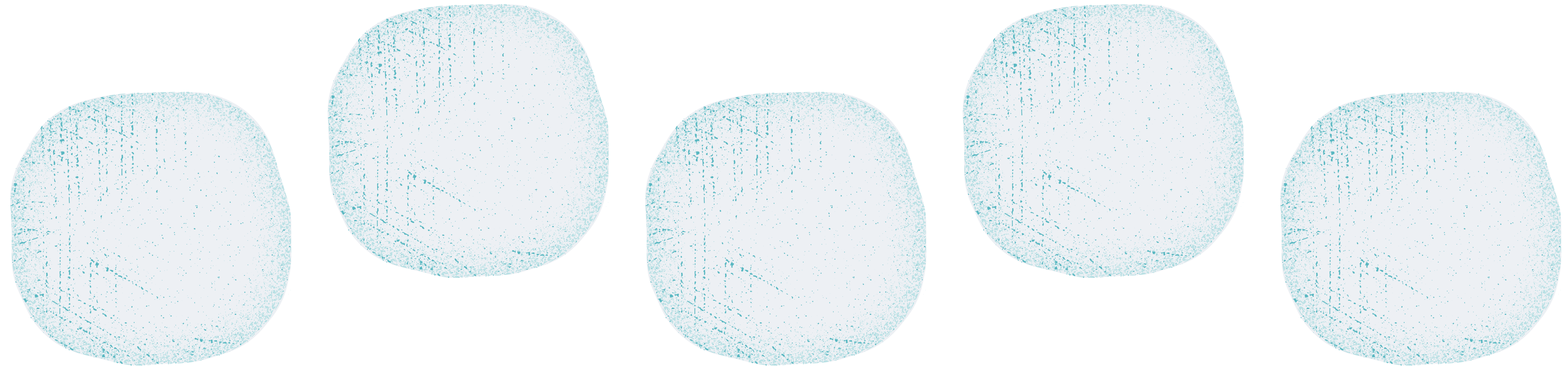


# Editing Fiction and Memoir

*Stepping Stones for Successful Self-Edits*



FALLON•EDITS

# Introduction

Hello, writer! \*waves\* I'm glad you're here.

Knowing when and how to start your editing and revision journey can feel just as daunting as finishing the manuscript may have seemed from the moment you wrote your first sentence.

The good news? The first step in editing is you!

Self-editing may lead to structural changes, deletions or rewrites of entire sections or chapters, moving chapters, changing the point of view or narrator, and reorganizing the story. The stepping stones in this guide are designed to provide you with a step-by-step approach to self-editing for the big picture.

## 3 Quick Reminders



**Don't overedit** a single passage or phrase. Mark it and go back later if needed.



**Don't get discouraged** by the process. Most writers edit multiple revisions of their work.



**Edit with the patience of a tortoise**, rather than the hare's haste.

# Stepping Stones

FORMAT

STRUCTURE

POINT OF  
VIEW

PLOT

CHARACTER  
ARCS

DIALOGUE and  
INTERNAL  
MONOLOGUE

PACING and  
RHYTHM

WORLD  
BUILDING



# FORMAT

Most editors (even me!) and agents want to see your work presented as professionally as possible for consideration. Make a good first impression by using Standard Manuscript Format!

Paper Set-Up	Font	Spacing and Details
8.5" x 11" (A4) paper size	Black font color	Double-spaced
1" margins all around	12-pt font	0.5" First-line/new paragraph indents
Last name, manuscript title, page numbers in header	Serif: Courier New, Times New Roman Sans Serif: Arial	Page breaks between chapters

**NOTE:** Always check submission guidelines for additional requirements or other preferences.



# STRUCTURE

Most fiction has a blend of narrative drivers that move the story, but one must emerge as primary to set reader expectations. Use the table below to confirm that the story you started writing is the story you finished.

Primary Driver	Story Starts When...	Story Ends When...	Conflicts Occur When...
<b>Milieu</b> the environment, setting, or atmosphere	a character enters a place	a character exits a place	the character tries to leave (thwarted escape, lures, etc.)
<b>Idea</b> a question or mystery	a character has a question	the character answers the question	the character cannot answer the question (lies, red herring, etc.)
<b>Character</b> the transformation of the character's role within the community	a character has a shift in identity	a character solidifies their self-definition	the character tries to change (self-doubt, backfiring change, etc.)
<b>Event</b> external problems or catastrophes	the status quo is disrupted	a new status quo is reached or the previous status quo is restored	the character(s) try to restore order or set the new status quo



# POINT OF VIEW

Point of view is both the perspective the story is told from and the distance of the narrator. Use the table below to review the point of view in your story.

Genre	Common Perspectives	Common Narrative Distance
Young and New Adult	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1st (I/my)</li> <li>• 3rd (he/she/they)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Close</li> </ul>
Adult	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3rd (he/she/they)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Close</li> <li>• Distant</li> <li>• Omniscient</li> </ul>
Romance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3rd (he/she/they)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Close</li> </ul>
Speculative (sci-fi and fantasy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1st (I/my)</li> <li>• 3rd (he/she/they)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Close</li> <li>• Distant</li> <li>• Omniscient</li> </ul>
Mystery and Thriller	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3rd (he/she/they)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Close</li> <li>• Distant</li> </ul>
Literary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3rd (he/she/they)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distant</li> <li>• Omniscient</li> </ul>



# PLOT

Story plot is the sequence of events that make up the narrative of a novel, including the build up to the climax and the wind down to resolution. Refer to the table below for major plot points and what's typically included.

