

Lesson 4: Self-editing Pro Tips

Week 4 Use self-editing tips

Every writer needs an editor. But sometimes, when writers are also editors, they know more about their craft than anyone else around them. Students will learn how they can edit their own work. Skills will include:

- Finding readers who can give thoughtful feedback
- A 3-step editing process
- Finding strong subjects and verbs

1. Review your assignment sheet (if you have one).
 - a. Does the story have a clearly stated focus sentence?
 - b. Is it organized so your reader can read it and clearly understand your meaning?
 - c. Did you start with action?
 - d. Did you use strong verbs?
 - e. Are people the subjects of your sentences (People can do many more interesting things than ideas can do, and your reader more easily understands your ideas when they see people doing those ideas)?
2. More self-editing tips.
 - a. Read your article out loud. Does it make sense?
 - b. Ask if you are showing instead of telling
 - i. Showing—create a scene with action
 - ii. Telling—summarize what happened.
 - c. Both are necessary and valid.
 - d. Pick simple words (2-3 syllables)
 - e. Check spelling and grammar.
 - f. Never fully trust auto-correct.
3. Find readers who can give thoughtful feedback
 - a. Your assigning editor
 - b. One of your organization's leaders
 - c. Someone who doesn't know very much about your topic.

4. Ask these questions.
 - a. Does it make sense?
 - b. Is it interesting?
 - c. At what point did you want to stop reading?

5. Resist the urge to defend your work.
 - a. Instead, listen to what they say.
 - b. Make changes to help your readers more clearly understand your intended meaning.
 - c. This is frightening. It takes courage. Remember, you are not your work.

6. Rewrite your piece.
 - a. Use the three-step editing process
 - i. Focus
 - ii. Structure (organized so readers understand)
 - iii. Strong verbs, people for subjects
 - b. Make sure your article represents your best effort.
 - c. Now you're ready to turn it over to your editor.

7. Homework
 - a. Download and read Editing Your Own Writing
<https://magazinetraining.com/product/editing-your-own-writing/>
 - b. Rewrite your piece and turn it in.
 - c. Homework is due on Thursday at the close of business in your time zone.
 - d. If you turn in all of your homework assignments, you will receive a certificate of completion for this course.

8. Let's review
 - a. Likable main characters
 - i. No superheroes—we write about spiritually mature people doing excellent work. It's easy to make them sound superhuman. Find a weakness that shows their humanity.
 - ii. No exposes—You are not trying to find and expose the sin in someone's life. If you discover your story subject has broken one of the 10 Commandments while you are writing the story, consider killing the story before you publish it.
 - iii. Show humanity (weaknesses)—Find what your story subject does well. Look for the opposite. Ask about it. For example, for someone who is active in ministry, you might ask when you do your laundry. Could be they don't manage their life at home very well.

 - b. Avoid happy endings

- i. Get characters to a safe place
 - ii. Show growth through struggle (purpose of a story)
 - iii. Leave room for more growth later
- c. Word count
 - i. Write paragraphs approximately the same length.
 - ii. From a previous piece, find the word count for 4 paragraphs.
 - iii. Add up the numbers and divide by 4 to find your average word count per paragraph. This number is personal to you.
 - iv. Use this to determine
 1. How many paragraphs to write
 2. Based on your assigned word count
- d. Outline your next assignment
 - i. Divide the assignment word count by the average number of words you write per paragraph.
 - ii. Reread your notes.
 - iii. Write your focus statement.
 - iv. Number your paragraphs, maybe 1 per page
 - v. Make a list of what to put in each paragraph. (Lead, focus, background, conflict, end)
 - vi. This becomes your outline.