

CLEARWRITER'S SIX STEPS TO EDITING YOURSELF

Editing is about making sure that your writing communicates your messages with clarity and impact. It's about cutting fatty words, choosing the most effective words, instilling order in sentences, and avoiding common errors in unclear pronoun references, misused relative clauses, and inconsistency. At ClearWriter, we've distilled standard editorial changes into easy-to-understand categories, so that you can become your own editor.

Tighten sentences by deleting unnecessary words

- Superfluous nouns.
Change *the field of economics* to *economics*
- Superfluous verbs.
Change *have a tendency to* to *tend to*
- Superfluous articles and prepositions.
Change *the making of cloth* to *making cloth*
- Weak modifiers.
Change *somewhat abstruse* to *abstruse*

Choose the most effective words

- Prefer short words to long.
Change *accomplish* to *do*
- Avoid beginning sentences with *It is* or *There is*.
Change *It appears Cuba will* to *Cuba will*
Change *There are some people who are* to *Some people are*
- Choose everyday words over jargon.
Try changing *morbidity and mortality* to *illness and death*
- Choose English words over foreign ones.
Change *ceteris paribus* to *other things being equal*
- Choose familiar words over unfamiliar ones.
Change *defalcate* to *embezzle*
- Avoid words ending in *wise* or *ize*.
Change *prioritize* to *set priorities for*
- Replace abstract words with concrete ones.
Change *population* to *people*
- Replace general words with specific ones.
Change *several* to *six*

- Choose words over symbols, initials, and abbreviations.
Change *k.m.* to *kilometers*
- Avoid slang.
- Replace vague pronouns with nouns.

Make pronoun references clear

- Clarify ambiguous pronouns—those that could plausibly refer to several nouns
- Reel in pronouns far from their nouns
- Ensure pronouns are introduced only after their nouns
- Avoid vague references to *this*, *that*, *these*, and *those*

Instill order in your sentences

- Order series from short to long
- Break a long sentence into two or more
- Delete unnecessary phrases
- Attach dangling phrases to the material they modify
- Make series and sentences parallel.

Do not abuse relatives

- Punctuate dispensable clauses
- Watch clauses that do not follow the nouns they modify.
- Avoid hopscotching between *that* and *which*
- Avoid too many *that*'s, *which*'s, and *who*'s

Be consistent

- Prefer the active voice.
- If you have a choice between spellings, use only one.
- If you have a choice between a capital and lowercase letter, pick one and stick to it.

ClearWriter's [online training](#) and instructor-led [workshops](#) show you how to put these ideas into practice. Our straightforward exercises will help you train your eye so that identifying these problems—and fixing them—become fast, even automatic.