"Self-Edit Saver" Revision Checklist

Do you go back and revise sections you've already written even though you should focus on forward progress? Are your first drafts taking longer than expected because of this habit? The "Self-Edit Saver" Revision Checklist can help!

Most revision checklists focus on story structure and organization (e.g., "Save The Cat"). The "Self-Edit Saver" takes a different approach: It encourages you to list potential revisions for your WIP so you'll feel less tempted to make changes in the middle of the drafting process. This allows you to save and keep track of your revision ideas for the next draft.

The "Self-Edit Saver" Revision Checklist coincides with the blog post "Chronicling The Craft: Draft #2 Revisions – 30% Complete," and was inspired by the checklist I created while working on a first draft. You can use this checklist along with the widely known "Save The Cat" beat sheet or other revision worksheets.

The checklist is divided into three parts:

Instructions

Here you'll find instructions on how to use the "Self-Edit Saver" Revision Checklist as well as my Six Steps to Saving Your Self-Edits for Later.

Checklist A: Universal Revisions

Use this section of the checklist for tracking revisions that will appear throughout the WIP:

   I.   **Did I Remember These?:** Major changes regarding backstory, characters, structural improvements, and repetitive elements to delete or revise throughout the WIP

   II. **Consistency Checks:** Has a character's name or age changed? What about the name of a location, object, etc.? What other facts or spelling do you need to check?

   III. **Cosmetic Changes and Edits:** Minor / editorial changes such as deleting filler words or eliminating dialogue tags and adverbs

Checklist B: Chapter-Specific Revisions

Use this section for listing individual changes within a chapter, such as dialogue edits, reminders for shortening scenes, and adding, deleting, or clarifying certain elements.

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"Self-Edit Saver" Revision Checklist

Instructions for Checklist A:

1. Print out one page apiece for Sections I, II, and III.

2. Manually number each line, and fill in with items for each type of revision:

    i. **Did I Remember These?:** Major changes (backstory, characters, structural improvements) or repetitive elements to delete or revise throughout the WIP

    ii. **Consistency Checks:** Facts and spelling of names, locations, or objects to check or change throughout the WIP

    iii. **Cosmetic Changes and Edits:** Minor / editorial changes (deleting filler words, eliminating dialogue tags and adverbs, etc.)

3. Repeat Steps #1 and #2 if you need additional pages for any section.

4. Review Checklist A before each session to refresh your memory on upcoming revisions.

5. When you complete an item in Checklist A, check it off in the "Done" column, and (if necessary) note the chapter number(s) in the "Chapter #" column.

6. Hang onto each page of Checklist A until you finish revising the WIP. Then, review each page one last time to ensure each item is checked off.

Instructions for Checklist B:

1. Create a separate checklist for each chapter by printing out as many Checklist B pages as needed and labeling them accordingly.

2. Manually number each line, and fill in with items for that specified chapter.

3. Repeat Steps #1 and #2 if you need additional pages for a chapter.

4. When it's time to revise a chapter, review its respective checklist to refresh your memory on upcoming revisions.

5. When you complete an item in Checklist B, check it off in the "Done" column.

6. Hang onto each page of a chapter's checklist until you finish revising that chapter. Then, review the checklist one last time to ensure each item is checked off.

Six Steps to Saving Your Self-Edits for Later

1. **Be Open to Revision Ideas.** Our subconscious has a funny way of processing our stories when we're not working them, even when we've moved on from a particular scene or chapter. If you randomly think of edits that could improve the story, that's great! The question is, how quickly should you address that change?

2. **Resist the Urge with a Spoken Mantra.** Instead of heeding that temptation to incorporate the new idea now, stop and speak this mantra (or any that works for you) out loud:

   "I recognize that [insert your idea here] might improve the WIP. But I've already finished that scene, and this is only the first draft. First drafts aren't meant to be perfect. So, I'll wait until the next draft and make the change then."

3. **Start a List of Your Revision Ideas.** When writing manually or typing in a Word document, it's important to commit your revision ideas to a list so you don't forget them. Include the chapter number where the change would occur, and number the first idea as #1, the second as #2, and so on.

4. **Repeat Steps #1 Through #3 as Necessary.** Each time you find potential revisions as you continue through the first draft, recall your mantra and say it out loud, then add the new idea(s) to your "self-edit saver" list.

5. **Use the "Self-Edit Saver" Revision Checklist to Organize Your Ideas.** Once you finish your first draft, use this checklist template to organize your revision ideas. List any changes that affect the WIP as a whole in Checklist A, and any chapter-specific changes in Checklist B. See the Instructions page for more information.

6. **Print Your List and Keep It Handy.** That way, you can review your checklists before each revising session, then cross or check off each item as they're incorporated.

   BONUS: Repeat the Six Steps During Your Second Draft If You're Planning on a Third Draft. This will depend on how many drafts you want to work on before giving the WIP to critique partners / beta-readers, querying the novel to agents, etc.

NOTE: The above list is based on the Six Steps to Saving Your Self-Edits for Later from the blog post "Chronicling The Craft: Draft #2 Revisions – 30% Complete."

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"Self-Edit Saver" Revision Checklist

Title: _____   **Draft #:** _____

Checklist A: Universal Revisions

NOTE: If you require more lines, print out additional pages of Checklist A as needed, then number the list items manually.

I. Did I Remember These?	Done?	If "Done," which Chapter #?
_____	☐	_____
_____	☐	_____
_____	☐	_____
_____	☐	_____
_____	☐	_____
_____	☐	_____
_____	☐	_____
_____	☐	_____
_____	☐	_____
_____	☐	_____
_____	☐	_____
_____	☐	_____

"Self-Edit Saver" Revision Checklist

Title: _____   **Draft #:** _____

Checklist A: Universal Revisions

NOTE: If you require more lines, print out additional pages of Checklist A as needed, then number the list items manually.

II. Consistency Checks	Done?	If "Done," which Chapter #?
_____	☐	_____
_____	☐	_____
_____	☐	_____
_____	☐	_____
_____	☐	_____
_____	☐	_____
_____	☐	_____
_____	☐	_____
_____	☐	_____
_____	☐	_____
_____	☐	_____
_____	☐	_____

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"Self-Edit Saver" Revision Checklist

Title: _____ **Draft #:** _____

Checklist A: Universal Revisions

NOTE: If you require more lines, print out additional pages of Checklist A as needed, then number the list items manually.

III. Cosmetic Changes and Edits	Done?	If "Done," which Chapter #?
_____	☐	_____
_____	☐	_____
_____	☐	_____
_____	☐	_____
_____	☐	_____
_____	☐	_____
_____	☐	_____
_____	☐	_____
_____	☐	_____
_____	☐	_____
_____	☐	_____
_____	☐	_____

"Self-Edit Saver" Revision Checklist

Title: _____   **Draft #:** _____

Checklist B: Chapter-Specific Revisions

NOTE: This page represents one chapter in your WIP. To create a separate checklist for each chapter, print out as many Checklist B pages as needed and label / number them accordingly.

Chapter #: _____   **Done?**

_____	☐
_____	☐
_____	☐
_____	☐
_____	☐
_____	☐
_____	☐
_____	☐
_____	☐
_____	☐
_____	☐
_____	☐

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