

Revision/Self-Editing Checklist

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Revision “Layer 1”: Story Content

Let the manuscript “sit” long enough so you can see it with “fresh eyes”

Read through the draft, asking the following questions:

- How does the story flow?
- How does it match up to the outline I plotted for it?
- Is there a clear beginning, middle, and end?
- Is anything missing?
- Are there things in it that don’t move the story forward?
- Where are things choppy or missing? (transitions, connections to plotted events, etc.)
- Does the story start “mid-action”?
- Are the main character, setting, and story problem introduced in the first 1/4 of the story?
- Is the conclusion satisfying and did the main character solve his/her own problem?
- What was my goal in writing this story? Did I clearly accomplish this goal? If not, what changes will help me “nail” my goal?

Revision “Layer 2”: Flow and Polish

Review for active voice, strong verb choices, minimal adverbs, consistent verb tenses, basic grammar and punctuation, spelling errors, etc.

Read the story out loud. Make an audio recording, if possible, then listen to the recording while reading the manuscript. Note any words or spots that sound rough or awkward, any words you may have changed while reading, and any other details that stick out to you.

For picture books, use a storyboard or make a book dummy. Ask the following questions:

- How might the text be broken out on the pages? (Typical PBs have 28 pages for the actual story.)
- Is there consistent action/conflict/pacing that will keep the reader turning pages to see what happens?
- How do I envision the illustrations might look? Is there enough action to give the illustrator something to show?
- Are there places where words can be cut because the illustrations will show what’s happening? What illustration notes will help convey that?

If you made a book dummy, read through it, noticing how the story flows as you turn pages. Are there pages with too much or too little text? (Note that some pages CAN have little to no text if the illustration shows the action, and that some pages can show multiple “mini scenes”☺) Are there places where shifting text to different pages (or deleting text) helps the story flow better?