George Mason University Writing Center

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Editing Checklist

- ✓ Does this paper fulfill all requirements of the **assignment?**
- ✓ Does this paper have a **thesis**? Is the thesis specific?
- ✓ Does this paragraph have **topic sentences** at the beginning of each body paragraph? Do the topic sentences both connect to the thesis and introduce what I will be talking about in the paragraph itself?
- ✓ Are there paragraphs that seem to be **too long** or **too short**? Are the paragraphs relatively similar lengths?
- ✓ Have I examined my paper for excess **repetition** (of words, phrases, sentence constructions)?
- ✓ Are there **transitions between paragraphs**?
- ✓ Are there **transitions between sentences**?
- ✓ Does the **conclusion** do more than simply repeat the introduction, or summarize my argument? Have I extrapolated anything meaningful? Have I explained to my audience why this paper is important to them?
- ✓ If quotations have been used, have they been smoothly **integrated** into the text with my own sentence both before and after the quote, including **signal phrases**?
- ✓ Have I properly formatted quotes over three lines (using indentation)?
- ✓ Have I used an appropriate **number and variety of sources** (per the assignment requirements)?
- ✓ Have I **documented** paraphrases and quotations appropriately, using an approved citation guide (MLA, APA, etc.)?
- ✓ Does the paper have an original, meaningful **title**?
- ✓ Have I included **page numbers**?
- ✓ Have I maintained consistent use of **verb tense**?
- ✓ Have I used **strong** verbs?
- ✓ Have I used active and passive voice appropriately, given the field of writing?
- ✓ Have I read the entire paper **aloud**, one word at a time, to check for simple errors?
- ✓ Have I eliminated **unnecessary words**?
- ✓ Have I carefully proofread the paper for **spelling and punctuation**?

Check for varied sentence structure and length: With a pen in your hand, read your paper out loud. At the end of each sentence, make a slash mark (/). Look at your sentences: are they very long? Very short? Mix it up!

Check for complete sentences: Starting from the last sentence in your paper, read it backwards, one sentence at a time. This helps you focus on a single sentence. Double-underline the subject and underline the verb for each independent clause. Make sure each subject has a verb. A sentence that starts with *for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so, although, as, because,* or *which* runs a high risk of being a sentence fragment, so read it out loud to check if any additional words are needed or if it should be connected to the previous sentence. Be on the lookout for misplaced or absent commas that result in run-on sentences or comma splices.

Check pronouns' referents: Draw a small square around each pronoun. Draw an arrow to the pronoun's antecedent/referent. Check that your writing is clear and specific on who or what the pronoun is referring to (Does the reader know who *they* are? Can the reader easily know what you mean by *it*?). Check for singular/plural consistency.

Check transitional words and phrases: Draw a wavy line under each transitional word or phrase (*moreover, in addition, on the other hand,* etc.). You should have *some* transitions but not *too many*. Is each transitional word being used appropriately?

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