

Eliminating Embarrassing Writing Errors

*“Writing without revising is the literary equivalent of waltzing gaily out of the house in your underwear.”
~ Patricia Fuller*

This is the polishing phase of your book. After the rough draft is complete in its sketchy form, you need to go back, reread, review and revise what you’ve got so far.

During the revision phase, you’ll be fixing more than simple misspellings and commas in your draft. You’ll be taking a fresh look from a critical viewpoint and honing your book so that it will be transformed from crude grammar and gaping holes to a refined and well-thought-out book to present for publishing.

You’ll be scrutinising your draft to see if what you’ve done so far is exactly what you wanted to say and in the method you wanted to say it (for example, with enough humour and detail) and targeted to the proper audience.

The process of reviewing and revising your rough draft into a final product is important and if you’ve never done it before, there are some things you should know that will make the task easier, faster and more productive.

The Process of Review and Revision

After you finish the rough draft of your book, you should walk away from it for a bit of time. You’ve likely immersed yourself in mind-mapping the outline and transforming that into a rough draft with notes, reminders and thoughts you want to incorporate.

+61 448 224 287

sue@authoracademy.com.au

www.authoracademy.com.au

Stepping back for a while will give you a fresh new perspective on what you've accomplished so far and make the revision process much easier. It's up to you how long you wait before tackling review and revision. For some, a few hours are enough and for others, it could take a day, week or even a month.

Proofreading is one of the easiest tasks when it comes to writing; however, it is one of the most essential steps to ensure you look like a professional.

Here are some ideas that you'll want to incorporate in the various stages of the revision process:

- Read from a hard copy in the beginning. Most professional writers find that errors or problems tend to be seen on paper more clearly than the computer screen.
- Read the rough draft straight through. Don't begin making corrections until you've read the entire book through to refresh your memory about the big issues that you want the book to address.
- Focus on the big picture at first. Forget about the commas and spelling during the first few runs through the draft. Right now, focus on whether your book addresses the questions and viewpoints you want your reader to come away with.
- Spell and grammar checking. These days we tend to write on our computers and use programs that have spell check and grammar check installed within them. It is very important that you use these programs, however, keep in mind that they are not 100% accurate; they will not pick up everything. An example

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of this could be “they will meet later” should of course read, “they will meet later”. This is why it is important to go over your work more than once.

- Run-ons and fragments. Run-on sentences and sentence fragments are two of the most common errors for new writers. Please make sure that each clause is dependent and can stand-alone. Make sure that you don't combine two unrelated clauses into one sentence.
- Misspelling confusing words. It is so easy to read right past words that are spelled correctly however, are actually the wrong words when you proofread. Make sure you look out for these, the most common problem words are: your/you're, they're/their, affect/effect, advise/advice, lie/lay, and sit/sat.
- Punctuation and capitalisation errors. These errors can also be easily missed when you don't proofread carefully. Please remember that every sentence begins with a capital letter and every sentence ends with a period or other end mark. Remember to check for comma errors and correct use of apostrophes.
- Make the prose flow. Are there areas of the book where your thoughts wander or you're confused? If you're experiencing that, your reader will also. Be sure your text flows seamlessly throughout the book.
- Does your book deliver what it promises? The purchaser and reader of your book had a reason for choosing it over the other offerings. Perhaps it was a blurb on the front or back cover that promised information about a subject or process that interested them. Be sure your book covers what you claim it will.

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- Are your facts accurate? Check and recheck the facts that you present in the book to ensure their accuracy. Nothing can ruin your book for the reader than inaccuracy in the content.
- Does the book end properly? Your conclusion should tie everything in the book together and leave the reader happy that he or she bought and read what you had to say.
- Does it make sense? Finally, your book should make complete sense to the audience you're targeting. At this point, you may want to have another person who knows something of what you're writing about to look over the book and ask questions or comment.

You may go through several draft processes before you announce that your book is ready for a final review and edit. Some writers claim they can write a book in only one draft, but for most of us, it takes several.

Editing and Proofreading

You're approaching the finish line of completing your book when you reach the editing and proofreading stage. Editing your draft includes looking for phrases you can make more forceful and avoiding repetition within the book.

Proofreading is looking for commas and other grammar faux faux that can make a difference in how your readers comprehend what you're trying to say. At this level of book polishing, it's best to read the manuscript aloud so you can get the full impact of the words and the punctuation choices you've made.

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Time to Hire a Professional Editor

After you're as sure as you can be that your book is polished and finished, think about hiring a professional editor to pronounce it "finished." You can try to get a recommendation for an editor through another writer or a professional publisher.

Before you choose an editor, be sure she can provide samples of her work and that she has references. Although the editor likely won't be savvy enough to know all the facts you're writing about, she can make recommendations on glaring mistakes and style.

Remember that you don't have to take everyone's feedback as law. Make your own decisions on some feedback issues, but take every one of them seriously so that you can feel confident as you progress to the publishing stage of your masterpiece.

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