



Tips for Editing Your Paper

Once you're finished drafting and revising, use these tips to polish your paper:

Check for common usage errors.

- Use **a lot** sparingly. (Note: *A lot* is a vague phrase. Can you be more specific?)
- Check for commonly misspelled words like *its/it's* and *their/there/they're*, to name a couple.
Its is a possessive noun. Example: Its windows are made of glass.
It's is a contraction of "it is." Example: It is a lovely day outside.
Their is plural and possessive. Example: Their house is always spotless.
There refers to a particular place. Example: Please put the bowl over there.
They're is the contraction of "they are." Example: They're a very nice couple.
- Make sure your **nouns and verbs agree** in tense and number.
- Look for **homophones**, words that sound alike but mean different things. Examples: affect/effect; accept/except; principal/principle.

Check for passive verbs and replace with active verbs.

- Active verbs are more precise and powerful.
- Passive verbs are often forms of the verb be (be, am, is, are, was, were, being, been). They are not incorrect, but they can detract from the energy of the piece.
Passive Example: A bomb was dropped on Afghanistan.
Active Example: U.S. forces dropped a bomb on Afghanistan.

Cut out wordiness wherever possible.

- Eliminate redundancies. Are there places where you repeat yourself unnecessarily?
Example: Black slaves were ~~thought of as or~~ stereotyped as lazy even though they were the main labor force of the South.
Example: Daniel ~~very hurriedly~~ scribbled his name, address, and phone number.
- Omit unnecessary repetition of words. Are there words used twice in a sentence, or phrases used more than once in a paragraph?
Example: Our fifth patient, in room six, is a mentally ill ~~patient~~.
- Cut empty phrases. An empty phrase can be cut with no loss of meaning. Common examples include words that tend to make the writer sound unsure: in my opinion, I believe, I think that, etc.

Hacker, Diana. *The Bedford Handbook*. Boston: Bedford, St. Martin's, 2002.