

## EDITING TIPS

### Line Revisions:

The key to line revision is to strengthen your writing from the start. The following guidelines are good to keep in mind when you are creating your first draft, but they are also helpful when you are going through and polishing your work.

1. Chose active verbs over passive verbs. Passive verbs are any form of “be” such as: is, am, are, was, were, had been.
2. Watch for “wasting” - Example: “She was running,” vs. “She ran.” Unless the action gets stopped in the middle, try to simplify. Example: “She was running when she fell and broke her arm.”
3. “Show, don’t tell.” Yeah, it’s a cliché, but it’s still true. Remember, your reader has five senses, and so should your characters. Use them. Describe sights and sounds, smells, tastes and sensations of touch.
4. Caution: be careful with your metaphors. Too many of them become distracting, and if they are difficult to follow, your reader will get stuck on them instead of following your character forward.
5. Don’t try to force emotion through text. Don’t rely on sighs, shivers, shudders, sniffs, etc. to convey what your character is feeling.
6. Watch out for “ly” adverbs - they are telling rather than showing. Use them only when necessary for clarification. For example: “He sipped slowly.” The word “sipped” implies slow. You can’t sip quickly - that’s slurping, or gulping.
7. Retain possession of all body parts. Example - “Her eyes rolled,” implies the character had no control over the action. “She rolled her eyes,” is a better phrase. “His foot tapped,” is better as “He tapped his foot.”
8. Watch for point of view shifts. Unless you are writing in an omniscient point of view, stay with one character until a break (like a new chapter) allows the switch.
9. Watch your tag lines. Remember the three “invisible” tags are “said”, “asked” and “answered” (or, “replied” if you prefer).
10. Check for consistent spelling of names and places. Perform a “search and replace” to make sure you always spell something the same way.
11. Have you verified all information? If you’ve used an actual place, an historical setting, real people, etc., you must be sure that your information is accurate. There is nothing more aggravating to a reader than to be expected to believe something they know is not true (like saying Disney World is in Los Angeles).
12. Look for the same word used too closely together and too frequently.

## Revision of Detail:

Revising the details is something that can be saved until the end, or can be done early on in the process. Look for places that lend themselves to added or more specific detail. Look for the opportunity to add or enhance sensory details.

Example: Start with something that looks initially good, but could be taken to another level.

*When we got home, we ate dinner.*

Now, add a few specifics:

*Later, when we arrived home, we sat down for a big dinner.*

That's better, but go even further:

*After the movie, we drove home, chatting and laughing. The aroma of dinner greeted us at the door.*

And even further still:

*After the Star Wars marathon, Carol drove us home.*

*"I want to marry Luke Skywalker," Cheri said. "I want him to sweep in on his x-wing fighter and take me away."*

*Carol and I giggled at Cheri's swooning.*

*We pulled into the long drive of our townhouse. The aroma of dinner greeted us at the door and we sat down for a meal of roast pork and potatoes, and key lime pie crowned with whipped cream for dessert.*