

POETRY EDITING CHECKLIST

25

EFFECTIVE
STEPS FOR
BEGINNER AND
INTERMEDIATE
WRITERS

BY PICK ME UP POETRY



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- Design A Catchy First Line
- Poetry Structure Principles
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- Arrange All The Lines In The Best Order
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Editor's Note

As a writer, you always want to make sure your work is as polished and error-free as possible. Editing your writing can be a little strange because of the bias we sometimes have toward our own words (I call it "the inner editor").

Poetry could be the most resistant to the confines of rules and laws of all the literary artforms. However, a little direction never hurt right? Don't think of these points as strict rules; instead, consider them loose guidelines you can employ to automate your poetry editing process and begin to improve the quality of your writing today!

Feel free to skip whatever you deem necessary and remember, **"Poetry is everywhere. It just needs editing."**- James Tate.



Select An Evocative Title

Your Poem's title should be engaging and incite curiosity. A good title can draw in readers, whereas a bad one can cause them to scroll past without even reading the first line.

To help you select a title that's just right, here are some tips on how to edit your poem title:

- Keep your title relevant

Your title needs to match your poem's content, so make sure they are on the same topic. Additionally, keep in mind how people will search for your poetry. If you're writing about a specific poet or work of literature, be careful not to choose titles that might get confused with other poems' names.

- Keep your title specific.

It's best to avoid general titles that could apply to any poem. Instead, choose a title that captures the mood of your work and how it will inspire readers in their own lives. For example, 'Sad Poem' or just 'Poem' are not evocative enough, while poems titled 'The Rain Falls On My Window Pane' or 'Meeting You' are more specific and engaging.

- Keep your title creative

If you can summarise your poem in one word, use that as a title. If not, be playful with how you give the reader an idea of what to expect from your work. Poetry is subjective, so there's no right or wrong way when it comes to how you choose your title.

- Your title focus on the reader

While titles that directly refer to what's happening in the poem are also acceptable, they should still aim at giving readers an idea of how reading your work will make them feel or how it might inspire something within them.

- Keep your title short and sweet

A long title will not look good in search engines or social media posts, so make sure you condense it. Additionally, contemplate how people might search for your poetry if you're writing about a particular poet or work of literature. Be careful not to choose titles that might get confused with other poems too.



If you can summarise your poem in one word, use that as a title. If not, be playful with how you give the reader an idea of what to expect from your work. Finally, focus on how your poem will make the reader feel and inspire something within them. Avoid using vague titles like 'My Poem' or 'My Life

Design A_Catchy First Line

A great poem begins with an unforgettable first line that draws readers into the piece as soon as they read it.

One way to make your first line stand out is to use a simile, metaphor or personification. These literary devices help the reader visualise what you are describing and give them something to relate to in their own life.

The way you structure your sentence or punctuate it can help capture the attention of readers. I always like to think about how I would react to reading this for the first time.

The best part is that it's not always easy or obvious how to do so—you just have to practice and let yourself explore different ideas to find what works for you.

Read The Poem Out Loud

Reading your poetry aloud can help you become a better poet, and it will allow you to catch any mistakes in spelling, grammar, and structure that may have been missed by proofreading alone.

This practice of reading your work out loud not only helps improve your writing but gives you valuable insight into whether or not people would want to read more if they came across one of your poems in a book store or library.

By reading your poetry out loud, you get a feel of the rhythm too! If it's not flowing quite like you would like it to, then move some words around, change your line breaks, or use synonyms until your poem sounds good.

Practice makes perfect.

You can also download specific programs on your Laptop or phone to read your poetry out loud. This Text-To-Speech software is free, but you can also get premium, paid solutions for better results.

Poetry Structure Principles_

Read your poem out loud. You can then hear how the words flow together, how they sound, how the rhymes work (if any), etcetera. This way, you can make adjustments to how you want the poem to sound.

It will be easier for a reader if there isn't constant rhyming throughout. The last line of every stanza may sound nice, but it will be just as effective to use rhyming words in only every second or third line.

Pay close attention to the number of lines you have per stanzas well as the line length - All of these aspects and how you use them is up to your discretion. You can do whatever feels appropriate for you and helps portray your poem the way YOU want!

