

# Editing & Proofreading Cards



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Warren Grieve  
Editor

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# Editing & Proofreading Cards



## 1. Brainstorming

## *Become an Editing Expert*

Try to write as many ideas as you can about a story you want to write OR try to write thoughts about different stories on the main idea you have. Start with one word, phrase or idea. Flood the ideas out onto the page, put down any thoughts or words that come, tease thoughts out of your mind by asking questions.... who, what, when, where, why, how? Don't worry about the order... just have a go. Keep trying and it will get easier.

Look at these two types of brainstorming:

1. 'Ship Wreck' (What different types of stories could be written on this?): pirates attack, ship drifts until hits rocks (modern or back in history), storm wrecks boat, large wave wrecks the steering, sabotage, find a shipwreck while diving or exploring on holiday, buried longboat in a swamp, stuck on a island, wrecked on a bare atoll with no food/water, wrecked on an island with little resources, wrecked and one group of people tries to stay alive by stealing off another, space ship wrecked on an asteroid, space ship hit by a meteorite.
2. 'Fire Escape Adventure' (Brainstorm focusing mainly on one idea/story topic): kids play on it, burglar, fire escape gives way, cat gets stuck in a railing, children chase each other on it, bird hits it and damages a wing, children climb on it at night, an escaped prisoner climbs up it, there is a fire and people have to use it, fire escape is on an old house/two storey house/apartment block/factory, children build a tree hut on it, children not allowed on it, children get hurt playing on it, use it late at night- spooky noises. (Plot Line Editing Card also uses this topic.)

*"Being on the tightrope is living; everything else is waiting. "*  
*Karl Wallenda*

## 2. Writer's Meaning

## *Become an Editing Expert*

There is a point to my writing - I can answer the question: "What do I want to say?"  
There is a reason I am writing this - I can answer: "Why am I writing this?"  
I can tell enough about my topic so that others can understand what I am writing about.  
I can answer the questions: "Who, what, where, when, why, how?" Do I stick to my message without going off track?

*"Never bend your head. Hold it high. Look the world straight in the eye."*  
**Helen Keller**

## Editing & Proofreading Cards



### 3. Writing a Plot Line

### *Become an Editing Expert*

Either:

1. Take ideas from a brainstorm and write a plot line (synopsis). Add details as you write. or:
2. Write ideas into a plot line straight away without brainstorming. E.g. Main plot idea: Fire Escape Adventure Plot line: Old two storey house- fire escape balcony around the top storey ..... children enjoy having adventures on it...balcony is rusty and old... squeaks ..... children go onto it late one night....covered in dark blankets for camouflage... past parents' bedroom window...down ladder...dad pokes head out... "Who's there?"...he is thinking a burglar.. kids freeze..too late...Dad orders them back up...meanwhile, a real burglar has been frozen on it waiting for the kids to go.....decides too many people around now and makes a get-away...Dad chases...kids throw blanket on burglar...tangled and trips... knocked out.

*"Success usually comes to those who are too busy to be looking for it"*  
*David Henry Thoreau (1817-1862)*

### 4. Writer's Voice

### *Become an Editing Expert*

How I see things is unique. My 'vision' is my own. What is it about in a few quick sentences? Have I written honestly? Have I put what I want to say in this story? Do I believe in what I have written? How do I want my readers to react to the story? To laugh, cry, think, be shocked, to see what people are like etc.? I write to make people feel what I want them to feel. Do they get my personality?

*"Whenever you fall, pick up something."*  
*Oswald Theodore Avery"*

## Editing & Proofreading Cards



### 5. Characters

### *Become an Editing Expert*

Are my characters real people? Have I put their feelings, thoughts, actions and reactions into the story? Introduce characters quickly into the story, especially your main character/s. Do I want crowd, group, pair or individual scenes? Main Characters: Do I have a main character that the story follows? Does this person struggle against people, one other person or against things (weather, disasters etc.)? Have I put people in my story who don't help the story along?

*"I have failed over and over again -- that is why I succeed."*  
Michael Jordan

### 6. Setting Story

### *Become an Editing Expert*

Have I shown the reader where and when the story is taking place? Describe the scene, things in the scene, clothes, research facts about that country or period of time that you are using, find out what events of history were occurring at that time- using some of these will put the reader in the 'picture'.

*"Great souls have wills, feeble souls only wishes."*  
Chinese proverb

### 7. Plot

### *Become an Editing Expert*

Introduce the plot straight away. Have I got a story that flows from one idea to another? Are any parts of the story not needed? Can I have two or more parts to my story that don't seem to be linked but gradually the threads of the different parts come together?

