



Copy Edit Checklist

A quick, practical checklist to help you tighten up your writing before you hit publish. Use it to spot slipups, tidy your tone, and sharpen your message. This is something we use every day.

Have you read it out loud?

When I first started writing I never understood this, but it really does catch clunky phrasing, awkward pacing, and words that just don't belong. If you stumble, the reader will too.

Is your opening strong enough?

Does it make people want to keep reading? Could it be sharper, shorter, or more curious? You have to get the reader past that heading.

Is there one clear message?

If you're saying three different things, you're saying nothing at all. Make sure your main point shines.

Does it sound like you?

Tone is everything. Is it friendly, approachable, and consistent with how you normally speak and write?

Have you cut the waffle?

Trim repetition, overexplaining, and any word that's just taking up space, every word needs to account for itself. Less fluff: more flavour.

Is every sentence pulling its weight?

Each one should either inform, persuade, guide, or move the story on. If it's just sitting there ... delete it.

Have you used plain English where possible?

Ditch the jargon; if there's a simpler way to say it, go with that. Write for humans, not committees.

Is your call to action clear?

Don't leave your reader wondering what to do next. Tell them ... nicely, clearly, and confidently.

Are your headings doing their job?

Another important one about Headings ... they should guide the reader and spark interest. They're not just labels; they're signposts.

Have you checked for repeated words or phrases?

If you've said 'that's why' three times in one post, it's time for a tidy up. Freshen it up.

Are your sentences varied in length?

Mix short and long. Too many short ones and it's choppy. Too many long ones and it's a slog. We've never worked out the perfect mix. But aim for 60-70% short to medium sentences and 30-40% longer, more details sentences, and you won't be far wrong.

Have you double-checked facts, figures, and names?

Nothing knocks your credibility quicker than the wrong year, misspelled name, or made-up stat. Check then check again!

Spelling, punctuation, grammar?

Even if you've got a spellchecker, give it a human once-over. Apostrophes especially; they're sneaky little beggars. SPAG checks are vital to good writing.

Does it look good on the page?

Big blocks of text scare people off. Use spacing, bullet points, and bolding to guide the eye.

Have you left it alone for an hour (or overnight)?

Fresh eyes spot what tired ones miss. Even a short break can make a big difference.

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