

Editing your First Draft - checklist

So, you've finished your first draft...

What do you do once you've finished congratulating yourself and dancing around the room? Put the book/story aside for a couple of weeks. Then, after you've had some time to think, dust off the copy, read it through, review it and edit it.

A first draft is miles away from a finished product and I'm not one for sharing a piece when it is in this rough state. This first draft is for your eyes only. It's where you dump the story and characters out of your mind and on to the page.

A review of your first draft should involve checking the structure and content of the story. It's about examining the development of the characters and removing any unnecessary sections, and adding in missing materials.

It is not about (but do correct):

- Formatting
- Spelling
- Grammar
- Front matter (dedications)
- Tables of contents & indexes
- Images and diagrams

How do I go about editing my draft?

1. Print out a copy
2. Get your red pen at the ready
3. Ask yourself the following questions (write them down – you will need to refer back to them. Adjust accordingly for non-fiction).
 - a. What is my story about? (E.g. *Arthur the snail, must make his way across the garden bed, in order to find his mother*)
 - b. What is the theme? (E.g. *Family*)
 - c. What is the genre?
 - d. Where is it set?
 - e. Who is the hero/heroine?
 - f. What is the quest/problem to be resolved?
 - g. Who are the main characters?
 - h. Any subplots?
 - i. Who is the target audience?
 - j. What is the sequence of the story? What happens in each chapter and what characters are involved.
4. Make up a personalised edit plan for you book. (Template Checklist below)
5. Go through the checklist. Answer 'yes' or 'no' to each of the questions.
6. Make notes on changes you need to make to each chapter.
7. Start on the second draft.

