

An Editing Technique That Needs To Be Heard

Authors often pride themselves in being good editors as well as good writers. But there is a reason even the best writers use professional editors. It can be difficult to edit one's own work. Perhaps this is true because writers don't know what they don't know. Perhaps it's because they have read and edited their manuscript more than a dozen times and have become numb to errors or awkwardness.

If you insist on editing your own work or want to perfect it as much as possible before handing it over to a professional editor, you may want to employ an editing technique that needs to be heard. By that we mean literally listening to your words out loud. Actually read your manuscript out loud and with the same inflection as intended in your mind, as if you are reading it to an audience. Pause with each comma and period. Read slowly and intentionally, always maintaining an engaged emotional investment in sounding out the story so your ear can pick up on any flaw.

What you may hear are sentences that go on for too long, bending your ear and taxing the patience of any reader. The 15 letter word you so proudly wrote may sound clunky and disruptive when read out loud. Then you will know to replace it with a more readable word. If when reading you have trouble understanding transitions from one sentence to another, then you know it's an opportunity to make better connections, maybe use more concrete terms and maintain relevance from sentence to sentence. If you have to re-read a sentence or passage more than once to "figure out" what you meant, then you know it's poorly devised and needs revision.

An oral reading of your work is a technique that will use another one of your senses to pick up on problems that go beyond copy edits such as punctuation, spelling, and grammar. It will delve into the more abstract aspects of writing, including transitions and flow that an audience can enjoy reading seamlessly.