Does anything seem unrealistic? Errors in the way things are depicted? Any important details missing?

Scene edits

14. **Every scene should move the plot forward and reveal characters.** Every scene should have conflicts and obstacles. Ask of each scene:
 - a. What happens?
 - b. What changes?
 - c. Is the POV character worse off?
 - d. Proactive scenes: Goal → Conflict → Resolution
 - e. Reactive scenes: Reaction → Dilemma → Decision
15. Is the scene an appropriate length?
16. Describe the setting at beginning of each scene (establishing shot) and identify the POV character.
17. End chapters in a cliffhanger, a question, etc.—something to make the reader turn the page.
18. Add periodic details that pop out, something that the POV character would notice, and reveals the POV's personality. Rule of thumb: 3 details are as much as a character can remember. (Only 1 needed for background characters.)
19. Chronology: When is the scene set? What time is it?
20. What's the weather like? (if scene is set outdoors).
21. Adequate descriptions? Need to engage all the senses, make the scenery fill the reader's head. Don't get too wordy and obnoxious, but a couple sharp details will do the trick.
 - a. Use of light and darkness
 - b. Colors
 - c. Sound
 - d. Smells (<http://www.neversmell.com>)
 - e. Touch
 - f. Taste
 - g. Temperature
22. Look for spots where characters can talk about other characters (but don't add anything unnecessary)
23. Write character POVs in their thoughts and words. (Note: people often talk in short sentences and phrases, rather than in long drawn-out sentences with big words.)
24. Show (don't tell) more emotional reactions and responses from the POV characters, and their impressions of other characters' facial expressions and body language.
25. Beef out the dialogue. Include body movement, posture, expressions, etc. Not empty words like "she sighed" or "he scoffed." Find a great detail, a significant gesture, a sharp thought – something that adds to the story/character. Build on the tensions and relationships between

characters, and make the drama more poignant with their behavior and thoughts while they speak to one another.

26. Beats should be original, and help illuminate characters. Should fit the rhythm of the dialogue.
27. Pronouns are your friend!
28. Provide character reactions, including emotions. When something is said or done to a character that is out of the ordinary, have the character respond. Don't forget to show the responses of characters before moving on with the plot.
29. Show, don't tell (except when needed for brevity and to rush past boring parts)

Sentence edits

30. Language should be crisp and clear, not drawing attention to itself but occasionally beautiful. Should be consistent with the POV character.
31. Limit passive voice and adverbs.
32. Limit narrative summary (but don't eliminate entirely)
33. Does any wording need changing?
34. Search for cliches and remove or replace (*Autocrit*)
35. Repeated words? (*Autocrit*)