Cut Any Unnecessary Words

Every time you write a poem, you should cut unnecessary words because it can help make the poem more concise and powerful. When writing your poetry, try your best to be as effective as possible with every word choice you make.

Take a look at the following example and how it can become more concise by removing some words:

"The trees sway back and forth in the wind, and the leaves rustle loudly against each other to create a sound that is both serene and ghastly."

VS:

*"Trees sway back and forth in the wind, **rustling loudly** against each other, creating a sound- both serene and ghastly."*

It's important to remember that removing words doesn't always make your poem weaker or less effective. Sometimes cutting out certain words can help you strengthen what you're trying to say.

Arrange All The Lines In The Best Order

Depending on what you want to convey, some arrangements will be better than others. The best arrangement is one that makes it easy for your readers to understand your message, and if not, they can at least enjoy reading it.



There are several different ways to do this, but one of the best ways is parallelism. Parallelism refers to repeating similar phrases or words throughout your piece, making it easy for readers to follow along with what you are trying to say.

You can also use contrast, which refers to showing how two things are different. Consider enjambment and end-stops, and be sure to use them appropriately. Poems are like puzzles, and it feels good to get all the pieces in order and watch them fit together.

Lastly, make sure that your words build up towards meaning! Don't just ramble without any sense of how the words are connected. Your poem needs to convey a message that takes your reader on a journey.

Maintain The Same Point Of View

Maintaining the same Point of View throughout a poem is critical to creating cohesion between each line. When readers are not aware of what character's perspective they are reading from or who is speaking, it can be difficult for them to connect with the piece as a whole.

Include Clear Images That Convey Tone

A great way to make sure the reader understands exactly how you want them to respond is by including clear images that convey tone. It might seem like this step would take away from creativity, but actually, it will help enhance what's already there.

Adding images that will give readers a sense of how you want them to feel allows them to build on those feelings and let themselves get into what they're reading.





Sprinkle Vivid Details

Adding vivid details in your poem is key to taking the reader on a journey. You can do this by using your five senses: sight, sound, smell, taste and touch. In addition to describing what the character experiences in a scene or setting, try adding sensory details as well.

Adding these images will bring the reader into the story and help them visualise it clearly without being too wordy or flowery. The key is balance while also allowing room for interpretation on behalf of both author and reader.

Enforce Deliberate Linebreaks

Line breaks are a powerful tool in poetry. We use them to interrupt the poem's flow, create emphasis, rhythm, pace or juxtaposition, and even create humour!

Line breaks are not just for separating lines but can also emphasise a particular word or phrase. They can serve as an exclamation point or create suspense by delaying the meaning until later in the poem.

When you're choosing where to break your lines, you must be deliberate about when and why you do so.

Line breaks are not just for separating lines but can also emphasise a particular word or phrase. They can serve as an exclamation point or create suspense by delaying the meaning until later in the poem. When you're choosing where to break your lines, you must be deliberate about when and why you do so.

Here are some helpful tips on how you can make sure your line breaks contribute to the meaning of your poem:

1) Use them sparingly - Readers shouldn't have trouble following along with what you're saying just because of poor formatting! Too many lines will also take away from your poem's rhythmic qualities, so try not to overdo it.

2) Use them to emphasise something important - A line break is an excellent way of calling attention to a meaningful word or phrase. If you want readers to notice how one line leads into the next and how each sentence flows, use it only where necessary!



3) Make them count - A line break has the potential to change how readers interpret your poem, and this is why you must be intentional about when and where you use them! For example, having a line break, every couple of lines will make each line feel more significant, while using them after quite a few sentences can create suspense or surprise for the reader.

4) Consider how they'll affect the flow - When you use a line break, readers will subconsciously try to connect it to what comes before and after. You can play around with this by placing them in such a way that they interrupt or complement your poem's flow!

If something important is correct at the end of one line, put a long pause right before it and break the following line there.

These are just a few tips on how you can make sure your poetry is formatted in such a way that serves to emphasise its meaning!

Choose The Best Words

Some words can evoke feelings or emotions, while others just don't seem to hit the mark. It is crucial to choose your words wisely to convey what you want people to feel when they read your poem.

