

# Things To Look For While Revising

**Overused Words** Most writers have pet words and phrases they tend to overuse. Maybe you've made too many things "upscale" or "pink" or "pretty," or maybe you're leaning too hard on infinitive verbs ( "Joe decided to go downtown to see if Mary would agree to have dinner with him"). "Is and "was" and "are" are notorious for creeping into sentences and deadening them. Once you become aware of your patterns, they'll pop off the page at you and you can decide which instances need changing.

**Sentence structure** A cluster of short sentences can convey urgency, but most of the time they just sound choppy. Add rhythm to your prose by varying the pace. Long sentences, short sentences, even phrases that aren't really sentences at all, they've all got a place. And think about the shape of your sentences, too. If most of them take the form "subject & verb & object" ( Dad bought a Model T, and then we drove across the country."), shake them up a little: "As soon as bought a MOdel T, we took off across the country."

**Descriptions** Whenever you describe a person or a place, use sensory details -- smell, taste, touch, sound -- as well as visual ones. Look for an interesting detail or two to establish a sense of place -- indoors or outdoors.

**Keep the Reader's Attention** To keep your reader's attention, keep your characters in a state of uncertainty and tension. Readers will be gripped by trying to find out how that tension gets resolved.

(Based on and adapted from: "Six Little Things to Think About While You're Editing You Novel," by Janis R. Bolster, Rock Hill Editorial Services)

## STORY / SCENE REVISION CHECHLIST

- Is the opening engaging?
- Does the scene have a clear beginning, middle, and end?
- Do flashbacks ( if there any ) make sense? Do they provide context for the story being told?
- Do you use sensory details? Specific details?
- Does the story include dialogue?
- Do you use varied sentence structure to keep readers interested?
- Have you used strong, specific, and active verbs?
- Does your story ending provide a sense of closure?