

# STEP-BY-STEP EDITING GUIDE

Adapted from a “Communications Briefings” Reprint

## GENERAL STEPS

- Set your work aside for a while before editing it.
- Edit only from a typed copy, double- or triple-spaced to make marking corrections easier.
- Be especially picky when reviewing your first draft. First draft editing should be about:
  - Deleting
  - Substituting
  - Rearranging
  - Inserting
- Focus on your introduction, but pay special attention to the overall sequencing of ideas in your writing.
- **Read your work ALOUD.** In error detection, the ear is more effective than the eye.
- **Read your work SLOWLY** to detect spelling errors and other errors that are not easily heard. Reading too fast will not give your eyes enough time to spot some errors.
- **ALWAYS** check your list of typical errors. If you do not have a personal list of typical errors, make one; review some of your writing samples and identify recurring errors.
- If you are not sure about how to correct a grammatical or spelling error, see a tutor or refer to a grammar handbook or dictionary.
- Let someone else read your work to identify any errors that you may have missed.

## ISSUES TO CONSIDER

### **Contents:**

- Is your thesis clear?
- Have you limited your subject sufficiently or have you covered items not directly related to your main theme?
- Did you leave out any main points?
- Are your supporting details adequate?
- Is your organization easy to follow?
- Did you answer the following questions related to your thesis: who, what, where, why, how, so what?

### **Brevity/Clarity/Vigor:**

- Have you eliminated all extraneous (**UNNECESSARY**) phrases or words? Weed out any words that add nothing to meaning (phrases which begin with prepositions often include unnecessary words).
- Locate places where you used long noun phrases, change these phrases to verbs.
- Have you substituted short, punchy words for long, showy words? Clear, concise writing is the goal.
- Did you use specific words rather than general words? Use specific adjectives, not vague ones. **BEWARE OF AMBIGUOUS PRONOUN REFERENCE.** If there is any chance the reader cannot determine what noun the pronoun refers to, substitute the noun.
- Have you overused parts of the verb “to be”?

### **Paragraph Strength:**

- Does each paragraph have a clear topic sentence?
- Does each paragraph deal with only one topic?
- Are the paragraphs developed in a logical way?
- Does each sentence in the paragraph contribute to the main idea?

- Are the sentences linked by transitional words or repetition of an important word or idea that reinforces your thesis?

### **FINAL EDITING AND PROOFING POINTS**

- Put yourself in the reader's place and re-read to be sure nothing can be misinterpreted.
- Check for accuracy of information and grammatical errors. Watch for these problems:
  - disagreement between subject and verb
  - sentence fragments
  - pronouns with unclear referents
  - pronoun antecedent disagreement
  - run-on sentences or comma splices
  - incorrect or inappropriate shifts in verb tense
  - missing end punctuation
  - showing open quotes or parenthesis, but no closed quotes or parenthesis
  - letters omitted or added
  - incorrectly spelled words
  - words spelled two ways in different parts of your manuscript
  - improper or inconsistent capitalization
  - incorrect indentation, transposition of letter (i.e. *form* for *from*), or poor spacing (i.e. *fo . b.* for *f.o.b.*)