BELLARMINE
Writing Center

Strategies for Editing and Proofreading

When to Edit
- o Only edit when you have your final *final* draft. In other words, you have written what you want to say and organized it how you want to say it. You made major revisions already.

Editing Strategies
- o Change any passive voice sentences to active voice.
  - o *Example:* The light was turned on by me➔I turned on the light.
- o Circle all adjectives and adverbs—delete them if they don't contribute meaning to the sentence. In many instances, a more specific verb or noun you can take the place of an adjective or adverb.
- o Underline all "to be" verbs (am, is, are, was, were, be, being, did, has, have, had, ect.) and change the verbs to simple tenses (past or present) if possible.
  - o *Example:* I <u>was </u>running down the hall → I ran down the hall.
- o Put a box around unclear antecedents, (it is, there are, this is, these were). Replace those with clear nouns—what the "it" or "this" is referring to, or delete the phrase if the sentence makes sense without it.
  - o *Example:* It is important to know that some disagree. → Some disagree.
- o Vary sentence length and type. Short sentences add punch. Conversely, combining sentences can emphasize overall meaning and help with transitions.
- o Find all the places you used "tricky" punctuation—commas, dashes, apostrophes, colons, semicolons, and *make sure* you have followed the rules correctly.
- o Review the rules for commas and add or delete commas where needed.
- o Always use gender neutral and non-stereotypical language. "He" is no longer the accepted gender-neutral noun. Use "he/she," "he or she," or make the subject plural. Don't say "policeman" when you can say "police officer."

Editing and Word Count
- o If you've edited well, your word count should lessen. Cutting out excess language makes your writing more straightforward and clear.

Proofread
- o Proofreading catches small errors, such as typos.
- o Read your statement aloud.
- o Reading aloud will help you catch inadvertent errors like typos and awkward language; however, you should not be the only proofreader of your work.
- o Have a trusted friend, parent, or co-worker carefully proofread your writing for you. Tell them what mistakes you typically make.
- o Learn from your proofreaders; take note of your most common mistakes.

The Writing Center can assist writers with implementing these editing strategies. Make an appointment at: www.bellarmine.edu/writingcenter