

David Newman

*Editing
a Story*

Editing Information
and Activities

Editing a Story

Editing involves students scanning their completed stories for errors or inconsistencies and essentially '*tidying them up*.' Self editing requires students to critically analyse and reflect on their stories and be mindful of ways to refine and improve them so that the story has better flow and readability. A thesaurus can be useful to help edit words that are repeated too often and provide different and more varied words which provides extra colour and range of description to a story. Students are editing stories, not because they have made mistakes, but to make the writing better. Editing a story is an important and necessary process. Even the best and most experienced writers continually revise their writing to improve their stories and tighten construction.

Editing for Sense and Polish

Students are encouraged to reflect on their characters' motivations and actions. For instance, students could ask questions such as, *Is the character's behaviour consistent with his/her personality? Would the character really think those thoughts or perform those actions?* Reading sentences or paragraphs aloud can also often reveal inconsistencies with sentence construction. Students can also have friends or family read sections of the story aloud to check if the passage makes sense.

Editing for Spelling

Students who have difficulty spelling can underline suspect words and check them later with a parent, friend or teacher. Most computer Word programs have a spell checker but students should also use a dictionary to assist them as required. Proofing a piece of writing for spelling and grammar errors takes practise and can be hard work, but can also be very rewarding to transform a piece of writing that is unfinished and messy to something that reads well and something you can be proud of.

Sequence of Instructions for Editing

Begin instruction by reminding students that revision of written language writing isn't about correcting mistakes; it's about making something that is actually really good even better and the best way to make something better is to continually revise it.

Students are encouraged to read their printed stories aloud to themselves with pen or pencil in hand. Students are to note any missing words or words that don't really belong in a sentence. Students should write a line through words they wish to delete and add in words (perhaps in pencil at this stage) that they think will improve the stories flow.

Students should make a note of possible spelling errors in words they are not certain about. These words can then be later checked with a parent or teacher. Any proper nouns (place names or peoples' names) should be capitalized. If students consistently use similar or same words such as *and then* or overuse of common adjectives such as *sad, happy, mad, good, bad*, etc encourage them to look for similar but more descriptive words in a **thesaurus**.

In terms of story flow and interest, students should ask themselves as they revise, *"Have I described my character or characters accurately? Have I spent any time or words describing the setting? Is my character believable and is there a clear beginning, middle and end to the story?"*

Once students have completed a draft of their story that they are happy with, they are encouraged to read the story out loud once more and to listen to the flow of words. Any words or phrases that don't sound right to their ears, may not read terribly well on the page. Remove any offending word or phrase that breaks the narrative flow and once again check for spelling errors.

Editing Exercises - *Sentences*

Featured below are sentences from a pirates on the Caribbean Sea themed story which have grammatical and spelling errors. Read each sentence carefully and correct (*edit*) each sentence in the space provided. *Some of the sentences may have **several** errors.*

1. The ship saled on the water,

2. Captain Foster shouted to be. Heard .above the wind.

3. I went below the deck. in search for fesh watter.

4. The island had big volcano with lot of lava.

5. I were walking on the ships deck.

6. The monster attack the ship with lots of big tentacle.

7. I ranned from the jiant spider.

8. The treasure ship was fulled with goold and money.

9. The shups sails where flapping in the fierce winde.

10. We was hungry.

Editing Exercises – *Sentence Answers*

Featured below are corrections to the sentences with spelling and grammatical errors. The corrections are shown in *italics*.

1. The ship *sailed* on the water.
2. Captain Foster shouted *to be* heard above the wind.
3. I went below the deck in search for *fresh water*.
4. The island had *a* big volcano with lots of lava.
5. I *was* walking on the *ship's* deck.
6. The monster *attacked* the ship with lots of big tentacles.
7. I *ran* from the *giant* spider.
8. The treasure ship was *filled* with *gold* and money.
9. The *ship's* sails were flapping in the fierce *wind*.
10. We *were* hungry.

Editing Exercises – *Story Passage*

Featured below is part of a story that has many mistake. The passage needs to be edited and proof read. Some of the spelling and grammar is incorrect and some of the sentences are clumsy and don't make sense. *One* of the sentences doesn't belong there at all. See if you can detect which one it is.

I could hardly believed it when the ship. Broke free of the Kraken's massive tentacles. I shouted loudly, 'Set the sails. Full speed ahead!' I ate my dinner and then went to sleep. The sales were loosened and soon filled with winde. I was relieved that the ship had boken free of the Kraken. The next stop. Was Squall Island.

Editing Exercises – *Story Passage*

Correction

On this page the spelling and grammatical errors have been corrected. The corrections have been underlined and are in italics.

In the first sentence, the words '*was attacked*' were added to make the sentence fragment complete and correct. The word *massive* has had the spelling error corrected with the addition of the letter *s*. The '*I ate my dinner...*' sentence has been deleted, because it made no sense in the context of the story passage. In the next sentence, the misspelled words *sails* and *wind* have been corrected. *Sails* describe sails on a ship, whereas *wind* does not have an *e* at the end of the word. In the final sentence, the full stop and capital letter have been removed. The sentence is now correct and complete, and reads much better. It is no longer two short sentence fragments.

I could hardly believe it when the ship *was attacked*. The ship broke free of the Kraken's *massive* tentacles. I shouted loudly, 'Set the sails. Full speed ahead!' (*I ate my dinner and then went to sleep. Delete*) The *sails* were loosened and soon filled with *wind*. I was relieved that the ship had *broken* free of the Kraken. The next *stop was* Squall Island.