



# Herb's Notes

## Editor Checklist for Fiction

Before copyediting, read the entire manuscript and take notes (indicate page numbers).  
Look at the story for structure, consistency, cohesiveness.

### The Opening Hook

- Does the story begin in the right place? If not, where would you suggest the story should open? Will your suggestions make the story better or just different?
- Does the first paragraph grab you and make you want to read more? If not, what are your suggestions for a better opening paragraph?

### Character Inconsistencies

- Keep a list of physical and emotional characteristics for each character. Are these characteristics consistent through the entire manuscript?
- Make a list of character names. Say those names aloud, together in pairs to see if any form unpleasant rhyming qualities.

### Plot Inconsistencies

- Does anything in the plot activate your “No Way” button.

### Errors in Logic

- Does each story thread track logically from one scene to the next?

### Transition Errors

- Do any scenes lack proper set up?

### Repetitiveness

- Do you notice any overused words, phrases, or character mannerisms?

### Flashback/Back Story

- If these elements are used in the story, are they inserted at appropriate places?
- Do any seem overly long?
- Could any of them be recast in present story time?

### Copyediting Guidelines

Once any structural inconsistencies within the manuscript are resolved, move through the manuscript a chapter at a time, line by line checking the following things:

- misspellings
- punctuation (general)
- punctuation (in dialogue)
- grammar
- capitalization
- hyphenated and combined words
- noun/verb agreement
- paragraphing
- character attribution (blending with 'beats')
- sentence structure
- homonyms
- sentence fragments
- run-on sentences
- missed indentations
- correct word usage
- wordiness
- confusing passages
- clichés
- word flow within paragraphs
- verbose sentences
- suggest to the author how passages that are told can be shown to better involve the reader
- suggest changes from passive to active voice where appropriate
- suggest transitions to smooth the flow of thought and ideas from one scene to the next
- suggest to the author cuts, additions, and rearrangements within the manuscript
- point out to the author any inconsistencies in plot or characterization along with suggestions on how to resolve those inconsistencies

ALWAYS

- maintain the author's voice and style in any changes you make to the manuscript.

NEVER

- make changes to the manuscript simply for the sake of change

Helpful References:

 [The Comma](#)



*This Way Back*