

Revising and Editing Fiction Worksheet

This is the worksheet for June's seminar, which you can find in video, audio and transcript forms at: www.writershuddle.com/seminars/june2013.

Revising vs Editing

It's up to you what terms you use, but it's useful to distinguish between *revising* (major changes like cutting characters and fixing plot holes) and *editing* (minor changes like rewriting sentences and fixing typos).

Revising

When you're going from Draft 1 → Draft 2, look at:

- **Characters** – do you need to cut some, add backstory, change characterisation?
- **Plot** – check for false tangents, repetitive scenes, and plot holes.
- **Setting** – relocate dull scenes, describe the setting (but don't go overboard).

Changes will often have a knock-on effect elsewhere – so it's useful to get everything rewritten before moving on to editing.

Editing

This is when you look at things like style, voice, and genre, making sure that you've nailed the voices of your characters and that your book is well-paced.

Watch out for:

- Places you can cut the text (e.g. the first paragraph of scenes).
- Repetitive phrasing (e.g. lots of "looked", "stared", "glanced" ...)
- Over-explaining: trust the reader to fill in the blanks

Exercise

Take a chunk of your own work-in-progress – such as a scene of a novel, or perhaps a whole short story.

Look first at the big picture. You might think about:

- Characters: do you have too many? (Or would the scene be enhanced by bringing in someone else?)
- Plot: does the scene further the plot, or is it an amusing but ultimately irrelevant tangent?
- Setting: does the location of your scene add to it – perhaps by making it more tense?

If you decide on any major changes, make those before moving on to editing.

Now, go through the scene looking for details. Think about:

- Does this paragraph further the scene? (Especially at the start.)
- Do I have “chit-chat” dialogue that needs to be cut?
- Can I get rid of any clichés or use more powerful words?

If you feel you haven't quite captured the voice of the character, try rewriting the scene in first person (if it's currently in third person). You could also rewrite it from the point of view of a different character.

Further Reading

[How I Self-Edit My Novels: 15 Steps from First Draft to Publication](#), by K.M. Weiland

[Ten Editing Tips, for Your Fiction Mss.](#), by Margaret Atwood,

[Clean Up Your Narration: Four Tips for Fiction Writers](#), by “FekketCantene!”