

Essay Revising and Editing Checklists

Use these checklists to improve an essay or review a classmate's work. Pair them with Quillbot's [Grammar Checker](#) to turn in your best work every time.

Essay revising checklist

- ☐ The [introduction](#) paragraph includes background information to familiarize readers with the main topic.
- ☐ The introduction includes a [thesis statement](#) that summarizes the essay's main idea.
- ☐ The essay has two or more [body paragraphs](#) to develop the thesis.
- ☐ The body paragraphs follow a logical order, such as most to least important or chronological sequence.
- ☐ Each body paragraph begins with a topic sentence that shows what the paragraph will be about and how the body paragraph topic is connected to the thesis.
- ☐ Each body paragraph includes several supporting details to develop the topic sentence.
- ☐ The body paragraphs include [transition words and phrases](#) to signal examples, contrast, additions, and other relationships between ideas.
- ☐ All of the sentences in each body paragraph are relevant to the topic sentence.
- ☐ Each piece of evidence from an outside source has a clear in-text [citation](#).
- ☐ A [conclusion](#) paragraph reiterates the main idea, explains how the points are connected, and ends with a final insight or call to action.

Essay editing checklist

Commas

- ☐ The draft successfully uses [commas](#) in these situations:
 - Before the [coordinating conjunction](#) (like “and,” “but,” “or,” and “so”) that joins the two complete sentences (aka [independent clauses](#)) in a [compound sentence](#)
 - To separate three or more words or phrases in a list, including an [Oxford comma](#) before the coordinating conjunction that joins the last item to the list
 - After an introductory word, phrase, or clause
 - Before and after [nonrestrictive clauses](#) that aren't essential to a sentence's meaning
 - Between [coordinate adjectives](#) that modify the same [noun](#)
 - Between a city and a state
- ☐ The draft avoids unnecessary commas in these places:
 - Before [subordinating conjunctions](#), like “when,” “if,” and “because.”
 - Before a coordinating conjunction that connects two words or two phrases

Sentence structure and variety

- ☐ Each sentence ends with a period (no run-on sentences).
- ☐ Each question ends with a [question mark](#).

- ❑ Each compound sentence has a comma + a coordinating conjunction or a [semicolon](#) between the two independent clauses (no [comma splices](#)).
- ❑ Semicolons are only used in these two situations:
 - Lists of three or more phrases that already contain commas
 - Between two complete sentences that are closely related
- ❑ All of the sentences express a complete thought with a subject and a verb (no [sentence fragments](#)).
- ❑ The draft has a variety of different [types of sentences](#) and sentence lengths.
- ❑ Lists of three or more words or phrases have [parallel structure](#) because each item is the same [part of speech](#).
- ❑ When sentences end with [parenthetical citations](#), the period goes after the parentheses.
- ❑ When a sentence ends with a quotation, the period is inside the end [quotation marks](#).

Apostrophes, contractions, and possessives

- ❑ Every apostrophe in the draft is part of a [contraction](#) or a [possessive noun](#) (and never in plural nouns that aren't also possessive).
- ❑ Each contraction (like "isn't" or "won't") has an apostrophe.
- ❑ Each possessive noun has an apostrophe.
- ❑ The writer uses "its," "their," and "whose" as [possessive pronouns](#) (which don't have apostrophes) instead of the contractions "it's" ("it is"), "they're" ("they are"), and "who's" ("who is").

Verbs

- ❑ Each sentence has correct subject-verb agreement, especially when there's a [prepositional phrase](#) between the subject and the verb.
 - Singular subjects have [present-tense verbs](#) that end in "-s" (e.g., "the student has" and "the student edits").
 - Plural subjects and [compound subjects](#) have [present-tense verbs](#) that don't end in "-s" (e.g., "students have" and "students write").
- ❑ Sentences that describe actions or situations from the past have [past-tense verbs](#).

Word choice

- ❑ Unless allowed by the instructor or required by the assignment, the draft avoids [second-person pronouns](#), like "you" and "your."
- ❑ Every [pronoun](#) (like "it" or "they") has a clear antecedent (a noun that it represents).
- ❑ The writer uses [active voice](#) instead of [passive voice](#) wherever possible.
- ❑ The draft is free of sound-alike errors, such as:
 - [Accept vs. except](#)
 - [Affect vs. effect](#)
 - [Apart vs. a part](#)
 - [Its vs. it's](#)
 - [Lose vs. loose](#)
 - [Passed vs. past](#)
 - [Than vs. then](#)
 - [There vs. their vs. they're](#)

- To vs. too
- Who's vs. whose

Style and formatting

- Date and number ranges are separated with an **en dash** (–) instead of a **hyphen** (-), unless your style guidelines require otherwise.
- **Compound adjectives** are connected with hyphens (e.g., “nine-year-old cat”), except when the first word is an adverb that ends in “-ly” (e.g., “commonly confused words”).
- Titles of longer works (books, journals, films) have *italics*. Titles of shorter works (articles, poems, or short stories) have quotation marks.
- Quotation marks are only used when quoting a source or piece of dialogue or for a title (no scare quotes).
- **Proper nouns** and the important words in titles follow **capitalization rules**. (Check your style guidelines, if applicable, for any special rules about capitalizing titles. For example, **APA** capitalizes “with” in a title, but **MLA** does not.)