**Editing: A Quick Reference**

**We are looking for feedback!**

**Please provide your comments here.**

Audience & Tone

* Check “audience pronouns” like **You**.
* Check for emotionally-laden words.
* Look, most of all, for consistency.

Argument. Check for:

* Discrepancies in the beginning and the ending.
* Transition between sections.
* Transitions between paragraphs
* Transitions between sentences

Paragraphs

* Does each paragraph start with a topic sentence?
* Are all the following sentences on the same topic?
* Do the sentences follow an order? Can you name the order (chronological, argumentative, etc.)?
* Look for parallel structure. Do lists use the same verb form?
* Does the paragraph go from what is known or established to what is new?

Sentences

* Does verb follow the subject?
* Are the subject and the verb close to one another?
* Chop qualifiers: **very, really, essentially.**
* Hunt down wordy phrases: “due to the fact,” “as a result,” “not only X but also Y.”
* Put negative sentences in the positive where possible!

Verbs

* Turn passive voice into active where possible.
* Make “to be” verbs active when possible.
* Replace weak verb phrases with active verbs, i.e., turn “have a positive effect” into “improve”
* Have verbs been “nouned” unnecessarily? (“notification”/“notify,” “decision”/“decide,” etc.)

Pronouns

* Make sure pronouns (she, they, which, that) have clear antecedents
* Use “who” for people, not “that”
* Examine sentences beginning with “this” or “that” for possible summary nouns

Punctuation

* “Commas,” says Jen, “always go inside the quotation marks, as do periods.”
* “Unless,” says David, “action or narrative follows the quote,” and they demonstrate an example.
* “Furthermore,” Jen reminds us, “a footnote always goes after the punctuation,” like in this sentence.[[1]](#footnote-1)
* “My heroes are my parents, Superman and Wonder Woman,” says David. “Wow, you parents are Superman and Wonder Woman?” Jen asks. “No, my heroes are my parents, Superman, *and* Wonder Woman. Forgot that Oxford Comma!”
1. Puthoff and Merems, May 2024. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)