

Bridging the Gap—Literacy



Helping your child with Editing

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When writers write, they check the finished piece to make sure that what they have written will:

- ☆ *Be clear to the reader, and*
- ☆ *Do what they want it to, eg inform or persuade or over the reader*

Really, there are two parts to editing a piece of writing:

- ☆ *Revising the content*
- ☆ *Proofreading for errors in spelling and punctuation.*

When authors write for an audience they have four major questions in mind:

- ☆ *What do I want my readers to know?*
- ☆ *How do I want them to know it?*
In other words -
 - What information will I put in and*
 - *What will I leave out?*
 - *How will I link the ideas together?*
 - *Which links will I make clear to the reader and which will I hide?*
- ☆ *What do I want them to think?*
- ☆ *What do I want them to feel?*

When authors revise or edit their work, they check to see that they have been successful by again asking the same questions.

When students have finished writing, they need to learn how to read their own writing through the eyes of a reader.

Explain that a reader should be given all the information they need to understand what has been written. Most readers do not have the writer standing beside them so they can ask questions when they don't understand.

This is really difficult. It takes knowledge. It takes skill and it takes practice... lots and lots of practice.

You can help by acting as the reader. As a reader you can make suggestions about when you need to know more of when the message in the writing is not clear.

Here's how you can help...

Before starting the assignment, make sure the student understands the task. Talk about what is expected. When your children have finished reading and editing their work, read through it quietly and carefully. As you read, pick out two or three things you like about what has been written.



When you have finished, ask your children how they felt about the piece of writing. Listen carefully to the reply. Talk to them about the things you noticed that they have done well.

If your children identify aspects of the writing they are unhappy about, work on these first.

If your child is unable to identify what are clearly problems for a reader, work through the following editing process.

Talk first about those aspects of writing which will make the most dramatic improvement.



Author (student)

Read your writing out loud.

Listen to how it sounds.

Look carefully at any parts you have difficulty reading.

Make any changes you think will improve these parts.

Editor (parent)



Think about the person who is going to act as editor for you.

What will they like about your writing?

What will they think you have done well?

What suggestions do you think they will make?

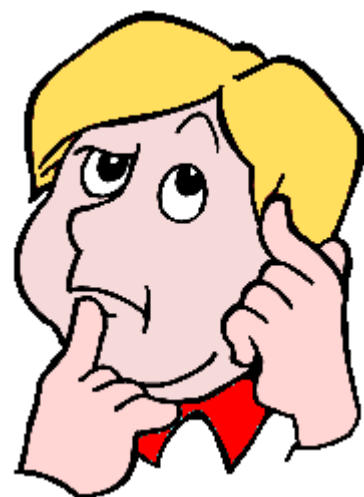
Why?

Should you think about doing that before you ask them to read

Help your child to make any agreed changes.

Many children find making editorial changes difficult, tedious and upsetting.

They need positive and supportive responses.



Make any changes you feel will improve your writing

Author (student)

Read the draft quietly to yourself.

As you read ask yourself:

- Does this say what I want to say?
- Have I said everything I want to say?
- Have I said it in the way I want to?
- Is what I have written clear to the reader? Could I write it another way?
- Have I linked my ideas in a way which will help my reader?
- Have I chosen just the right words to make my meaning clear?

Make any changes you feel will improve your writing.



Editor (parent)


Refer your child back to the task and ask whether or not s/he had done what the task required. **Point** to the questions on the editing flow chart that relate to the task. Gently point out places where

- The meaning is not clear. Say things like "I wasn't quite clear about this part here? I need to ask questions like ... Was that what you meant? Could you write it another way?"
- A better word could be used. Say things like—"I liked the words you used there. I wonder if you could think of a better word here?"

If the piece of writing does not flow, read it out loud to the child. Ask your child to identify any problems and to suggest improvements.

Ask questions about

- The way the ideas are put together
- Could it be clearer?
- Could the sentence order be changed or words left out to improve the text flow?

| Author (student) | Editor (parent) |
|--|---|
| <p data-bbox="97 190 794 309">Have I put a reasonable amount of effort into this task?</p>  | <p data-bbox="794 190 1497 380">Talk to your child about the effort s/he has put into doing this writing task.</p> <p data-bbox="794 414 1497 683">Ask your child, whether s/he has put a reasonable effort into the task and whether s/he is happy with what s/he has done.</p> <p data-bbox="794 716 1497 974">Talk about what they have learned and what they might do differently for a better result another time.</p> |

Avoid using the term "best effort". It can be really demoralising.

Do you give everything you do your "best effort"? As we complete any task we learn things that would allow us to do it better next time. Therefore, we know that this is not our "best effort", that we would do it better next time.

The constant quest to produce our best effort and then have our mistakes pointed out can be disheartening. Rather, ask if this is a "reasonable effort".

