**Self-Editing Checklist: The Dirty Dozen**

WCCS Writing Center

Note: This is a checklist for AFTER you have followed the first four steps of the writing process: prewriting, organizing, drafting, and revising.

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| Specific | Detailed |
| * Complete sentences | Read sentences individually to check for independent and depending clauses. Only FANBOYS\* can connect two independent clauses with a comma. Make sure all fragments are intentional. Check for correct use of semicolons & colons. |
| * Spelling | Know your bad patterns. Use a dictionary or [Dictionary.com](file:///C:\Users\WCCS\Documents\dictionary.com). |
| * Commas | Use to separate two ind. clauses with a FANBOYS, lists, parts of an address, and parenthetical phrases (nonrestrictive words & clauses). But scrutinize other uses of a comma. Is there a rule? Should there be a semicolon or colon instead? |
| * Parallel structure | Underline the parts in a list (including lists with only two parts). Do they match? Underline your five correlative conjunctions\* & check each part. Double check each part of your thesis. |
| * Agreement | Do your subjects and verbs agree? Circle all prepositional phrases to help check; your subject is never part of a prepositional phrase. Do your pronouns agree with the antecedents? *Everyone loves his or her mom*, not *Everyone loves their mom.* |
| * Commonly Confused Words | Check for *their* vs. *there*, *too* vs*. two*, *lay* vs. *lie*, *accept* vs. except, *its* vs. *it’s*, etc. Use a dictionary if you’re not sure. Make a list in your notebook of words you often confuse. |
| * Figurative Language | Use where appropriate, but check for originality and clarity. Figurative language should always enhance your writing, not detract from the idea you’re trying to convey. |
| * Word Choice | Are your words clear? Did you avoid jargon and informal language in formal writing? Use a thesaurus to find more precise words, but avoid complicated, “stuffy” language and clichés. Know your audience. |
| * Word Order | Read sentences individually & aloud. Do they make sense? Do you have misplaced or dangling modifiers? |
| * Description | Description is key, but it must be used appropriately. Do your words and examples add meaning and clarity? Avoid overuse of adjectives; focus on strong verbs. |
| * Voice | Proofread for active voice. Is the subject doing the action? Use strong, precise verbs. Show and don’t tell. (*He is tired*. vs. *He collapsed on the bed*.) |
| * Spell & Grammar Check | Word will do this for you, but use your discretion as the software isn’t always correct. |

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| **Remember: Content always comes first. Check for a clear main idea, organization, and supporting details before and after editing.** |