Plot Point	What to include:
Beginning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hook the reader with a question</li><li>• Spark an emotion for reader-character bonding</li></ul>
Inciting Incident	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A life-changing event that pulls the character(s) into the story</li></ul>
Learning Curve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Trials</li><li>• Triumphs</li><li>• Failures</li></ul>
Middle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increase in conflict and stakes</li><li>• Tie up old subplots or introduce new subplots</li><li>• Introduce new characters</li></ul>
Climax	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Main character should reach lowest point and be forced to make a change: formulate a new plan to move forward</li><li>• Main character either wins or loses</li></ul>
Resolution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tie up all loose ends: happily ever after; completion of journey; crime/mystery solved</li><li>• Set up the next novel (if series)</li></ul>



# CHARACTER ARCS

The evolution of character is at the heart of a good story, and needs change. Whether spiritual, emotional, or intellectual, your character(s) starts somewhere and ends elsewhere. Refer to the table below for an outline of four common character arcs, including their major parts.

ARC TYPE	3-Act	7-Point	Hero's Journey	In Medias Res
<b>MAJOR POINTS</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Set up to introduce main characters and establish setting</li> <li>2. Confront small but complex problem</li> <li>3. Resolution: stakes, challenges, growth, and solution</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Protagonist's starting place</li> <li>2. Conflict moves story to midpoint</li> <li>3. Pressure on protagonist</li> <li>4. Midpoint and protagonist's response to conflict and action</li> <li>5. More pressure on protagonist</li> <li>6. Conflict moves story from midpoint to end</li> <li>7. Climax (contrasts starting place)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The call to adventure</li> <li>2. Threshold</li> <li>3. Mentorship</li> <li>4. Revelation</li> <li>5. Transformation</li> <li>6. Atonement</li> <li>7. The return</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Inciting incident</li> <li>2. Rising action</li> <li>3. Explanation or backstory</li> <li>4. Climax</li> <li>5. Falling Action</li> <li>6. Resolution</li> </ol>





# DIALOGUE and INTERNAL MONOLOGUE

Dialogue is the speech of fiction, whether spoken between or among characters or unspoken as internal monologue. Use the dialogue table to review the use of dialogue and internal monologue in your story.

Dialogue Component	What it is	How to revise
Attribution	the indicator that clues the reader in on <b>who said/thought what</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speaker name or pronoun comes before the verb (he said, NOT said he).</li> </ul>
Emotion Adverbs	a part of speech that modifies a verb and ends with <b>-ly</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cut adverbs based on adjectives describing emotion. Work the character emotion into word choices or body language instead.</li> </ul>
Action Beats	the way a character moves, which includes <b>body language and humanizing habits</b> or movements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Replace some speaker attributions with action beats during long passages of dialogue.</li> <li>• Make sure it's still clear who spoke/thought.</li> </ul>
Disguised Descriptions	internal monologue serving to <b>tell what should be shown</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid interior monologue or processing that repeats spoken dialogue or narrates facts the reader already knows. When telling is important, consider spoken dialogue, exposition, or narrative summary.</li> </ul>



# PACING and RHYTHM

Pacing includes the ebb and flow of action and follow-up scenes. Rhythm refers to the shape and sound of the language being read. Together, pacing and rhythm influence the reader by either soothing with gentle cadences or disturbing with unsettling stresses.

Genre	General Pacing Guidelines
Literary	Slower pacing; more backstory and setting descriptions; fewer action scenes
Fantasy	Lots of action; descriptions should be appropriately detailed to reach a feeling of grandeur
Mystery/Thriller	Faster pacing; detailed setting for uncovering clues; shorter action scenes
Historical Romance	Slower pacing; more setting and character descriptions; dialogue will be most of the action
Science Fiction	Faster pacing; setting descriptions shown through character actions; longer action scenes

Rhythm Tips
Alternate Sentence Length!
Rearrange Words and Phrases!
Use Sentence Fragments!
Match Rhythm to Mood!
Apply and Release Tension!



# WORLD BUILDING

World building is the construction of the world in which your characters live and relies on accuracy, consistency, believability, and rule-breaking. Use the table below to review the world-building elements in your story.

When reviewing...	Look for...
What's important	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What kind of place is best suited for the scene?</li> <li>• Who are the main characters or protagonists, and where are they in relation to each other?</li> <li>• Does the environment play a role in driving or mitigating conflicts?</li> </ul>
Geography or Locations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do people/beings live here? Food? Cloth? Shelter materials? Water?</li> <li>• What is the culture, and do those living see themselves within the culture?</li> <li>• Are there races, social challenges, or other issues readers must know for understanding?</li> </ul>
History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How long has the world in your story existed? How did it form?</li> <li>• Are there big events or holidays people celebrate from the past?</li> <li>• Are there differences in belief systems because of or in spite of the past?</li> </ul>
Details	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there specific customs, types of dress, speech patterns, or behaviors?</li> <li>• How do people relax? Express creativity? Fight? Dream?</li> <li>• Who are the opinion and thought leaders? What are their flaws? Strengths? Successes? Failures?</li> </ul>
Rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the rules of your society and its processes and systems?</li> <li>• What happens when rules are broken?</li> </ul>



# Conclusion

You've done it!

You've successfully completed a developmental review and self-edit of your manuscript.

Goal: CRUSHED!

## 3 Last Things:



The first draft is for you.  
The final draft is for readers.  
**The path from you to your readers may be long.**



**Trust in your writing and editing processes.** When you feel stuck, return to your process to turn the cogs.



**Savor the tension** between where you are and where you want to be. It's important.  
Don't rush through it.