

EDITING

Once you've "finished" writing a paper – written the introduction, the body, the conclusion, the required minimum number of words, etc. – you may feel that you've got nothing left to do but run spell-check, submit the paper and await your professor's response. Unfortunately, what spell-check can't discern is:

1. How readers might think or feel when they read the essay
2. Where readers might become confused, annoyed, bored, or distracted

Anticipating those responses is the job of an editor — the job you take on as you edit your own work.

EDITING CHECKLIST:

(Following is a self-editing checklist. When unsure, reference the corresponding Writing Center handouts.)

Overall:

- Have you reread the assignment to make sure you've answered all parts adequately?
- Is your thesis clear, specific, and arguable?
- Does it provide a straightforward outline for the rest of the paper?
- Is the tone and language of your assignment appropriate for the intended audience?
- Do the body paragraphs have topic sentences that summarize the main point and content of the paragraph and correspond to the thesis statement?
- Do you use concrete details and examples to support your claims AND explain how that evidence supports your claims?
- Do you use effective transitions to move between paragraphs and ideas? Readers shouldn't have to make their own jumps in logic; use transitions and topic sentences to guide them through the paper.

Sentence Structure:

- Have you varied sentence structure and length?
- Have you reviewed each sentence to eliminate run-ons, fragments, and comma splices?
- Are parallel ideas expressed in parallel form?
- Have you eliminated dangling, unclear, or awkward modifiers?
- Have you tried to eliminate wordiness by removing unnecessary words such as "a lot," or "really"?

(Continued on reverse side)

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Additional online resources can be found at www.madonna.edu/owl

Grammar and Usage:

- Do all of your verbs agree with their subjects? Double check long, complex sentences.
- Do your pronouns have clear and correct referents?
- Have you eliminated any unintentional or incorrect shifts in tense?
- Is your paper properly punctuated? Review usage rules, especially for semi colons, if you're at all unclear.
- Are all of your quotes and paraphrases properly introduced and explained? Are they correctly cited both within the text and in a Works Cited or References page?
- Are all of your words spelled correctly? Be especially careful of homonyms like your/you're, to/too/two and there/their/ they're.
- Is your writing direct, concise, and precise? Do you repeat the same word or phrase too often?
- Have you replaced "to be" verbs (be, been, is, are, were, was) with stronger, active verbs?
- Do you use passive voice only where appropriate (such as in scientific papers), relying instead on active voice to increase directness?
- Have you eliminated jargon, slang, clichés, and euphemisms in favor of more precise language?
- Have you eliminated repetition and redundancies? Read each sentence and ask yourself if it introduces a new information, ideas, or analysis. If it is simply restating old information, rewrite it or delete it.