Always remember that striving and struggle precede success, even in the dictionary

*"A mind once expanded by a new idea, never returns to its original dimensions."*  
Oliver Wendell Holmes

### 8. Climax

### *Become an Editing Expert*

Do I have a part of my story, usually near the end, that is very exciting? Does the rest of the story lead to this climax?

## Editing & Proofreading Cards



*"Success is going from failure to failure with great enthusiasm."*  
Mark Twain

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### **9. Detail**

### ***Become an Editing Expert***

If my story is like a movie, which scenes (parts) of the story do not have enough detail? Are there missing pieces that are in my mind but not in the story?

*The grass may look greener on the other side...but it still needs to be mowed*

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### **10. Five Senses**

### ***Become an Editing Expert***

Have I used the five senses to make the story real. Sight : what colours, textures, shapes, movements? Touch: where are things felt by hands, feet, face, fingers, skin etc? Smell: what smells are in the story? Taste: what tastes are in the story? Hear: what sounds are in your story? Make your story live like real life by using the five senses.

*" Opportunity is missed by most people, Because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work."*  
Thomas Edison

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### **11. Choose a Good Title**

### ***Become an Editing Expert***

Have you a title that says something about your story without giving away too much? Does your title grab the reader's attention? Is it written in an interesting way? Your title is a signpost.

*" Don't talk about what you have done or what you are going to do, Do it and let it speak for itself."*

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### **12. Rhythm**

### ***Become an Editing Expert***

Music has rhythm and so do words and sentences. How easy is your story to read out loud, what is its rhythm? - This is given by the number of syllables in a sentence, where commas and fullstops go etc. Does it sound right? Does the story flow the way you want it too?

*" Every job is self-portrait of the person who did it. Autograph your work with excellence."*

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## Editing & Proofreading Cards



### 13. Cutting Out

### *Become an Editing Expert*

Are there any words, sentences or ideas that are not needed? I want to try to have a story that does not have any fat in it. What is in the story that does not help the plot (main idea) of my story?

*" Failure is not falling down; failure is not getting up."*

### 14. Speech

### *Become an Editing Expert*

Speech (direct or indirect)moves a story along with less detail. 2-3 sentences only for each character as a general rule. See Proofreading Card 5 for how to set it out.

*"Always remember that striving and struggle precede success, even in the dictionary."  
Sarah Ban Breathnach*

### 15. Change Order

### *Become an Editing Expert*

Sometimes we write sentences and put things in a way that is too long, too wordy, with ideas we do not need. Try using some better words and putting things in a different order. You may need to put different ideas in separate sentences. E.g. My birthday was today and I got some presents and the best one was a black mountain bike. I excitedly ripped the paper off my birthday presents. The best- a black mountain bike.

*" My imperfections & failures are as much a blessing from God as my successes & my talents & I lay them both at his feet." Mohandas Gandhi*

### 16. Improving Words

### *Become an Editing Expert*

Are there any words or sentences that are too weak compared to other parts of the story? E.g. He ran down the road.....becomes....He sprinted, gasping, down the street.

*" Kites rise highest against the wind, not with it."  
Winston Churchill*



## Editing & Proofreading Cards



### **17. Appropriate Language** *Become an Editing Expert*

Are you using words that make the right mood you want in the story? E.g. If you have a sad part in your story do the words and phrases that you use help make it a true feeling for the reader?

*Your mind is what makes everything else work.*  
*Kareem Abdul-Jabbar (1947 -*

### **18. Overuse of Words** *Become an Editing Expert*

Have I used the same words in the same sentence or in sentences close by? Do I need to change some of these words?

*"Champions know that success is inevitable; that there is no such thing as failure, only feedback. They know that the best way to forecast the future is to create it." Michael J. Gelb (b. 1952)*

### **19. Sentences/Paragraphs** *Become an Editing Expert*

Does each sentence have one main idea? Which sentences do not read well? Are they linked? Are the paragraphs linked?

*"He who has achieved success has worked well, laughed often and loved much."*  
*Elbert Hubbard (1856-1915)*

### **20. Starting Sentences** *Become an Editing Expert*

Do I use interesting words to start sentences or do I use the same word a lot?  
Sentence Length Do I have sentences of different length to make my story interesting?  
(When writing action or high tension scenes some writers use very short sentences - try it because it really works.)

