

Revision Checklist

It is rumored that James Joyce worked on one sentence in *Finnegan's Wake* for fourteen years. We don't need to go that far, but a polished story is the editor's best friend and is more likely to be published. First, set your story aside for a while so it will be fresh to you when you pick it up again. Then, here are some questions to ask yourself when you do your rewrite. Before your final draft take it to your writers group, or another experienced writer/editor, for feedback.

- Can you sum up the story in one sentence?
- Have you taken out every unnecessary word?
- Have you used the features in your word processor such as find/replace, spell check, and grammar check?
- Where does the story begin?
- Does it hook the reader?
- Where does the story end?
- Does it say what you want it to say, or does it take a sidetrack?
- Is there any extraneous stuff at the beginning or end?
- Did the characters achieve anything?
- Is the point of view (first person, third person, omniscient) consistent?
- Is every character important to the story?
- Do the characters have an agenda—their own, not yours?
- Are the characters revealed through the choices and actions they make under pressure?
- Does the dialogue have attitude, with each character having his own agenda?
- Is there any “reader-feeder” where you are TELLING the reader something you want them to know? If it's important to the story SHOW it, if not cut it.
- Is there tension? Unanswered questions? Conflict such as two characters with opposing agendas?
- Does each scene have a beginning, middle, and end?
- Does each scene have a emotion, force, drive?
- Does it flow, build and have transitions?
- Do the readers see wide-angle shots as well as being drawn in with close ups?
- Does each scene play out an emotion that no other scene does?
- Is it of interest to other people and will others understand it?