Editing Your First Draft

Workbook

Edit Checklist Worksheet

When making notes, ask yourself these questions:

☐ **What bumps you out of the story?**

☐ **What doesn't make sense?**

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☐ **When does the style get clunky?**

☐ **Does each chapter move the story forward?**

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☐ **Is the protagonist changing and evolving? Do they have agency? Are they making decisions and choices that drive the story and create drama?**

☐ **Does the pace vary? I find it helps to sketch out the story as a rollercoaster, with peaks and troughs. Or is it flatlining?**

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☐ **Are the characters distinct? Or are some of them redundant? It's surprising how often two characters will serve the same purpose, so can some of them be merged into one character.**

☐ **Is the POV the right one? Would the story benefit from switching for first person to third person, for example? Try a chapter in a different POV and see if it works.**

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☐ **Are you setting up themes and characters that don't pay off later in the story? This can be a bigger problem for pantsers, who will forget or ignore ideas they started in early chapters which just fizzle out.**

☐ **Try and identify your bad habits. This is tricky as you might be completely blind to them, but as you develop as a writer you will start to notice when you keep correcting the same things again and again. An author I recently edited had their own style guide, listing all their preferences for the edit, but along with that they also noted their bad habits and asked me to keep an eye out for them.**

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☐ **Most importantly, remind yourself of the good stuff. As well as making notes regarding the errors, be sure to leave praise to yourself for the cool bits. Believe me, there will be days when you need a little pat on the back, even if it's from your past self.**