

Self-Editing Guide for Chrys Fey

Please go through your manuscript carefully using this guide. Thank you!

STYLE:

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. Also, don’t use a hyphen or en dash instead. Em dashes are longer. Word – Insert – Symbol – More Symbols – Special Characters (The em dash is the first one there.) Ctrl + Alt + Num - (NOTE: “Num -” is the “-” symbol on the side of the keyboard, not at the top.)

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

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

SELF-EDITING BEFORE EDITING ROUNDS:

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

TIP: Do a search using Microsoft’s Find tool. Most manuscripts can have a hundred or more of these first 5 words. Try to bring this number down to 50 or so.

- **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.

Check for an excessive use of “as.” Do a search using Microsoft’s Find tool. You can search for: said as, just as, and (space)as(space). In most cases, the “as” could be replaced with “when” or “and.” In other cases, the sentences will require some reimagining to remove “as.”

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.

NOTE: Do a search using Microsoft's Find tool. You can search for: “ing” followed by a comma (ing,). When you search for that, you'll find all gerund phrases. Not all of them will be incorrect. EX: Shaking his head, he turned around. (That is correct because you can do both actions at the same time). In most cases, revising an incorrect gerund phrase to add “and” does the trick. In other cases, the sentence will have to be reworked. Sometimes creating two sentences can solve this.

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**)

Thank you so much for going through this self-editing guide. I appreciate it.

- **Chrys Fey**