

## SELF-EDITING CHECKLIST

### What exactly is editing?

Editing is revising or correcting a document to make it more comprehensible for the reader. Before submitting any written work, it is always a good idea to first do self-editing, even when there are people other than the writer to do the final editing and proofreading.

The following are general guidelines to follow when starting the actual task of self-editing:

- Editing should be done with the hard copy of the written work. A different form usually gives a different perspective and simple errors that can go unseen on the computer screen become very noticeable on paper.
- There should be an interval of time between finishing the writing and starting the editing. The longer the length of time, the more objective and open-minded one can be towards the writing.
- The document should be read at least twice, first, silently, to determine the general readability and fluency; and second, out loud, to detect any inaccuracies in language or expression.
- Where applicable, blocks of texts can be reduced by using tables or graphics. This is a compact way to convey information and it often emphasizes the main point better than the written text.

### Checklist for a more thorough editing:

#### For organization:

- Every paragraph should develop a separate central idea; i.e. every paragraph should have its own topic sentence and the paragraph should only develop or explain that central idea.
- A new paragraph should not be written just because the current one seems too long. One-sentence paragraphs should be avoided. Each paragraph should ideally have at least three sentences.
- The thesis should be clearly stated at or by the end of the introduction. It should also be followed throughout the paper.
- Check transitions. (But first **remember**: careful organization and strong expressions make the best transitions. When one point or action follows logically from another, connectors may not be necessary to convey the correct meaning).

Do the paragraphs flow into each other, one following the other in a logical way?

Does every sentence in each paragraph flow logically into the other?

Do the transitions (both between sentences and between paragraphs) help connect ideas?

Is there a more appropriate connector that may be used? Or, can a different connector be used to bring variety?

### **For language:**

People have a tendency to repeat the same mistakes; therefore, typical mistakes should be focused on. Finding out what errors come up more frequently and/or repeatedly and learning how to fix those errors can prevent a great number of them. Some focal points are:

- **Tense agreement:** Check to see if the tense appropriate for the writing has been used. A tutor can be consulted if necessary. Using a variety of tenses should be avoided unless really necessary. For instance, if the writing requires present tenses, the writer should alternate between present simple, present continuous and present perfect-but use mostly present simple.
- **Subject / verb agreement:** Find the main verb in each sentence. Then, match the verb to its subject. If the subject is singular, the verb needs to be singular too. If the subject is plural, the verb needs to be plural too.
- **Pronoun reference / agreement:** Skim the paper. Stop at each pronoun. (Look especially at: *it, this, they, their, and them.*) Search for the noun that the pronoun replaces. If there is no noun, change the pronoun or insert a noun prior to the use of the pronoun. If there is a noun, check if it agrees in number and person with the pronoun.
- **Parallel structures:** Skim the paper. Stop at key words that signal parallel structures (especially; *and, or, not only...but also, either...or, neither...nor, both...and*). Make sure that items (adjectives, nouns phrases etc.) are in the same grammatical form (except: *Not only* + sentence in question order, *but also* + sentence in sentence order)

### **For mechanics:**

Another point to be aware of while editing is the mechanical aspect of the writing; that is, any possible spelling or punctuation mistakes. Here are some points to consider:

- Check to see if every sentence has ended with a period (.), question mark (?), or exclamation point (!).
- Check to see if a period has been used after abbreviations.
- Check to see if compound sentences have been separated with a comma (,). If not, skim for conjunctions (*and, but, for, or, nor, so and yet*). If there is a complete sentence on each side of the conjunction, place a comma before the conjunction.
- Check for *capitalized* names of *persons, cities, countries, streets and titles*.
- Check to see if a quotation has been capitalized according to the original and according to the needs of the sentence.