

Self-Editing Tips

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COMPEL TRAINING

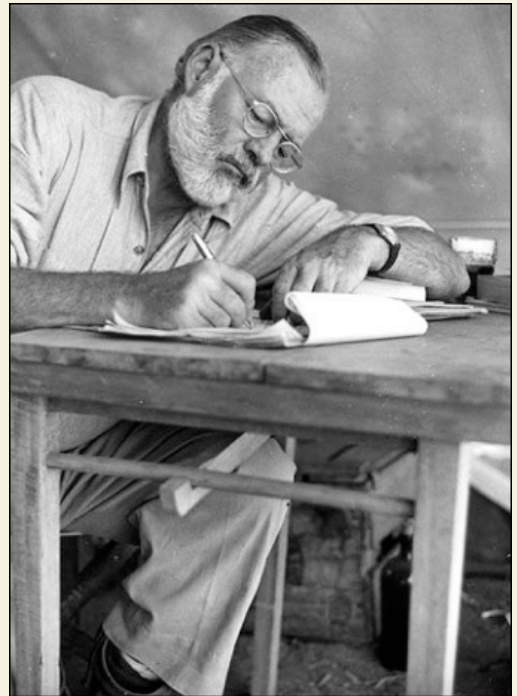
What is editing?

- . A stage of the writing process in which a writer or editor strives to improve a draft (and sometimes prepare it for publication) by correcting errors and by making words and sentences clearer, more precise, and more effective.
- . “What is editing, after all? I define it as taking pass after pass through a rough piece of writing until it has reached a level of refinement approaching perfection.” *June-Allyson Ieron, from Writers on Writing*

- “I have rewritten often several times every word I have ever published. My pencils outlast their erasers.” *Vladimir Nabokov*
- . "It is no sign of weakness or defeat that your manuscript ends up in need of major surgery. This is common in all writing and among the best of writers" - *E. B. White*
- . "Only amateurs don't rewrite. It's in the rewriting that writers bring ALL their knowledge--basic craft, technique, style, organization, attitude, creative inspiration --to the work." - *Gloria T. Delamar*
- . "Writing a first draft is like groping one's way into a dark room, or overhearing a faint conversation, or telling a joke whose punchline you've forgotten. As someone said, one writes mainly to rewrite, for rewriting and revising are how one's mind comes to inhabit the material fully." - *Ted Solotaroff*

Why edit, revise, rewrite?

- . Interviewer: How much rewriting do you do?
- . Hemingway: It depends. I rewrote the ending of Farewell to Arms, the last page of it, 39 times before I was satisfied.
- . Interviewer: Was there some technical problem there? What was it that had stumped you?
- . Hemingway: Getting the words right.
- . *Ernest Hemingway, The Paris Review Interview, 1956*



Writing & editing is like mountain climbing.



Zion National Park



Walter's Wiggles



Scouts Landing



The last 1/4 mile to the top



Angel's Landing 2008

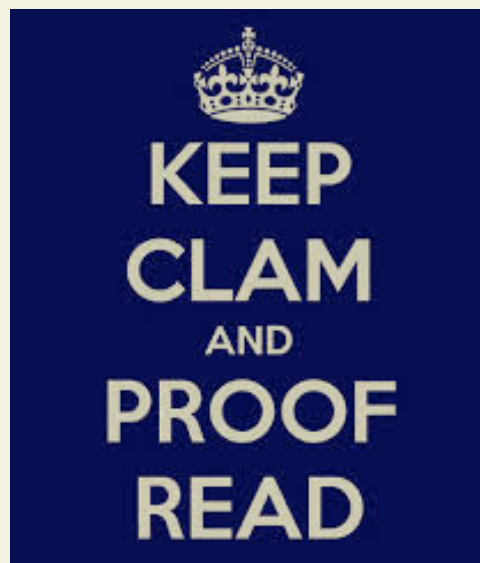


Getting to the top!

Time is your friend.



Trick your tricky mind.



Mountain Top View



Questions to ask

- . Does it make sense?
- . Do you take side trails?
- . Do you leave questions unanswered?
- . Is your main point clear?

