

GenGuides | REVIEW YOUR WORK

by *Genwriters* | Now is the time to edit

When your writing is complete, take the time to review and edit your work. Regardless of who your audience will be, you will want to produce a well-written and edited volume.

- ✓ Read through your work. Even better, have a friend or relative read your draft for continuity and clarity. Read your work out loud to yourself. You will “hear” your sentence phrasing better and identify awkward sections.
- ✓ Look at your sentence structure. Do you have sentences that are too long, or too short? Many times awkward phrases are caused by wordiness. Are your sentences boring? A series of short, choppy sentences can be boring, especially if they all begin with the same preposition. Combine sentences, or split sentences as needed to refine your writing.
- ✓ Look at the flow from sentence to sentence, paragraph to paragraph. Does your writing flow smoothly? Or are there sudden turns leaving your readers wondering if they missed something? Your stories should be tied together in a cohesive manner.
- ✓ Are there uninteresting or irrelevant sections? Don’t be afraid to edit out that which is not relevant.
- ✓ Be sure that you have been accurate with your content. Review facts and carefully proofread dates to be sure that you have transcribed from your notes accurately.
- ✓ Do a spell check, and if your word processing program has one, a grammar check. This is the quickest and easiest way

to proof your writing. But don't rely solely on these system-generated checks.

Nothing can replace reading the document yourself. Remember, spell check does not identify a misspelled word when that misspelling is still a word (albeit an incorrect one for your writing). A grammar check program can help identify awkward passages and misused words.

- ✓ Look for consistency in personal name spelling. There can be multiple spellings for surnames, and you may have uncovered quite a few in your research. Use the most common, or most recent, spelling for your surname and use it consistently throughout your book. You can make note of variant spellings in the notes to your book
- ✓ Choose one date format and apply it throughout your book. The standard format for genealogists is day/month/year. The month is spelled out, and the year is a four-digit number. Hence, you would write a date as: 2 February 1879. The date cannot be misinterpreted in this format.

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PROOFREAD FOR COMMON PUNCTUATION ERRORS

Punctuation marks (commas, periods, exclamations points, parentheses, etc.) are used to solely to improve the readability of the written word. While there are rules governing the use of various marks of punctuation, keep in mind that your goal is to ensure that each sentence is punctuated in a way to clarify your meaning and intention.

Read through your writing once focusing solely on punctuation usage. While you were editing your work for content, you probably did not pay close attention to the mechanics of your writing. Take the time to make a final pass focusing on this important element.

Refer to a style manual, such as "The Chicago Manual of Style," for rules regarding proper use of punctuation.

Punctuation marks should be the same font and format as the text immediately preceding them. For instance, a question mark after italicized text should appear in the italicized format.

EXCLAMATION POINTS

Limit the use of exclamation points. Actually, try not to use any. They become ineffective because most people tend to overuse them. If you feel the need to use an exclamation point, look at the verbiage in the sentence. Perhaps by simply changing the wording, you will achieve the emphasis you desire without the need for an exclamation point.

COMMAS

Commas can enhance the readability of your family history. As you read your writing, think of commas as your "breath" point. If there is a point in a sentence that you would naturally pause, or take a breath, you may want to place a comma there. Well-placed commas will help the flow of your writing.

PERIODS

All sentences must end with a period (unless it is a question, in which case you would insert a question mark). Be sure all of your sentences are closed with a period. There should be only one space after each period before the beginning of the next sentence. Many of us learned long ago to insert two spaces after a period, but for readability, one space is considered best.

QUOTATION MARKS

When using quotation marks, remember that periods and commas go inside ending quote marks while semi-colons and colons go outside ending quote marks.

SEMI-COLONS AND COLONS

Semi-colons and colons are often confused in written text. Semi-colons are used to separate two complete sentences or two independent thoughts. A semi-colon is similar to a comma but with more emphasis. A semi-colon may also be used to separate items in a list when the series involves internal punctuation (such as additional commas). A colon is most often used to introduce a list.

WATCH THAT APOSTROPHE!

The apostrophe is a frequently misunderstood form of punctuation. It is often used either too generously or overlooked when its presence is needed. A few simple rules, and extra care during the editing process, will help to ensure that every apostrophe is properly placed.

An apostrophe is used to show possession. The possessive form of a noun indicates the noun owns something. If the word is singular, add an apostrophe followed by an "s"; if the word is a plural ending in an "s" simply add an apostrophe.

Winter's hush
The cat's meow
The puppies' paws

The apostrophe is also used to show the omission of letters, for instance, when creating contractions.

it's = it is who's = who is
he'll = he will didn't = did not
don't = do not

An apostrophe is not used with a possessive pronoun (her, his, my, yours, ours, its).

Incorrect: The pill was her's to swallow.
Correct: The pill was hers to swallow.

Incorrect: The cat played with it's tail.
Correct: The cat played with its tail.

The word *it's* is always a contraction for the words "it is." Reread the incorrect sentences above replacing *it's* with "it is." The use of the contraction is clearly incorrect in these cases; the word *its* is a possessive pronoun and the correct word to use in these sentences.

An apostrophe is also not used to show the plural form of a word. Plurals are formed simply by adding the letter "s" to the word, no apostrophe required.

When you proofread, be sure to proofread for apostrophes. If you tend to leave them out, then check every word ending with "s" or "es" to see if an apostrophe is needed. If you tend to overuse apostrophes, then check every apostrophe against the rules to determine if it is needed.

COMMONLY MISUSED WORDS

their, they're, there

their is the possessive form of they
they're is a contraction of they are
there refers to a place

who's, whose

who's is a contraction of who is
whose is the possessive form of who

your, you're

your is the possessive form of you
you're is a contraction of you are

its, it's

its is the possessive form of it
it's is a contraction of it is

affect, effect

affect is a verb meaning to influence
effect is a noun meaning result

emigrate, immigrate

emigrate means to exit
immigrate means to enter

COMMON SPELLING ERRORS

CORRECT	INCORRECT	CORRECT	INCORRECT
acceptable	acceptible	liaison	laison
accommodate	accomodate	lieutenant	leutenent
acquaintance	acquaintence	judgment	judgement
allege	aledge	memento	momento
all right	alright	millennium	millenium
anoint	annoint	necessary	neccesary
argument	arguement	niece	neice
boundaries	boundries	noticeable	noticable
calendar	calender	occurred	occured
cemetery	cemetary	occasionally	occassionally
collectible	collectable	occurrence	occurence
commitment	committment	pastime	pasttime
consensus	concensus	perseverance	perseverence
definitely	definatly	precede	preceed
development	developement	privilege	priviledge
disappoint	dissappoint	pursue	persue
equipment	equiptment	receive	recieve
exceed	excede	recommend	reccommend
existence	existance	seize	sieze
fascinate	fasinate	separate	seperate
foreign	foriegn	sergeant	sargent
forty	fourty	sheriff	sherrif
gauge	guage	siege	seige
harass	harrass	subpoena	subpena
height	heighth	succession	succesion
hierarchy	heirarchy	supersede	supercede
incidentally	incidently	threshold	threshhold
independent	independant	tragedy	tradgedy
inoculate	innoculate	twelfth	twelvth
irrelevant	irrelavent	withhold	withold