

LAST DRAFT: THE FINAL POLISH

1. Take out all side trips. If it doesn't further the plot, it doesn't belong, no matter how well written.
2. Flesh out the areas where you've been telling and not showing.
3. Take out every use of these words: very, causing, here, this, now, today, just.
4. Investigate every use of the word "it." There is usually a better word.
5. Investigate every sentence that begins "There is..." or "There are..." This indicates a weird point of view.
6. Investigate every adverb. Try to pump up the verb instead.
7. Replay carefully every conversation to make certain the person speaking is attributed correctly.
8. Take out all qualifiers: almost, kind of, nearly, sort of. Pump up the action, the drama.
9. Look for *anything* that might distract the reader, and fix it.
10. Make sure the reader is grounded in space and time at every jump.
11. Investigate every use of the verb "to be," (is, was, are, be, being, am, were) and gerunds. "He *was running* to the store." vs. "He *ran* to the store."
12. Investigate every use of passive voice, looking for the telltale "by" construction. "The ball was hit by the boy." vs. "The boy hit the ball."
13. Make sure every sentence furthers the story.
14. Make sure every chapter has a structure and is weighted at the end.
15. Make sure your opening grabs the reader and flows smoothly into the rest of the story.
16. Make sure your ending echoes the beginning.
17. For fiction, make sure your protagonist has an internal revelation separate from his external problem solving.
18. Make sure ancillary characters don't take over the show.
19. Take out clichés.
20. Be interesting with every sentence.
21. Vary the rhythm of your sentences—not all short, not all long.
22. Put a sensory image in *every* paragraph. Don't forget that we currently have five.
23. Make sure that the only thing that slows the plot is a subplot complication, and not description.
24. Can you heighten the tension? Tighten the suspense? Do it.
25. Have you answered all the questions your story posed to the reader? Double-check.
26. Omit unnecessary words.
27. In the final read-through, it should read like the wind.