Proof Reading

There is a difference between editing and proof reading. When you edit, you read like a reader—you read for meaning. You concentrate on gaining the information you need, the author's intention.

Poor spelling, punctuation and grammar can detract the readers attention. Proof reading helps overcome that problem. Proof reading takes place as you write and after your write. When proof reading, you concentrate on spelling, grammar and punctuation.

Hear are some tips

Fix as many problems as you can as you go. Have a try pad beside you to check spelling.

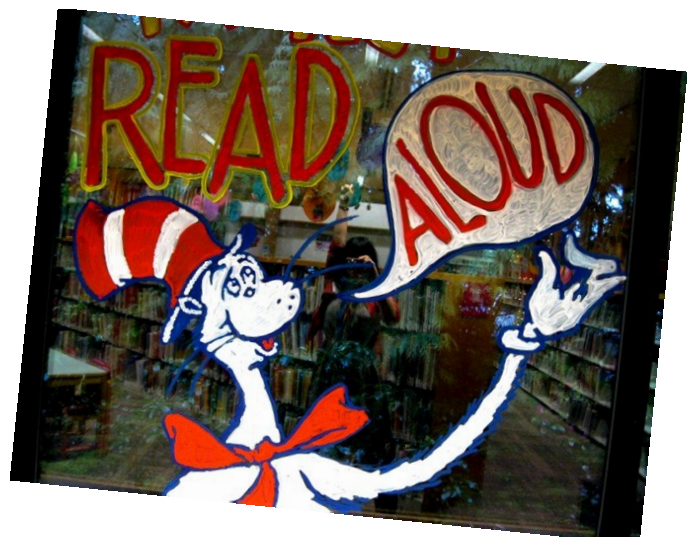
After you have finished writing

Look for one thing at a time -

- ☆ Spelling,
- ☆ Grammar,
- ☆ Punctuation.

To look for spelling

- ☆ Put a ruler under each line so that you can see only one line at a time.
- ☆ Read slowly, point to each word.
- ☆ Check words with your journal.



As you read, ask yourself

Does this word look right?
Which part(s) am I sure of?
What other letter patterns could I try?
What other words do I know that

- Look like that?
- Sound like that?
- Have this meaning and spelling?
- Does that look right?

Yes
That's great.
Next one.

No
What will I
do now?

I could

- Try another letter pattern and see if that looks right.
- Look it up in the dictionary.
- Find it in my notes/textbook.
- Look in my spelling journal.



Good spelling needs work.

Editing can be a time consuming and emotional business.

Using a computer

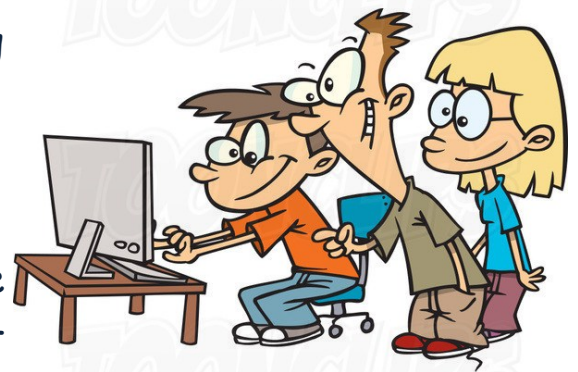
Using a computer for writing makes both writing and editing easier. If your children have access to a computer encourage them to do their writing on it.

It is much easier to make changes on a computer. We all know that asking a child to constantly rewrite can lead to temper tantrums and tears... at any age.

Using the computer means that no matter how many changes are made, the work still looks new and fresh. Not only that, it is easier to read.

A page covered with arrows and crossing out can be very difficult to read and very disheartening.

Most of all, it is important that the child gets a sense of continuing improvement from the editing process.



The final word ...

- ★ **Use** the computer from the brainstorming stage of writing right through to the finished product.
- ★ **Show** your child how to use the spell checker and grammar checker.
- ★ **Talk** with them about what these checkers do and don't do. Remember that they won't find all errors and that they are not always right.
- ★ **Experiment** together. Observe how the spell checker might show alternative spellings.
- ★ **Talk** to your child about the layout of work. Writing looks better if there is not too much on one page.
- ★ **Experiment** with fonts. Fonts without curls and flourishes such as arial are easier to read.
- ★ Don't use a font size that is too small, it's tiring for the reader.

- ☆ Don't use any smaller than 11 point font in the body of the assignment. In fact, 12 point font is probably better. Readers can read it easily and quickly. Remember teachers usually have a lot of assignments to mark at once. Work that is easier to read leaves a better impression.
- ☆ Try surrounding your work with a border, it helps the reader focus on the page.

Set a limit to the number of drafts.
Remember "reasonable effort".

