

Checking the 'fundamentals'

Spelling

- * use a dictionary (*Macquarie Australian Dictionary*)
- * use an Australian English spell-checker
- * check *Style* for common misspellings
- * develop your own list, especially with words you commonly misspell

Punctuation

- * should assist understanding, not hamper understanding of sentences
- * should not be overdone (aim to minimise)
- * check the right letters are capitalised
 - + The first word of every sentence.
 - + proper nouns (**A**my, **B**risbane, **A**ustralian **L**abor **P**arty)
- * does every sentence end in a full stop or a question mark?
- * are all but the best-known acronyms spelled out the first time?
 - + Churchill Park Action Group (CPAG) but ACTU, NATO
- * are commas used correctly, especially with names?
 - * check that modifiers have correct punctuation
 - + The big, brown, lazy bear slept in the sun. (*Use commas with unrelated adjectives*)
 - + A second-rate result will be disappointing. (*Hyphenation of compound modifier*)
 - + His lowly ranked team is improving. (*No hyphenation when an adverb ending in -ly*)
 - + There are three- and four-year courses available. (*Note placement of hyphens*)
- * use these punctuation marks, as needed
 - + full point [.] no space before, one space between sentences
 - + comma [,] no space before (none after in figures)
 - + apostrophe ['] no space before or after
 - + question mark [?] no space before
 - + hyphen [-] no space before or after
 - + em dash [–] space before & after
 - + standard round open bracket [(] space before, no space after
 - + standard round close bracket [)] no space before, space after unless full stop
 - + open & close quotes [“ ”] up flush against words they enclose
 - + single quotation marks [‘ ’] up flush against words they enclose
 - + the dollar symbol [\$] up flush against numbers they describe
 - + the ampersand (only in registered company names) [&] space either side
- * limit the use of
 - + colon [:] run up against word they follow, space after
 - + semi-colon [;] most newspapers don't use it at all
 - + elipsis (space either side) [...] space either side
 - + "at" symbol (for URLs) [@] no space on either side
 - + oblique (for URLs) [/] no space on either side
 - + tilde (for URLs) [~] no space on either side in URLs
 - + percentage symbol [%] use *per cent* (two words) instead
 - + asterisk [*] use bullet instead [●]
 - + copyright symbol [©] space either side
 - + back slash [\] no space on either side
- * do not use
 - + exclamation mark [!]
 - + hash [#]
 - + caret [^]
 - + maths symbols [+ - x ÷ = ≠ √ ± ≅]
 - + curly brackets [{ }]
 - + less than, greater than [< >] don't write URLs inside them either

Grammar

- * check sentences are complete both in structure (do they have a subject, verb & object?) & in meaning (do they make sense or are there still confusing bits?)
- * have correct tenses been used & do tenses agree within sentences?
- * remember an entity such a department, organisation, political party, sporting team, family or couple is singular & should be referred to as an "it" & not a "they"
- * check plurals haven't been given apostrophes between the root word & the plural ending & that possessive plurals carry an apostrophe after the "s" plural ending
- * have all grammatical problems been rectified?

Attribution

- * is it perfectly clear who is speaking & when speakers change?
- * are all opinions, comments & claims attributed?

Tautology

- * watch out for common-but-needless repetitions
- + 7am tomorrow morning
- + past history (or past experience)
- + new initiative
- + new record, all-time record
- + circular shape
- + advance planning
- + future plans
- + violent explosion

Redundancy

- * similarly, avoid these sorts of redundant phrases
- + best ever (or first ever)
- + completely destroyed
- + consensus of opinion
- + early pioneer
- + plain-clothes detective
- + self-confessed
- + widow of the late ...

Inclusive language

- * have you eliminated discriminatory language?
- + invisibility for women happens when the term or suffix “man” is used generically to refer to men & women
- + unnecessary gender modifiers (woman lawyer, female supervisor) tend to paint women as an oddity deserving special linguistic treatment
- + trivialisation (“he cried like a woman”, “even a housewife...”, “an office girl”) causes offence
- + stereotypical descriptions (“mother of three”, “home-maker” & “single mum”) are signs of lazy writing
- + while the physical attributes & appearances of men are seldom mentioned, those of women are frequently described, even when irrelevant
- + if unsure whether something is sexist or not
 - ^ substitute a male entity/name for the female role/name in question & re-read the sentence with the new details – if it seems stupid, bizarre or totally out of place, then there’s a good chance it’s discriminatory

Economy of expression

- * are sentences as tightly written as they could be?

Jargon

- * have you substituted simple explanations in plain English?
(This may involve converting direct quotes to indirect speech.)

Clichés

- * have you eliminated tired, worn out or ‘trendy’ phrases?

Style

- * does the entire story conform to *Style*?