

Aaron's Ultimate Self-Editing Checklist

Use this checklist to edit your content without the use of a friend or professional editor.



- Define both an audience-centered and business-centered goal (ex. Audience focused: "I want to teach my readers to edit." Business focused: "I want to drive signups to my new eBook").
- Start editing by chainsaw.
- Introduction: Cut unnecessary "warm up" copy from your introduction.
- Body: Ensure your sections are optimally ordered. If your intro would work better as a conclusion, don't be afraid to slide that sucker down.
- Body: Cut paragraphs that don't serve your purpose. Do any of your paragraphs fail to move your piece towards your goals? Do they detail unnecessary or out-of-place information? If so, chop e
- Body: Ensure your sentences are optimally ordered. "Is sentence B a logical afterthought to sentence A, or is it only clear in my head?" (from On Writing Well by William Zinsser)
- Body: Inject relevant data an examples.
- Body: Smooth the transition between your body sections.
- Conclusion: Cut the conclusion if your article isn't long or packed with data. Fade into a relevant CTA instead.
- Start editing with "surgical tools."
- Intro: Strengthen your first sentence. There are two qualities of a first sentence: they're short and they tickle your reader's curiosity.
- Intro: Shorten your other sentences. Create a "slippery slide" into the body of your article.
- Intro: Throw in "snappers" (if the mood is right). "Snappers" are short, comedic sentences placed at the ends of your paragraphs.
- Intro: Fix the transition between your intro and your body.
- If so, publish that shit.
- Body: Check each sentence for economy. Are your sentences clear and concise? Or are they long-winded and jumbled with gobbledygook?
- Body: Look for multi-word phrases that can be shortened.
- Body: Hunt for cliches. If you wrote a sentence that you feel like you've heard before (and it didn't come from you), switch it up.

- Body: Double check the things you love. Don't hold onto unnecessary paragraphs or sentences just because you think they're funny/smart/clever.
- Body: Check for common grammar errors.
- Body: Cut any unnecessary adverbs. If they don't alter the meaning of the word following them, it's best to remove them.
- Body: Create simple transitions. Each of your sentences should build off your previous ones. Same goes for your paragraphs.
- Body: Strengthen your verbs. "Punt" is more interesting than "kick." "Jab" is more descriptive than "poke." And "hurl" is way funnier than "puke."
- Body: Remove repetitive sentences and paragraphs. If you've said something once already, there's no need to say it again.
- Conclusion: By now, I'm going to assume that you've cut your conclusion and ended with a strong CTA instead. But if you haven't, just do the same stuff you did to your body paragraphs.
- Take a much needed break. Go walk the dogs. Take a countryside drive. Meditate. Do whatever you need to do to clear your head—you'll need it for this last step.
- Do one last sweep.
- Do all your sections and paragraphs flow smoothly?
- Have you said what you wanted to say?
- Have you achieved the goals you outlined in step one?
- Do you have enough data to back up your points?
- Have you used a consistent voice across the piece?
- If so, publish that shit.
- Optional: Join my newsletter. I'll send you digestible chunks of writing knowledge that I've spent my free time mastering throughout the week. <https://mailchi.mp/c419a7b596f5/newsletter-signup>

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