

"Once it's done, to put it away until you can read it with new eyes. Finish the short story, print it out, then put it in a drawer and write other things. When you're ready, pick it up and read it, as if you've never read it before. If there are things you aren't satisfied with as a reader, go in and fix them as a writer: that's revision." -Neil Gaiman

Yseult's Quick and Dirty Cheat Sheet to Self-Editing

By Shannon Yseult

TO DO LIST

- 1) Put your scenes into an order if they aren't already.
- 2) Put page numbers into your document. Possibly with your name in the header. I suggest adding some space between your lines to make it easier to write in notes, but if you're self-conscious about wasting paper it can be done on single spaced. Do keep your margins though. They are needed.
- 3) Print out your novel.
- 4) Let it sit for at least a week, but no more than a month.
- 5) Decide that it's time to edit.
- 6) Make a date for personal editing to be finished by. This is the date that you will be handing your novel to someone else to have them critique it. The best way to make this deadline stick out is to let this person know that they should expect the novel on this date and if they don't receive it then they will need to lock you in your room until it is complete. Be fair; give yourself a solid month like NaNo, certainly no less than two weeks.
- 7) Sit down with a notebook and read your novel. Note issues on the page or in your notebook. DO NOT FIX THEM.
- 8) Fix big overarching issues.
- 9) Then the smaller issues.
- 10) Lastly the style, consistent dialogue, description, and overall flow. See if there is an overabundance of certain words in your novel and change them up as needed.
- 11) Personal editing round one is done.

THINGS TO ASK YOURSELF WHILE READING YOUR NOVEL

What would make this more interesting for the reader?

Does this character appear throughout the book?

Does this character still look and act the same way he did at the beginning of the book?

Do all of the hints, subplots, ideas, red herrings, that were mentioned throughout your novel followed through?

Does this scene matter?

Is there consistent conflict?

Do your characters obviously want something in every scene?

Does your world add complications? (Hint: It should.)

Are there themes? What are these themes? Are these themes noticeable throughout the novel?

Is everything actually happening in order? What's your time line?

Are there info dumps? Can that info be spread out more throughout the book?

Do your characters have motivations?

Are these scenes ending on upbeat and downbeats?

Am I switching the upbeat and downbeats enough?

TOP THREE THINGS AGENTS LOOK FOR

- 1) **Where, and how, you start your story.** Does your story start with your character waking up and going through their daily routine, waking up from a terrible dream, or any description of the weather? Cut it out and start with action. Does your opening scene begin with action? Excellent, you're set.
- 2) **Pacing.** Have a trusted beta reader really take a look at your pacing and really believe them when they say something about it. It cannot be ignored.
- 3) **Satisfying ending.** Make sure your novel leaves the reader with a good feeling; they'll spread that feeling to others which leads to word of mouth reviews for you!