

FREE RESOURCE

Editing workbook

Exercises for revising a full draft, chapter by chapter.

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This workbook is designed to get you thinking about your writing and to help you improve your draft. It can also help you draft a one-page, single-spaced synopsis.

This workbook is the revision process I'd suggest to any writer with a finished draft: start with the whole book, then work down to the sentence.

At the end there's a chapter tracker. Fill in a row as you revise each chapter so you can see the whole book at a glance and spot the chapters that need more work.

Notes from the first read-through

PART 1 OF 6

Structure

Look at the shape of the whole book before any single chapter.

Summarise the book in three sentences: the beginning, the middle and the end.

List each chapter in one line. Where does the story turn? Mark the two or three biggest turning points.

Which chapters do the same job as another? Could any be combined, moved or cut?

Does the ending connect with the situation that unfolds at the beginning of the story, or does it deliberately leave things open? What impact might this have on the reader?

PART 2 OF 6

Character

Characters carry a reader through a book. Check what drives them, chapter by chapter.

For each main character: what do they want, what do they fear, and what barriers do they face?

Where does each main character change? Name the chapter and what causes it.

Is there a moment where a character acts only because the plot needs them to? What would they really do?

Choose a minor character. What do they add? Could they do more, or be merged with someone else?

PART 3 OF 6

Chapter Outline

A chapter earns its place when something shifts. Look at how the chapters work together, then at one chapter at a time.

Why have the chapters been arranged and included in the way you have chosen?

How are they advancing the story?

Pick a chapter. For each scene, write its purpose in one line. If you can't, note it.

What does the point-of-view character want in this chapter, and do they get it?

Where does each chapter start and end? Could it start later or finish sooner?

PART 4 OF 6

Pacing

Pacing is the reader's sense of time. Fast and slow both have their uses.

Mark the chapters that feel fast and the ones that feel slow. Is the pattern deliberate?

Where does backstory or explanation interrupt the action? Could it come later, or be shown in a scene?

Find the place a reader is most likely to put the book down. What could pull them through?

PART 5 OF 6

Voice

Voice is how the book sounds. It should stay itself even as the story changes.

Read the first page and a page from the middle aloud. Do they sound like the same book? What differs?

Choose three words that describe the voice you want. Find a passage that misses them and rewrite a few lines.

Does each character speak differently? Cover the dialogue tags: can you still tell who is talking?

PART 6 OF 6

Line by line

Leave this until the structure is settled. There's no point polishing a scene you might cut.

Choose one page. Underline filler words and repeated words, then rewrite the page without them.

Find three general descriptions and replace each with one specific, concrete detail.

Read a whole chapter aloud. Note where you stumble, run out of breath or lose interest.

Chapter tracker

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After the revision

When you have worked through every section, read the whole draft again from start to finish. Note what has improved and what still needs work.

What is working now?

What still needs attention?

My plan for the next draft

Revision usually takes more than one pass. That is normal. Each draft gets you closer to the book you meant to write.