



Module 1 Exercise – Get ready to revise your book

In this exercise, the goal is to finish the first draft before you begin your revision. Below is a check list for you to follow:

- Step 1: Finish or write any scenes you've been putting off**

There are ways one or two scenes you know you need to write, but never do write until you absolutely have to. If you have any scenes you've been putting off, sit yourself down and write them now.

- Step 2: Fill in the details that still require research**

Look for places where knowing a detail wasn't necessary during the first draft, but adding it now will make the scene richer and more plausible.

Pick a day when you can focus, then start at the first missing detail and take them on one at a time until they are done. At the very least, write the information in another file so you can easily add it when you reach that scene during your revision.

- Step 3: Finalise any shaky character backstories**

Look at your characters and flesh out any missing histories or defining moments necessary to the plot. Now that the first draft is done, it should be clear who matters and who needs more oomph to refine their personalities or personal stories. You'll also know what areas or details will add depth to the existing story and character arcs.





Step 4: Decide on the final details or names

Sometimes you need to live with a name or detail for a while before you decide if it's working for the book or not. And sometimes, you change them mid-book and forget, so both revision (or spellings) exist.

If you have any names or details you're not sure about, change them now so you can get used to the new ones, and change them again if you still don't like them.

Step 5 – Do what you know needs doing

If there's anything you think is going to take additional time or effort, go ahead and do some work on it first. Maybe you know you're not happy about the setting, or you wanted to add more symbolism, or you think the book needs a subplot – whatever is nagging at you, give in and fix it. Filling the holes now will make the rest of the revision process easier.

Step 6 – Get feedback of your manuscript

Not every writer seeks feedback at the same stage (if at all). If you prefer to receive feedback before you do your revision, send your draft to your person of choosing when the draft is done. If you'd rather get the manuscript finished as possible before looking for feedback, then do your revision first. When you seek feedback is entirely up to you.

Know when to revise what

Unless you're one of those rare authors who can write and polish a book in one draft, you'll go through several revision passes between the first and finished drafts. How many passes depends on both the book and the writer, and you might do as few as two or as many as twenty. No matter how many drafts a book needs, you can make the process more efficient. For example, it doesn't make much sense to polish the text if you're still figuring out the story.





The goal here is to understand the most effective way to do your revision so you're not revising text you've already edited.

Early draft revision

These revisions take the most rewriting, so tackle them first. They change how the plot and story unfold, who the characters are, maybe even the theme, but don't typically affect how the text itself reads (unless you decide to change narratives styles, like past tense to present tense or first to third person).

Middle draft revisions

Once you've dealt with the macro issues, move onto the text itself. Middle draft revisions include issues that require rewriting on a smaller scene by scene level. These edits don't change the plot or story, but clarity or enhance how the information is conveyed to your readers.

Finished draft revisions

The final revision pass is all about the last-minute review, fixing the elements that have been nagging at you, or clearing up any messy areas. Most scenes require little more than a cut here and there or moving a sentence for better narrative flow.

Final draft polish.

Once the manuscript is working and everything reads smoothly, it's time for the final polish to put the shine on the prose. These edits that don't change the story, plot, or understanding of either, just how the text itself reads. The goal in this final pass is to focus on the copy editing and proofing.

Check for oft-used or repeated words

Catch any revision smudge





- Check the spelling, punctuation, and grammar
- Check any spellings or details unique to your book

- Mentally prepare yourself for the revision**

Not every writer dreads a revision, but if the thought of revising is daunting or even frightening, it helps to mentally prepare for the work involved, especially if you know you have a lot of rewriting to do. By the time the book is written, the characters feel like family, and anything you do to alter that family can be rough. Even if you enjoy revising, it's helpful to prepare for it.

The goal is to put yourself in the right mindset to have productive and effective revision sessions.

- Don't be afraid of the delete key
- It's the story that matters
- First drafts are for ideas
- Making the story better is a good idea
- Think macro until you're happy with the story

- Stay organised during the revision**

The goal is to determine the best way to organise your thoughts and keep track of what you want to do.

- Gather your materials: If you don't have a preferred method yet (or think your current one is not working), try one of these options:
- Software: Collect or your notes and critiques in one file (or folder) in your favourite program e.g. Word
- Ring binder and paper: If you prefer the more hands on approach, a binder with paper you can add to and group how you like it can be a perfect fit.





- Tape flags and printed pages:** If the idea of everything written and marked on the manuscript appeals to you, print out your manuscript and use different coloured tape flags for different aspects of the revision. Or you could use highlighters to mark certain aspects.

- Gather your notes**

- Put the notes into the manuscript file:** Copy all the comments you want to address directly into the manuscript, so as you read through each scene, you'll see what needs to be done.

- Create a master revision file:** A master file with a summary list of what you want to revise can provide a nice step by step guide to follow and a checklist to cross off when each aspect is done.

- Print everything out:** Hard copies you can physically flip through could be a better option for those who prefer to edit from paper.

- Use index cards:** A popular organisation method is to write out what needs to be done per scene on an index card, referencing page numbers or chapters. You can put everything on one card, or use different colours for each character or option.

- Gather your thoughts**

Revising a book is a lot of work, and being in the wrong head space can affect how productive it is. It's not uncommon to try to tackle too much too fast, and end up frustrated and feeling as though you're not getting anywhere (or worse – that you're ruining the manuscript). Take the time you need to be in the right frame of mind to revise your book, review your plan, and have fun with it.

