

# The Self-edit Checklist



A Free Resource Provided by [studio-marginalia](#), a premium story analysis service

---

## How to Use This Checklist

- Answer honestly (no one's judging!)
- Focus on areas where you answer 'no' or 'not sure'
- Use this to guide revision priorities

---

## Big-Picture Story Analysis

### Overall Reader Experience

- Would I keep reading this if I found it in a bookstore?
- Is the tone/mood consistent throughout?
- Did I stay emotionally engaged?
- Would I recommend this to someone in my target audience?

*Tip: If unsure, your opening might not hook, or your middle might sag. Check pacing and stakes.*

### Opening (First 3 Chapters)

- Does my opening hook readers immediately?
- Is it clear what kind of story this is (genre, tone)?
- Are my protagonist and stakes established early?
- Would a stranger keep reading past page 5?

*Tip: Consider starting closer to the action. Cut backstory/setup that can come later.*

## Ending (Final Act)

- Is my ending satisfying and logical?
- Are all major plot threads resolved?
- Does it feel earned based on character arcs?
- Does it leave a lasting impression?

*Tip: If unsure, your climax might not have enough setup, or you're resolving too quickly.*

## Plot Structure

- Does my story have a clear beginning, middle, and end?
- Is the main conflict compelling and clear?
- Are there any plot holes or contradictions?
- Does every scene move the plot forward or reveal character?
- Are cause-and-effect relationships clear?

*Tip: Outline your plot in 10 bullet points. If you can't, your structure might be muddled.*

## Character Work

- Is my protagonist relatable and active (not passive)?
- Do my characters have clear, believable motivations?
- Do characters change or grow throughout the story?
- Does dialogue sound natural and distinct per character?
- Are relationships emotionally engaging?

*Tip: Write a one-sentence motivation for each major character. If it's vague, dig deeper.*

## Setting & Worldbuilding

- Is my world clear and consistent?
- Does the setting feel lived-in, not just described?
- Do characters interact naturally with their environment?
- Does my setting support the plot and characters?

*Tip: Draw a map or write a 'day in the life' for your world if unsure.*

## Theme (If Applicable)

- Is there an underlying message or question in my story?
- Does the theme emerge naturally through character and plot?
- Is it subtle rather than heavy-handed?
- Does the ending reinforce or complicate the theme?

*Tip: Ask what your story is 'really about' beneath the plot.*

# Micro-Level Story Analysis

## POV & Voice

- Is my POV clear and consistent throughout?
- Does my narrative voice fit the story and character?
- Are perspective shifts intentional and clear?
- Does the voice remain consistent across chapters?

## Pacing & Tension

- Does my story maintain momentum throughout?
- Are any scenes too slow, rushed, or repetitive?
- Are stakes built effectively?
- Is there a balance of action, exposition, and character moments?

## Scene & Chapter Effectiveness

- Does each scene have a purpose? (Advances plot, develops character, builds stakes)
- Are chapters engaging from start to finish?
- Are there redundant or unnecessary scenes?
- Do scenes transition smoothly and logically?

## Opening & Ending (Micro Check)

- Does each chapter open with a hook and close with momentum?
- Does the final act pay off the setup in each chapter?
- Are there weak chapters that slow the story down?