*"The road to success is always under construction."*  
*Jim Miller*



## Editing & Proofreading Cards



### **21. Story Beginning**

### ***Become an Editing Expert***

Have I started my story in a strong way? Should I start it in a different part of my plot, in a different place in the story?

*"The secret of success is to do common things uncommonly well."  
John Davidson Rockefeller, Sr. (1839-1937)*

### **22. Ending Stories**

### ***Become an Editing Expert***

Have I finished my story in a strong way? Did I end it the same way that I've finished lots of other stories?

*"The most important single ingredient in the formula of success is knowing how to get along with people."  
Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919)*

### **23. Showing not Telling**

### ***Become an Editing Expert***

Try to say things in a way that is less obvious. E.g. John was angry- this is telling ; John clenched his fists (by reading the story the reader figures out that John was angry)- this is showing.

*"Every success is built on the ability to do better than good enough."*

### **24. Tension**

### ***Become an Editing Expert***

Have I tried to put tension into my story? When I get to tension pieces in my story do I 'pull' them out to the right length? I can create tension by introducing danger, having conflict between characters and by making the reader wonder what is going to happen next.

*"Scientifically a bee is too fat to fly. It's not aerodynamic enough and it's wings are too short. But why does it still fly you ask? Because nobody told him he couldn't."*

## Editing & Proofreading Cards



### 25. Similes

### *Become an Editing Expert*

Are there places in my story where I could use similes to explain things to a reader better or to use more interesting language? E.g. 'the sea pounced like a dog' (the sea is alive like a dog) Often similes use the words 'like' or 'as' in the phrase.

*"Failure is success if we learn from it."  
Malcolm Stevenson Forbes (1880-1954)*

### 26. Anthromorphism

### *Become an Editing Expert*

The fancy word for giving animals human feelings. You write the story as though they think and feel like us. Imagine you are the animal as you write.... see through its eyes, walk with its body, hear with its ears. The way an animal 'thinks and feels' will still be different to how a human thinks.

*"He had the deed half done, who has made a beginning."  
Horace*

### 27. Metaphors

### *Become an Editing Expert*

Can I use metaphors to explain ideas to a reader better or to use more interesting language? E.g. 'the sea pounced with saliva dripping from its fangs' (e.g. the sea is made to be a dog).

*"Up, sluggard, and waste not life; in the grave will be sleeping enough."  
Benjamin Franklin*

### 28. Personification

### *Become an Editing Expert*

I can make things more interesting by pretending that they are people. E.g. The tree branches reached out to grab me.

*What is written without effort is in general read without pleasure.  
[Samuel Johnson](#) (1709 - 1784)*

## Editing & Proofreading Cards



### **29. Use Cliches (Idioms)**

### ***Become an Editing Expert***

E.g. 'I drove my mum up the wall'. These help add colour to my writing.

*"The secret of success is constancy of purpose."  
Benjamin "Dizzy" Disraeli (1804-81)*

### **30. Overuse of Description**

### ***Become an Editing Expert***

Have I described something too much? Does it take too long to say what I'm trying to say? Do my sentences seem to bog the reader down?

*"Nature gave men two ends -- one to sit on, and one to think with. Ever since then man's success or failure has been dependent on the one he used most." Robert Albert Bloch*

### **31. Sound Words**

### ***Become an Editing Expert***

Are there places that I can use sound words? E.g. 'Pow', 'Wham'. Don't overdo it!

*"Many of life's failures are people who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up."  
Thomas Alva Edison (1847-1931)*

### **32. Altering Scene or Action**

### ***Become an Editing Expert***

Will I stop part of my story suddenly and switch to another thread or part of the story, leaving the reader wondering what is going to happen? E.g. Startled, Jane's horse reared above the snake. Jane felt herself slip sideways and plunge towards the massive drop beside the track. (Change of scene next) Jane's mother had felt all day that something was going to happen. A premonition. A nagging worry that pestered her mind.

*"I have heard it said that the first ingredient of success - the earliest spark in the dreaming youth - is this; dream a great dream." John A. Appleman*

## Editing & Proofreading Cards



### 33. Point of View

### *Become an Editing Expert*

You can write from three points of view:

1. First Person: You write the story through the eyes of one person. This means you will use 'I' a reasonable amount.
2. Third Person: You write the story through the eyes of all characters in your story. You pretend as a writer that you are the characters and you use their name/s.
3. All Seeing Eye: You write as though you are God looking down on the scene/s. Most of your characters will have the same importance. See things through the eyes of all of your characters, from their different points of view.

