Self-Editing Tips
Self Editing Tips

1. After working on your paper, put it away for a day or so, and then read it aloud. If something doesn’t sound right, change it.

2. Make sure you have used your sources correctly: refer to the Avoiding Plagiarism PowerPoint.

3. If your instructor requires you to write from the third person point of view, search your paper for 1st or 2nd person (i.e., I, me, my, our, us, we, you, your). Rename these pronouns (i.e., person, individual, society, reader, author, character).

4. Proofread your paper for careless typographical errors and for the following common sentence level errors.
Word Choice

Avoid starting sentences with words like **there is**, **there are**, **there were** (empty words).

- There are several sources that support Luft’s claim.
- There are many times in life when hard work pays off.

✓ Several sources support Luft’s claim.
✓ Hard work usually pays off.
Commonly Misused Words  Ex. 1

**Its vs. It’s**

*Its* (possessive)

- The gerbil runs all night in *its* cage.

*It’s* (it is)

- *It’s* a heavy vehicle, which makes it more difficult to maneuver.

  **Tip:** To catch a possible error, read it as “it is”

**Then vs. Than**

*Then* is a sequence of time

- I went to the mall, and *then* (next) I stopped at the grocery store.

*Than* is used when comparing to introduce the second element of an unequal comparison.

- The larger, comfier couch was more appealing *than* the cheaper, more economical couch, but the buyer could decide which one she wanted.
Commonly Misused Words Ex. 2

Affect (verb)

**Affect** means to influence

Example:
The young boy’s tears **affected** his mother’s decisions more than his father’s.

Effect (noun)

**Effect** is a noun meaning result

Example:
However, by crying, the boy achieved his desired **effect**: his mother convinced his father to let him have the toy.
Commonly Misused Words  Ex. 3

✓ A lot is always two words but should be avoided in collegiate (college-level) papers.

✓ Definite/Definitely has “finite” in the middle.

✓ Separate/Separately has “rat” in the middle.

Check out this helpful site:
**Check Punctuation Ex. 1**

**FANBOYS are joiners**

For, and, nor, but, or, yet, so are coordinating conjunctions.

IC, and IC (IC= Independent clause/simple sentence)

**Example:**

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the average male in the United States can expect to live to be seventy-six years old, **and** the average female will likely live to seventy-one.

When you join to ICs with a coordinating conjunction (bolded) you need a comma.
Check Punctuation Ex. 2

**DC** = dependent clause (DCs depend on ICs to finish the thought; they cannot stand alone)

**IC** = independent clause (ICs can stand alone)

✅ **DC, IC**

When Jimmy runs on the playground, he practices falling down.

✅ **ICDC**

Jimmy practices falling down when he runs on the playground.
Semicolon (;)

Used to join two closely related and complete sentences:

✓ According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the average male in the United States can expect to live to be seventy-six years of age; the average female will likely live to be eighty-one.

Colon (:)

Used when the second sentence defines or explains the first or to introduce a quotation:

✓ Thomas Paine’s first pamphlet in the series The American Crisis starts with these famous words: “These are the times that try men’s souls.”
Colons are also used to introduce a list; however, they never directly follow a verb or preposition:

Example:

At the amusement part, we rode: the rollercoaster, the Ferris wheel, the bumper cars, and the log flume.

We rode several rides at the amusement park: the rollercoaster, the Ferris wheel, the bumper cars, and the log flume.
Noun/Pronoun Agreement

**Pronoun:** I, you, he, she, it, they, etc.

**Noun:** a person, place or thing

Pronouns always refer back to a noun (antecedent), so the reference has to be clear and has to agree in form (singular or plural) and gender.

**Examples:**

✓ Because the car would not start, it had to be towed.

✓ The sociologists had to work to finish their report.

✓ The sociologist had a required time frame to complete his or her report.
Which, That, or Who?

Use **which** when information is nonessential to the sentence (always preceded by or offset by commas):

- Coq au vin, **which** I like best, is our meal tonight.

Use **that** when information is essential (restrictive) to the sentence (no comma):

- The meal **that** I like best is spaghetti.

Use **who** when the information refers back to a person (comma when essential/no comma when nonessential):

- The boy **who** threw the spitball got detention today.