Here are a few tips that should help with your word selection:

- 1) Experiment with different synonyms that seem like they would work well together.
- 2) Think about what sounds good, and then go with it!
- 3) Look up some different word meanings on Google Images if you need inspiration.
- 4) Cut down your words wherever possible to get your point across.
- 5) Avoid repetition.

Some Elements Of Surprise

I can't tell you how often I've read a poem that's just not very engaging. It starts with the same old things, and then it just goes on like that forever. The best poems gradually build up to an epic finale.

Elements of surprise include a plot twist, a cliffhanger, a love triangle, or a time jump- anything that the reader wasn't expecting!

You can use all these elements and many others in many different ways, but they all have the same goal - to catch the reader off-guard and make them wonder what will happen next!

Is Your Last Line Memorable?

The poem's last line is the most important, as it leaves a lasting impression on your reader. It has to be perfect. Some poets have a knack for writing an ending that sticks in your memory and haunts you long after you close the book; you can be that writer- with practice. The challenge of crafting a firm conclusion may seem intimidating at first, but it's not impossible!

Here are a few tips to help you craft the best final verse for your work:

- Avoid overused expressions.
- Don't be too ambitious with how much of an impact you want on your reader.
- Keep it short and sweet, but not too simple.
- Find the perfect balance of how long or how short your last line should be with how much you want to leave your reader thinking about it after they finish reading;
- Think about how you can leave your reader with a feeling. For example, how will they feel walking away from the poem? Is it happy or sad?
- Read what you've written out loud. It's harder to catch mistakes on paper than when reading them aloud;
- Don't be afraid of letting go of old words that aren't relevant anymore.
- Ask someone else to read it through once they've finished reading so that you can get an outside perspective on how well your poem's ending works.

Eliminate The Cliches

We all use cliches because they're easy, and we know what the reader expects of them. But using new words will make your writing more exciting and help you stand out from the crowd!

It's hard to believe that cliched phrases are still being used in poems today. We all know what they are, but it seems as though few poets have taken the time to examine them more closely.

Here are a few examples of cliches that I see most frequently in poetry:

- Love
- Heartbreak
- Soulmate/Soulmates
- Born to Run
- Runaway Train
- Roses Are Red
- Love at first sight
- Hiding behind these words
- People think I'm crazy

If you want your poem to stand out from the crowd, read through it and get rid of all familiar-sounding phrases that have been used in poetry and movies before.

You'll be amazed how much better your poetry sounds when you get rid of these Cliches!

Did You Run A Spell Check?

Even a poet who's been writing for decades should run their poetry through spell check. Spell check is an easy way to catch most of your spelling errors and grammar mistakes that you may have missed when editing.

You might think that you're good at spelling, but it only takes one misspelt word to ruin all of your hard work.

There are many free spell-checking programs out there that you can use online or download onto your computer. My Personal Favourite is Grammarly

How Grammarly can help improve your poetry
Grammarly is a tool that helps to improve your writing by catching mistakes and suggesting edits. You can run your entire document through Grammarly or just parts of it, depending on how much you need help.

The best thing about the software, though, is how easy it is to use. If you are not a poet or do not think that your writing needs editing, I still recommend giving the program a try just because of how easy it is to navigate and how much information they provide about word choice, sentence structure, etc.

How's Your Word Placement?

It's a common misconception that the words with the most meaning are at the end of a line in poetry. It is often more effective for readers to understand what they're reading about before encountering any significant details.

One standard convention in poetry is placing words with the most meaning at the beginning of a line. It will help your readers better understand what you're trying to say by giving them an idea of how you feel early in your poem.

You can also place the most important words at the end of a line. This creates a mystery for readers as they are led through your poem and left wondering how you feel by determining how important each word is during their journey.

Another good way to structure poetry is to have little to no punctuation so that lines can be read in any direction and still make sense. It is particularly effective for those who want to create a poem where the words aren't as important as how they sound and how they make the reader feel by using their voice when reciting them out loud or how it makes them interact with your work through dance, mime, or song.

Play around with different styles of poetry and explore how you can craft them to fit your desired outcome best.