*About the only thing that comes to us without effort is old age.  
Gloria Pitzer, in Reader's Digest, 1979*

### 34. Tie Up

### *Become an Editing Expert*

Can you put re-occurring ideas, thoughts, words or images through your story. This will help it to feel linked from beginning to end. E.g. a theme of falling may be throughout the story: person into river, leaves off trees, rubbish into bin, boxes onto heads, fence collapsing, tripping up etc. The story may start and end with the same scene. The same emotion may re-occur throughout the story in different characters.

*"Be not afraid of greatness: some men are born great, some achieve greatness and some have greatness thrust upon them." William Shakespeare (1564 - 1616), 'Twelfth Night'*

### 35. Pace

### *Become an Editing Expert*

Stories should vary in pace. At times you will move the story or plot line along quickly and at other times slow the description/pace down to make your scenes more graphic. Different types of scenes suit different speeds.

*"Thought is the blossom; language the bud; action the fruit behind it."  
Ralph Waldo Emerson*

## Editing & Proofreading Cards



### 36. Texture

### *Become an Editing Expert*

When you listen to a piece of music you can usually hear more than one instrument playing, sometimes different layers of tunes (parts). When you are writing your story you can do the same. Are there different stories/ideas/scenes all running at the same time? They should be linked in some way but it may not be apparent to the reader at first. Have you given clues to your reader as to how they could be linked or do you want to keep what happens as a total surprise? -work out what is the best for the story.

*“The future is purchased by the present.”*

[Samuel Johnson](#)

### 37. Repetition & Contrast

### *Become an Editing Expert*

Do I have ideas/scenes that repeat ideas deliberately? Would it be better to have a contrast in mood, setting, pace, or colour?

*“The distance is nothing; it is only the first step that is difficult.”*

*Author: Mme. Du Deffand*

### 38. Sentences Together

### *Become an Editing Expert*

Are there sentences in my story that have ideas that could be put easily into one sentence and so cut out words that are not needed? Ask yourself, "What is the main idea in this sentence and in this other sentence? Can I put these two ideas together or not?"

*“Small matters win great commendation.”*

*Francis Bacon*

## Editing & Proofreading Cards



### 39. Writing Opinions

### *Become an Editing Expert*

When you are giving an opinion you take sides, you agree or disagree with something, you say what you think about something. Be careful to back up what you say with facts or written arguments that help the reader to believe what you say. E.g. The facts clearly show that whale numbers today of many species are very low, compared to the 18th Century. If we are to have such beautiful creatures in the seas in the years to come, then 'scientific' whaling must stop. (Underlined statements are opinions)

*“We live in deeds, not years; in thoughts, not figures on a dial. We should count time by heart-throbs. He most lives who thinks most, feels the noblest, acts the best.” Phillip James Bailey*

### 40. Project Writing

### *Become an Editing Expert*

As you write your draft keep these ideas in mind:

1. Put your notes in sets or sentences that belong together. Some people number each note that is on the same subject with the same number - then when you write you can put them together easily.
2. Cross out the notes as you use them in your draft to keep track of what you have put in.
3. Make sure your writing has your own 'voice' or 'flavour'.
4. If you have been taught to write paragraphs then write your draft in them.... it's easier to read. An explanation of paragraphs found on Proofreading Card 12.
5. Don't forget to EDIT. Are your ideas are in a sensible order? Ask yourself.. Which ideas should come first..second?
6. Don't forget to PROOFREAD

*“The difficult is done at once, the impossible takes a little longer.”  
Slogan of the US Armed Forces*

## Editing & Proofreading Cards



### 41. Spelling

### *Become an Proofreading Expert*

Proofread through for your spelling mistakes, circling any word that you think does not look right. Correct these and any others that you circled while writing by checking in the dictionary. (If you can't find the word in the dictionary you have probably guessed the wrong vowel near the beginning.)

*"Persistence is what makes the impossible possible, the possible likely, and the likely definite"*  
*Robert Half*

### 42. Fullstops/Period

### *Become an Proofreading Expert*

Each sentence should have a main idea, so your fullstops/periods come at the end of the idea. As you read under your breath listen for the pauses and drops in your voice as these are probably the places you will put in either fullstops/periods or commas. Ask yourself, "When do I want this idea to stop?"

