

## Self-Editing Advice

[www.theflashfictionpress.org/some-advice-about-editing-your-own-work/](http://www.theflashfictionpress.org/some-advice-about-editing-your-own-work/)

Editing your own work is a much harder task than editing others'. You know what you wrote, you know what you meant. This makes it much easier to skip over a passage that will be unclear to others. So you omit that comma, join phrase after phrase into one long sentence, do one of the myriad things that makes your work harder to read. And less likely to be accepted for publication.

**\*Read and reread your work.** So, it's once through to catch typos and then send it off because you are eager for the world to see your fine prose. This more than likely will get your piece rejected by a tired editor who does not have time to wade through punctuation and grammar errors, let alone run on sentences and the like. There are always a lot of submissions waiting. The ones with few errors are usually those accepted.

**\*Read using sub-vocalization.** If you read your work like you normally read, it is very easy to gloss over mistakes. Sub-vocalization makes you slow down and makes you go word by word. The final check is best done by reading aloud, as if you were reading a story to a child at bedtime.

**\*Be ruthless in the use of your delete key.** If you can get the meaning across with fewer words, then fewer words is better. Just because you wrote it initially doesn't mean it is written in stone.

**\*Vary the length of sentences.**

**\*When** you have a sentence of many phrases, it is usually better to use more than one sentence.

**\*If** you have a large solid block of prose, check to see if it might read better when broken into multiple paragraphs.

**\*When** you are reading using sub-vocalization, if you almost say a word other than what is written, more than likely that is a better word.

**\*It** sometimes helps to 'zoom in' on the page, making it larger. With the letters 3-4 times larger than usual, it helps focus your attention on just those words right in front of you.

**\*Follow** punctuation rules, but let the rhythm when you are reading aloud/sub-vocally be your final guide when using commas, em-dashes, and ellipses in order to create that rhythm for your readers.

**\*If** your knowledge is weak when it comes to punctuation, buy a book and learn the basic rules.

*[Punctuation for Fiction Writers](#)* by Rick Taubold and Scott Gamboe is my recommendation. The *[Punctuation Guide](#)* on the web is good for quick reference.

**\*Don't** be married to that favorite phrase. Yes, you like the sound of it, and it might even have been the initial idea for the story. But if it doesn't quite fit any more, hit delete.

**\*READ and REREAD your work!!!** If you read it through a couple times without changing anything, put it away. Read it again in a couple days—at least the next day—to double check. After all this and you are satisfied, have a friend—or maybe better yet, not a friend—read it over to proof it before sending it off.

**\*RE Passive/Active Voice.** I do not object to passive voice unilaterally. It should be used where appropriate, as active voice should be. For a good article about this subject see: [“Fear and Loathing of the English Passive”](#).

**\*Be patient** about pushing that 'Submit' button. You only get one chance before the editor hits his 'Reject' button