



## Self-Editing Checklist

Once your manuscript is tidy and consistent, you're ready for a more focused self-edit. This isn't about perfection. It's about strengthening what's already there, smoothing the rough edges, and making sure the story reads the way you intended. Think of this stage as giving the book its final shape before anyone else sees it.

### A Quick Prompt to Get You Started

Choose one chapter, ideally one from the middle, and read it as if you didn't write it.

Ask yourself: *Does this feel like the book I meant to write?*

That question will guide the whole checklist.

#### Structure and Flow

- **Does each chapter have a clear purpose?**
- **Do scenes begin and end cleanly?**
- **Are there any slow patches or rushed sections?**
- **Does the order of events feel natural?**
- **Are transitions smooth, or do they jump?**

#### Characters

- **Are character motivations clear?**
- **Do they behave consistently?**
- **Does each major character have a distinct voice?**
- **Are there characters who disappear without reason?**
- **Do relationships develop in a believable way?**

## Dialogue

- **Does it sound natural when read aloud?**
- **Is it doing work (revealing character, moving the story)?**
- **Are there long stretches that need trimming?**
- **Are dialogue tags and beats clear but unobtrusive?**

## Description and Detail

- **Are you giving the reader the right details, not all the details?**
- **Is the description restrained and purposeful?**
- **Do settings feel consistent from scene to scene?**
- **Are there repeated phrases or overused words?**

## Pacing

- **Does the story slow down where it should?**
- **Does it speed up at the right moments?**
- **Are there chapters that feel too long or too short?**
- **Does the tension rise and fall in a satisfying way?**

## Language and Clarity

- **Are sentences clean and easy to follow?**
- **Are there places where you can simplify without losing meaning?**
- **Is your tone consistent throughout?**
- **Are there clichés or filler words you can cut?**

## Continuity

- **Do names, ages, and details stay consistent?**
- **Does the timeline make sense from start to finish?**
- **Are there unresolved threads you meant to return to?**
- **Do objects, injuries, or promises appear and disappear accidentally?**

## A Simple Exercise

Pick a chapter and highlight:

- **green** for sentences that feel strong
- **yellow** for sentences that need a tweak

- **red** for anything that needs rewriting or cutting

You'll see very quickly where the chapter is solid and where it needs attention.

### **A Final Thought**

Self-editing isn't about being harsh. It's about being clear. You're shaping the book into the version you always meant it to be, nothing more, nothing less.

For many writers, editing is the stage they want to avoid. It can feel daunting, slow, or simply less exciting than drafting. But it's a necessary part of the process, especially if you're self-publishing. A thoughtful self-edit not only strengthens your manuscript, it also makes any external editing more focused, efficient, and successful