*"Four steps to achievement: Plan purposefully. Prepare prayerfully. Proceed positively. Pursue persistently"*  
*William A. Ward*

### 43. Commas

### *Become an Proofreading Expert*

Commas help to separate pieces of a sentence and go where you want to signal to the reader a slight pause or slow down in the reading of your written work. Commas should also be put between lists of words. As you read under your breath listen for the pauses and drops in your voice as these are probably the places you will put in either fullstops or commas. E.g. When you started sawing Grandma woke up from her sleep..... this sentence needs a comma or else Grandma gets hurt!

*"Go forward confidently, energetically attacking problems, expecting favorable outcomes"*  
*Norman Vincent Peale*



## Editing & Proofreading Cards



### 44. Capital Letters

### *Become an Proofreading Expert*

Capitalize beginnings of sentences. Capitalize names of people, places and organisations. Capitalize Mother, Father etc. when using them instead of names. We capitalize to show we are talking about a particular person, thing, place or group.

*“We shall neither fail nor falter; we shall not weaken or tire...Give us the tools and we will finish the job.”*  
*Winston Churchill*

### 45. Direct Speech

### *Become an Proofreading Expert*

Speech marks or quotation marks go around the exact words of the speaker. Start a new paragraph for each speaker. Look at the examples below to help you, or use a book:

He said, "They won't be fooled this time."

"They won't be fooled this time," he said. "Sit down!" he ordered.

"You may go," my uncle said, "but I think it is risky." (one sentence speech)

"You may go if you wish." my uncle said. "Don't come running back to me, though."

"I don't know how many times I've told you not to let Fred feed those chickens. But do you listen? Oh, no. It's always, 'Don't listen to her, she's talking to the wall again.'

"I've had it up to here, Hemi." (Mum made the usual hand salute to her forehead.) "Next time I will send you to your bedroom."

*“Risk! Risk anything! Care no more for the opinion of others, for those voices. Do the hardest thing on earth for you. Act for yourself. Face the truth.”* Katherine Mansfield

### 46. Quotes

### *Become an Proofreading Expert*

When quoting from a book put quotation marks at the beginning of each paragraph but only at the end of the last paragraph- to show that it finally ends there. **Possession**

That is the boy's bat. (One person)

They are the boys' bats. (Two or more persons)

*“Stop the habit of wishful thinking and start the habit of thoughtful wishes.”*  
*Mary Martin*

## Editing & Proofreading Cards



### 47. Semicolon (;)

### *Become an Proofreading Expert*

This says that one idea ends and another starts that has something to do with it. E.g. Mary has many friends. Her parents are very rich. Mary has many friends; her parents are very rich. The second sentence, which uses the semicolon, says that Mary has friends because of her rich parents. The first sentence does not show this; they are separate ideas.

*“Even if you're on the right track, you'll get run over if you just sit there.”*  
Will Rogers

### 48. Colon (:)

### *Become an Proofreading Expert*

The colon (it looks like this “:”) says, "There is something missing from this sentence and here it comes." It usually introduces direct quotations or lists.

*“Ideas not coupled with action never become bigger than the brain cells they occupied.”*  
Arnold H. Glasow

### 49. Exclamation Point & Dash (! -) *Become an Proofreading Expert*

Use these to give more force to a certain word or phrase. Over-use can weaken your writing. You will note that the dash also joins words that are separate words usually but have been put together for a reason.

*“Anything you can do needs to be done, so pick up the tool of your choice and get started.”*  
Ben Linder

### 50. Contractions- the Apostrophe (')

### *Become an Proofreading Expert*

It is = it's  
there is = there's  
you are = you're

If you aren't sure that you have got it right then read the sentence saying the two words in the contraction. E.g. The cow flicked it's tail... means: the cow flicked it is tail - does that make sense?

*“Seek first to understand, then to be understood.”*  
Stephen Covey

## Editing & Proofreading Cards



### 51. Question Marks (?)

### *Become an Proofreading Expert*

Put these in whenever someone asks a question in your story. Do you understand?

*"Stand up to your obstacles and do something about them. You will find that they haven't half the strength you think they have."* [Norman Vincent Peale](#)

### 52. Paragraphs

### *Become an Proofreading Expert*

Paragraphs tell the reader: "Here is a new set of ideas or sentences." It marks a large break in your story. Pages with paragraphs are easier to read and look at, so you encourage your reader. A new paragraph is used every time someone new speaks. E.g. whenever you have a time gap in your story it is usually a new paragraph: .....  
John felt very pleased with himself. It was late that night before he could put the plan into action... (the new paragraph)

*"Hope is always available to us. When we feel defeated, we need only take a deep breath and say, "Yes," and hope will reappear."* *Monroe Forester*