

Unleash Your Inner Editor

Your Inner Editor is *almost* ready to get to work. You've gotten some helpful editing notes from classmates—which is a great start—but your classmates were not able to read your entire novel. Revising your whole book might seem pretty overwhelming at first, but this worksheet will help you make a manageable and realistic revision plan!

You'll want to start by recalling all the hopes and dreams you had as you wrote your first draft. What was your goal in writing? Another way to think about this is to ask yourself what you hope readers will think or feel after reading your novel.

Here are some example goals:

"I want to move people to care more about the Earth's environment."

"I want to help people understand that sea monkeys totally should be allowed to fly airplanes."

"I want to show that love really does conquer all."

"I want to make people laugh until they cry."

"I want to show that winning the lottery isn't everything!"

Write your goal below, using a complete sentence.

My Goal:

Now use the novel draft you've got with you, as well as your own recollections from writing, to fill out each section below. And keep that goal you wrote on the last page in mind; it will help keep you focused when you start to feel overwhelmed by details.

Note: You may notice that none of the questions below have to do with grammar or typos. You and your Inner Editor will do that absolutely last, after you've revised your novel in every other way.

I. Organization

1. Is your novel organized in chapters? If so, how did you decide where to make chapter breaks? If you didn't use chapters, why not?

2. Find and read a few transitions between chapters and/or between settings/scenes. Describe some transitions—or links—you created between chapters and/or events to make the organization clear.

3. Name three places in your novel where readers might get confused about the order of events.

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4. Name three changes you plan to make as you re-organize your novel. These changes could be big (moving whole chapters) or small (adding transition words like “then” to make the flow of events or ideas clearer).

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II. Voice and Writing Style

1. How would you describe your writing style? Tell how the words and sentences in your novel might sound if read aloud (such as dramatic, dark, simple, minimalistic, stark, dry, funny and light hearted, wordy and highly intellectual, etc.).

2. Open your novel to any page. Skim the paragraphs. Do they sound like they were all written in the same voice? If not, why not?

3. Name three changes you plan to make as you revise the voice and writing style of your novel. These changes could be big (getting rid of jokes throughout) or small (trying not to use the word “totally” so much).

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III. Plot and Conflict

1. In three sentences or less, describe the plot of your novel.

2. In one sentence, describe the conflict in your novel.

3. Open your novel to one page, any page. (If you turn to a page related to your subplot, try again.) Skim the paragraphs. Then repeat with another page. Did you or your characters lose focus on your main plot or conflict at any point? Is this okay, or do you think readers might get confused?

4. Name three changes you plan to make so your novel's plot and conflict are clearer.

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IV. Literary Features that Make Your Novel Fun to Read

Which of the following special features did you use a lot of in your novel? First complete the lists below with features you like to see in novels, such as suspense or humor. Then check off all the listed items *you* used and *did not* use.

1. I used:

- Dialogue that shows without telling
- Sensory detail about settings
- Sensory detail about characters
- Plot twists
- Suspense
- Other: _____
- Other: _____
- Other: _____
- Other: _____
- Other: _____

2. Open your novel to one page, any page. Skim the paragraphs. Then repeat. Which of the following did you *not* use so much:

- Dialogue that shows without telling
- Sensory detail about settings
- Sensory detail about characters
- Plot twists
- Suspense
- Other: _____
- Other: _____
- Other: _____
- Other: _____
- Other: _____

3. Name three ways you plan to revise your novel to improve the dialogue, sensory detail, subplots, or any of the other features you listed above. These changes could be big (add dialogue everywhere) or small (add more sensory details to the car chase on page 10).

- _____
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OK, now you have a plan for revising your novel. Let that Inner Editor loose!