Landmarks to watch for

- . Compelling opening.
- . Strong conclusion.
- . Graceful transitions.

“What struck me most powerfully when I got to Timbuktu was that the streets were of sand. I suddenly realized that sand is very different from dirt. Every town starts with dirt streets that eventually get paved as the inhabitants prosper and subdue their environment. But sand represents defeat. A city with streets of sand is a city at the edge.

That, of course, is why I was there: Timbuktu is the ultimate destination for edge-seekers.”

William Zinsser “On Writing Well” puts it this way: The first sentence of the second paragraph grows out of the last sentence of the previous paragraph; the reader is given no chance to squirm away.”

Switchback View



Tighten Sentences

A hurting heart can send us down paths we regret. It may send us running in search of something or someone who can possibly make us feel less pain. His mission statement lets us know that we can stop running and rest in Him, expectant that the person we always knew lives inside of us will emerge with His touch.

A hurting heart can send us **running** down paths we **may** regret, ~~It may send us running in searching for~~ of something or someone ~~who can possibly make us feel less~~ **to ease our** pain. ~~His Jesus'~~ **His Jesus'** mission statement lets ~~us know that we can~~ **invites us to** stop running and rest in Him, expectant that ~~the person we always knew lives inside of us~~ **our true selves** will emerge with His **healing** touch.

A hurting heart can send us running down paths we may regret, searching for something or someone to ease our pain. Jesus' mission statement invites us to stop running and rest in Him, expectant that our true selves will emerge with His healing touch.

Rewrite weak sentence starts.

Expletives are phrases of the form it + be-verb or there + be-verb

Using there is/are or it is at the beginning of a sentence adds nothing. Sentences with these adverb phrases become wordy, boring, and less clear.

There are many bird species living in the sanctuary.
Many bird species live in the sanctuary.

It is important to hold hands when crossing the street.
Holding hands when crossing the street is important.

There may be more than one way to solve the problem.
The problem may be solved in more than one way.

Cut unnecessary words

~~That~~

Remove intensifiers

really, very, quite, extremely, severely

Original version: This was very hard for me because I love sleep. My Doctor is very adamant about meeting each morning because His mercies are new each day.

Corrected version: This was hard for me because I love sleep. But my Doctor is adamant about meeting each morning because His mercies are new each day.

Exceptions



Really cute



Extremely cute



Very cute



Seriously cute

Eliminate qualifiers

- . a bit
- . a little
- . somewhat
- . slightly

Change passive to active when possible

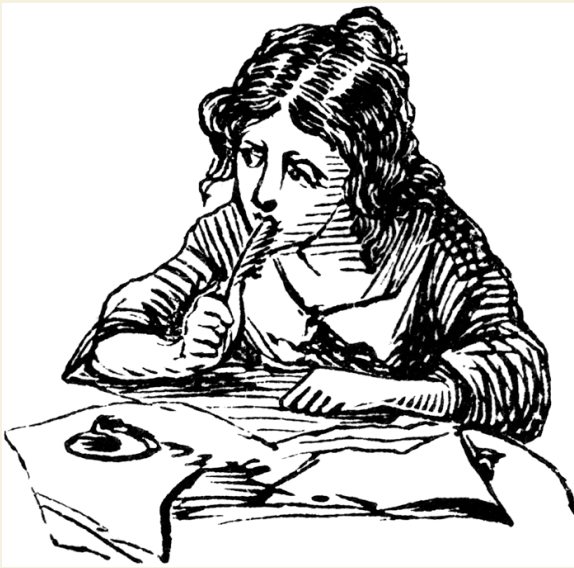
- . Passive: The book was finally finished.
- . Active: Snoopy finally finished the book.



Show instead of tell

- . She was cold.
- . She shivered and pulled her coat more tightly around her.
- . He was a tall man.
- . He ducked as he entered the room.

Add detail with a more descriptive word



- . Write vs scribble
- . Walk vs amble
- . Yell vs bellow

The Path View



*“I’m not a very good writer,
but I’m an excellent rewriter.”*

-James Michener