

6 Steps to Self-Edit Essays

Self-editing is an important step in the writing process. It is an act of finding and revising mistakes, and like every step in the writing process it takes time to develop. Learning to edit your own writing is important because it gives you a chance to understand your strengths and weaknesses as a writer, and this helps strengthen your writing skills in the long run.

1. Take a break from writing before you begin to edit your work.

Come back to your editing once an hour or day has passed. Giving yourself time away from writing will help you see your work from a fresh perspective.

2. Check the instructions in your assignment outline.

Compare the information in your assignment outline to your paper and note any elements missing. Focus your revisions on those, using your missing elements as a checklist.

3. Check your thesis.

Does your thesis match the assignment type?
Is it clear and concise?
Does it match the supporting details you drew in your body paragraphs?
Does it answer and explain your assignment question?

4. Check your body paragraphs.

Do you have topic sentences that work with your thesis?
Do you have evidence that supports your thesis and is clear?
Have you explained/analyzed how your evidence supports your thesis?
Is there transition between the body paragraphs?
Are the main ideas from your body paragraphs mentioned in the conclusion?

5. Check your introduction and conclusion.

Does your introduction introduce your topic, provide background information, and grab the reader's attention? Is your thesis at the end of your introduction? Does your conclusion restate your thesis and elaborate on why it is important?

6. Proofread your paper a couple more times.

After going through the above steps and making your corrections, read through your paper a few more times to make final revisions. During this time, ask yourself if your ideas and argument are concrete and clear, check your grammar (see '**Grammar Self-Edit**' sheet), punctuation, sentence structure, citation, and formatting.

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More Self-Editing Resources

Check out the **Self-Editing for Grammar and Punctuation** worksheet for more self-editing tips, and/or use the **Self- and Peer Editing Checklist** worksheet to go over with a friend. Both are available on the MHC Writing Support web page and through the Writing Specialist.

Need help improving your academic writing skills? Contact the Writing Specialist for support:

Online: <http://www.mhc.ab.ca/Services/AcademicSupport/WritingSupport>

or at the Student Success Centre located in the

Vera Bracken Library.