The Abstract Vs. The Concrete

There is a certain beauty to the abstract. It's hard to find, but when you do, it can be breathtaking. However, poetry that doesn't include the concrete is just incomplete and unfulfilling. The two elements complement one another so beautifully because they work together to create meaning in an otherwise meaningless world.

Abstracts are ideas that exist without form or shape, while concretes are tangible objects with names and identities of their own. Combining these two elements creates something more than words on paper; it creates magic!

Root Out Adverbs

Regarding adverbs, how you use them in your poetry comes down to personal preference. While some poets find that they absolutely cannot write a word without including an adverb, others swear by cutting them from every line of poetry they ever plan to edit.

Ask yourself if the poem still makes sense without your adverb. If it doesn't, leave it because an adverb's job is to create a more potent and specific verb. However, sometimes adverbs tend to make the sentence sound redundant if used excessively.

When you do decide to go ahead and cut some adverbs, how can you spot them? There are two easy ways: The first is by reading the poem aloud while paying close attention to how certain words sound when they come after a verb or another adverb. When it sounds strange, that's your cue to edit!

The second way is to read your poem backwards. When you do this, it's much easier to catch how the words flow and if they sound right together or not.

Search for "ly" throughout the poem. If you find yourself constantly including the "ly" throughout your poem, it's time to cut some adverbs. You can either choose to keep them or get rid of all of them entirely.

Cut Out Any Unnecessary Adjectives

Adjectives are a necessary part of writing. They add to the tone and mood of your sentences, but there is a time and place for them. That time isn't always, though, and sometimes adjectives can be completely unnecessary.

Adjectives are words that describe nouns. They can help give your writing more depth, but they can also clutter the page and make it difficult for readers to get through.

Here is how to cut out any unnecessary adjectives:

- Look at each word and ask yourself how it adds to the sentence. If you can't think of a way, then cut it out

- Make sure that your adjectives describe unique qualities about your nouns. You don't want everything sounding too similar if they're all just using the exact words and adding different endings

-If you've already used the adjective, consider omitting it or using a synonym. For example, if you've already used the word "large" to describe how big something is, consider using a synonym like "massive" or just omitting it entirely.

-If your poem has too many adjectives, try cutting some out and see if it changes what you're trying to say.

Omit All Instances Of The Word 'Very'

There are many words in the English language that, when used excessively, can make your writing less effective. One of these words is "very", and using it excessively weakens your writing and makes you sound unconfident in what you're trying to say.

While 'very' isn't a bad word by any means, its absence from your writing will not change the meaning of your work.

Look Out For Problem Words

We all know how difficult it can be to find mistakes in our work. It's easy to miss them when you're looking for something else or when your eyes are tired, but if you want your poetry to shine, then you must check for these problems.

Let's start with 'they're vs their'. These two words sound very similar, but they mean different things. They're means "they are", while their means "belonging to them."

Also, keep an eye out for 'you're vs your' and 'its vs it's'.

If you already have Grammarly installed on your device, you shouldn't have this issue as Grammarly will automatically recommend any inconsistencies in real-time as you type.

Be Wary Of Passive Voice

Passive voice is writing where the subject of a sentence receives an action rather than performing it.

The following sentence is in a passive voice:
"Mistakes were made."

Meaning that the subject (a person or group) performed an action, but it does not identify who they are. It also implies that someone else is responsible for their actions rather than them taking responsibility themselves.

Passive voice can weaken your poem and make it harder for the reader to engage with what you are trying to say. On the other hand, an active voice makes it easier for your readers to follow what you are saying because they can understand who is doing what in each line of your writing.

Don't Tell The Reader How To Feel_

I've written a lot of poems in my life. Sometimes I write them with the intent to share them with others, and sometimes I write them just for myself. But one thing that's always been true is that there are some rules you shouldn't break when it comes to poetry.

One of those rules is telling your readers how they should feel about what's in your poem. After all, if someone has an emotional reaction while reading your poem, they did something right - but why would you want to tell someone how they should feel?

For instance, I have a poem that's about how frustrating it is to get up every day and find out how much the world has changed while you've been asleep. It makes me feel angry when I write it - but what if someone else feels excited? Or sad? Write your truth and let the reader react to your art however they see fit.

