HOW TO

Make an Editing Checklist

(Or: Learning How to Fix the Mistakes)

A spelling mistake in your résumé could cost you a job interview.
A grammar mistake on a birthday card could be embarrassing.
To avoid unnecessary mistakes, **here are some basic things to look for when you edit your writing.**

Punctuation   Start sentences with capital letters. Put periods at the end of sentences. Make paragraphs by indenting or skipping a line.

Spelling   Spell all words correctly.

Grammar   Make sure that verbs end correctly. (For example, pay attention to *s* and *ed* endings, such as think*s* and walk*ed.*) Make subjects and verbs agree. (She is going, they are going...)

If you get all those things right, you are in pretty good shape. Be on the lookout for **question marks (?), commas (,), exclamation points (!), apostrophes (’), and “quotation marks”** too.

SO WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP AVOID MISTAKES?

- **First**, write everyday— and write a lot! Spelling, punctuation, and grammar are parts of writing. Practice writing and you'll get better at the different aspects of it.

- **Second**, realize that everyone needs help. Find people you trust, people who won't tear your writing to pieces. Ask those people for help. Good writers know how to ask for help.

- **Third**, use the **editing checklist**—a proofreading list to help you fix spelling, punctuation, and other mistakes. It will help you improve in those areas. Use this list and you will make fewer mistakes when you write and get better at fixing them.

- **Last**, read your work aloud, clearly and slowly. Does it sound right to you? If something sounds wrong, it probably is!

An editing checklist helps you check for one thing at a time. It lets you practice what you need to work on. It lets you go at your own pace. It lets you improve in a way that works for you.

GETTING STARTED

First, check off all the things you are going to look for when you proofread. You might want to focus on one item at a time. You might want to practice putting periods in the right places. Or you can work on lots of items at the same time. You have to decide for yourself.

Then start to proofread. Read for every item that you checked off. For example, read your writing to check for capital letters. Then, read your work, checking for periods and so on. Each time you read, you may find mistakes that you didn't catch before. If possible, have someone else check your work, too.

Remember, the editing checklist helps you practice. It also catches many—but not all— mistakes. If it is a really important piece of writing, have someone you trust check for you.

You can make copies of this checklist and use it to practice proofreading. Or just use this one as a model and make your own. Practice with this list and you will get better. It won't be easy, but it will be worth it. To get you started on the checklist, use a piece of new writing that you have just finished. See how many mistakes you catch using this checklist. Keep track of your progress over time.

EDITING CHECKLIST		
What I need to check	**Checklist item**	**I checked for this**
	Capital letters	
	Periods (Full stops)	
	Paragraphs	
	Verbs ending in *s*	
	Verbs ending in *ed*	
	Subject-verb agreement	
	Spelling	
	Commas	
	Other punctuation	
	I read every word	
	I read it out loud	
	I read it more than one time	