Preparing Documentation for Editing: A Checklist

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Use the following basic checklist to make sure your documentation is ready to hand off to the editor. You can also review the *Style Guide,* especially Chapter 8, "Terminology," on page 117, and use past edits to add other items as necessary to personalize the list.

❑ Run spell check.

❑ Search for the following words or phrases and replace them as necessary:

  ❑ **once:** For most occurrences, use "when" or "after." Use "once" only to mean "one time."

  ❑ **have to, need to, must:** Use "need to" or "must" instead of "have to."

  ❑ **may:** Reserve "may" for use in cases where permission is sought or given, such as in a legal statement. Use "can" to express ability, "might" or "could" to show a possibility, and "perhaps" to express a subjunctive mood.

  ❑ **while:** "While" means "for a period of time," "as long as," or "during the time that." Use it to indicate a time relationship. Don't use it as a substitute for "and," "but," or "although."

  ❑ **due to:** Use "because of" instead of "due to."

  ❑ **back up, backup:** Two words when used as a verb, one word when used as an adjective or noun.

  ❑ **log in, login:** Two words when used as a verb, one word when used as an adjective or noun.

❑ Make sure you're using the simple present tense most of the time. (Search for the word "will" and check its usage in context.)

For more information, see Section 1.40.2, "Verb Tense," on page 68.

❑ Check for antecedent problems with the word "using."

For more information, see "Using the Word "Using" in Documentation" in the *Editing Notes* guide.

❑ Use "which" to introduce nonrestrictive clauses and use "that" to introduce restrictive clauses.

For more information, see "That and Which" in the *Editing Notes* guide.

❑ Make sure you are using "they" and "their" as plural pronouns instead of singular pronouns.

Writers sometimes attempt to avoid gender problems in writing by using "they" and "their" as gender-neutral singular pronouns, such as "A user can start their computer by..." There are several suggestions for avoiding this difficulty in ""Their" As a Gender-Neutral Singular Pronoun" in the *Editing Notes* guide.