Use Literary Devices

To write a great poem, one needs to find the right words and put them together effectively. Using literary devices such as imagery, metaphor, and alliteration can make your writing shine by giving it more character and depth.

Check out this fantastic article we published a while ago on poetry devices.

Are Your Stanzas The Appropriate Length?

A poem isn't made up of words alone but of lines, separated by spaces on a page or the screen. It's essential to understand how these all work together to make your message as effective as possible.

How you structure your stanzas can impact how people perceive your poem, so do the appropriate research.

What dictates the length of a stanza in a poem? Free-verse poetry, for instance, does not adhere to any strict guidelines; however, English sonnets, for example, typically have 14 lines, broken into three stanzas of four lines called quatrains. Your style of poetry will determine the length of your Stanza.





Sprinkle A little Magic

The world is full of magic, and it's right in front of you. Sometimes we're too busy to see the fascinating things happening around us, but there are little wonders everywhere if you know where to look.

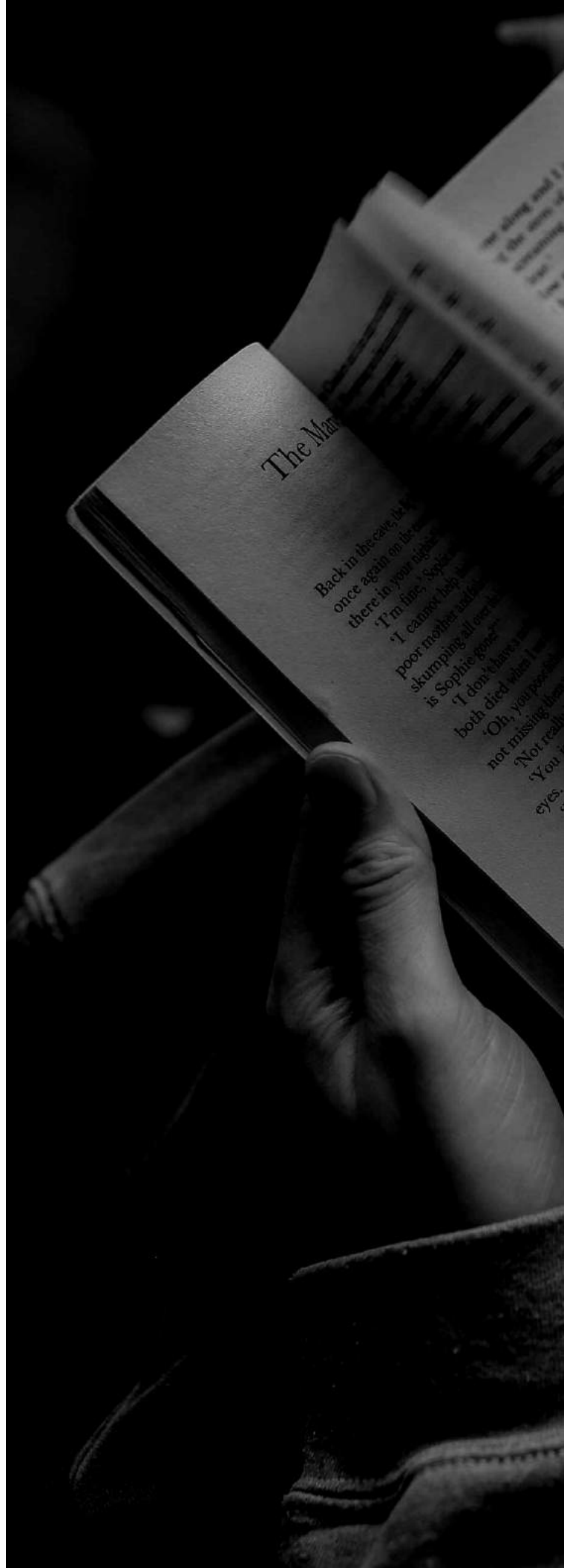
Your poetry presents the perfect opportunity to experience and share all the little wonders around us.

Final Note.

When refining your next poem, use this checklist as a guide and watch your poetry blossom before your eyes.

Consider joining our Facebook group: **'The Poetry Network'** if you are just starting in poetry writing or need a community to grow and share your art with.

Till next time!



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