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MASTER WRITING COACH

How to Sabotage Your Self-Editing Efforts

Avoid These 4 Self-Editing Traps

By Dawn Josephson, The Master Writing Coach™

Many writers inadvertently make the writing and editing process more difficult than it needs to be. As a result, they sabotage their own efforts and actually put more errors in their text than they remove. Following are the top self-sabotaging mistakes writers make. Avoid these things and watch your self-editing success soar.

1. Second-guessing yourself

When you second-guess yourself, you wonder if something you wrote is wrong. You may have a feeling that it's correct, but you let your self-talk convince you otherwise. You may flip-flop between right and wrong for minutes or hours. Ultimately, you decide it's wrong, when it is actually correct. Then you change the correct version to something that's incorrect. What a shame!

If you find yourself stuck in an internal struggle of whether something you wrote is correct or incorrect, more often than not, it's correct. That's right. Whatever you put on paper first comes out instinctively, and your instincts are usually right on. So if you're flip-flopping and asking yourself, "Is this right?" it probably is. Stop second-guessing yourself and focus on your proven writing challenges.

2. Not being willing to let go

Some writers get so attached to their work that they're not willing to ever let it go. They're continually changing a paragraph here or refining a word choice there. Nothing they do is ever good enough, and the editing process is never-ending.

Realize that you could likely edit any piece indefinitely. You'll always find something you want to change, whether it's a single word or an entire concept. At some point you simply have to say, "That's it. It's done." And then you must hand it off. If you never let the self-editing process end, you'll never have a successful experience.

3. Having too many versions of the text

Every written piece goes through many drafts. That's normal. What's not normal is saving every single version of the text you ever wrote. That's called "confusion." Even so, some writers think they must save every version "just in case." This can work if you have a good file naming system; however, most people do not. As a result, they get confused about which version of their file is the most recent, and which version they actually edited.

In reality, the only version of your text you need to save is the most recent one. If you need a part of an old version for some future writing, then save just that one part, not the entire document, and give the saved information a new file name. The more versions of your file you have, the more confusing you make the process.

4. Being a poor note taker

When asked about their research materials or character background information, many writers point to their head and say, "It's all in here." They think they don't need to write out notes or keep track of facts. Then when it comes time to edit their work, they can't keep track of specifics and end up with inconsistent data and/or inaccurate information.

Realize that part of being a good writer and self-editor is having reliable data, not information you "think you know." You may need to prove something you wrote down the road, or you may need a reminder of something you said earlier in your piece. In those instances, having notes, complete with where you got the data from and how recent it is, either on paper or in your computer, are key. So learn some good note taking skills. It'll make the self-editing process much easier.

About the Author

Dawn Josephson, the Master Writing Coach, has been helping professional speakers and business leaders write better to earn more since 1998. As the author of *Write It Right: The Ground Rules for Self-Editing Like the Pros* and *Putting It On Paper: The Ground Rules for Creating Promotional Pieces that Sell Books*, she empowers leaders to master the printed word for enhanced credibility, positioning, and profits. Contact her at dawn@masterwritingcoach.com.