

## ***Self-Editing Guide for Chrys Fey***

Always use the Oxford comma.

EX: The colors of the American flag are red, white, and blue.

Format dialogue tags like this: he/she said or [character name] yelled.

EX: “Thanks,” Matt said.

Not: “Thanks,” said Matt.

Don’t use “he smiled,” “he nodded,” or “he laughed” as dialogue tags.

EX: “Thanks,” he laughed.

**Better:** “Thanks.” He laughed.

Don’t use em dashes (—) in the middle of dialogue. Only use an em dash at the end of dialogue to indicate an interruption.

Don’t use semi-colons (;) in dialogue. Replace with a period or other punctuation mark.

Place commas within quotation marks.

EX: Don’t use “he smiled,” “he nodded,” or “he laughed” as dialogue tags.

Replace “eyes” with “gaze” when describing an action.

EX: Her eyes snapped to him.

**Correct:** Her gaze snapped to him.

EX: His eyes roamed around the room.

**Correct:** His gaze roamed around the room.

US Spelling: Toward, Backward

UK Spelling: Towards, Backwards

**Eliminate as many of these words/phrases from your writing as possible:**

- Just
- Only
- Really
- Very
- Both

EX: Both of us want to go to the beach.

**Better:** We want to go to the beach.

EX: Jamie and Matt both wanted ice cream.

**Better:** Jamie and Matt wanted ice cream.

- That

EX: She swore that it would never happen again.

**Better:** She swore it would never happen again.

- Almost
- Slightly
- Seemed

EX: The room seemed to go quiet.

**Better:** The room became quiet.

- Perhaps
- Maybe

EX: Maybe/perhaps we should go.

**Better:** We should go.

- Simply

- Kind of
- Sort of
- A little

EX: The cut hurt slightly.

(Or: The cut kind of/sort of hurt. Or: The cut hurt a little.)

**Better:** The cut hurt.

### **Redundant/Incorrect Phrases to Fix:**

- Stand/stood up = Stand/stood
- Sit/sat down = Sit/sat
- Turned around = Turned
- Rise/Rose up = Rise/Rose
- Low/soft whisper = Whisper
- Whispered softly = Whispered
- Woke/wake up = Woke/wake
- Alright = All right
- Could care less = Couldn't care less

### **Eliminate Passive POV:**

- He/she saw
- He/she heard
- He/she smelled
- He/she felt

EX: She heard someone shouting her name

**Better:** Someone shouted her name.

### **Eliminate Passive Voice:**

Passive voice is when the subject of a sentence is acted upon.

EX: Ben was attacked by a swarm of bees.

Active Voice is when the subject of a sentence is the doer of the action.

EX: A swarm of bees attacked Ben. (**correct**)

### **Phrases to Eliminate to Make Your Writing More Specific:**

- There was/were
- It was
- That had been

EX: It was a dark and stormy night.

**Better:** The night was dark and stormy. (Tell your readers exactly what “it,” “that,” and “there” refers to so your meaning is clear.)

### **Join Complete Sentences**

Make sure when you join two sentences with a comma and conjunction (and, or, but) that the sentence following the comma is complete with a subject.

Example: She couldn't wait to go on vacation, but she had a deadline to meet first.

This is correct, because there is a subject (she) after the comma and the conjunction.

### **Watch out for Comma Splices**

A comma splice is when two independent clauses (sentences) are joined by a comma without a conjunction (and, or, but).

Example: Mom ordered pizza, Dad went to pick it up. (Comma Splice...**Incorrect**)

Example: Mom ordered pizza, and Dad went to pick it up. (**Correct**)

### **Pay Attention to Gerund Phrases**

Gerund phrases begin with a verb that ends in “ing.” These phrases can be at the beginning of a sentence or at the end of the sentence following a comma.

Example: Smiling, she tilted her head.

This is **correct**, because you can smile and tilt your head at the same time.

Example: Running upstairs, she flopped onto her bed.

This is **not correct**, because you can't run upstairs and flop onto your bed at the same time, not even if your bed happens to be in the stairway. You'd have to stop one act to do the other.