



We use the word edit a lot these days. We edit our closet, our wardrobe, our life. What we mean is we are getting rid of stuff. That is exactly how to think of editing your writing: rid each sentence of what is not needed. Keep what works.

Authors spend time creating beautiful sentences. The perfect noun, the perfect verb, simile, metaphor, alliteration, hyperbole, analogy, adverbs, adjectives, etc. are tools writers use to create something memorable. But they don't use them all at once.

"The grand mansion stood stoically on the hill, shining like a ripe cranberry amid the aspen and pines" becomes "The house was scarlet, like my mother's favorite lipstick."

The most important thing is to edit like you are in charge, not like the story is in charge of you.

Knowing grammar is essential. The less an editor has to work on your piece, the more appealing it is to a literary agent/acquisitions editor.

Here is our 5 Step Process for Self-Editing:

1. Partly edit as you go. Write quota. Next day read it aloud and make some changes. Write quota. Repeat.
2. Finished draft; put it away. Go celebrate.
3. Come back to it FRESH. View it as a reader. Make changes.
4. Repeat steps 2 and 3 until it is perfect.
5. Finally go through line by line to edit punctuation.

Then, realize that it will never be perfect. You will read it a day after it is published and see things you would change. See our checklist section for a list of what to edit.

Your Assignment: Chant these words before you write: Simplify, Simplify, Simplify. Clarify, Clarify, Clarify.