

## Hive South Yorkshire Competition 2020 - Final edit checklist before you submit

To submit your best work that you feel most proud of, here are some final edit checks you can run through before submitting.

**Shape & tone:** Asking yourself what the tone and the shape a story or poem needs to be after a first draft can really help you polish something great.

**Be authentic:** simple words or, the right words, are usually far more effective than longer, more sophisticated ones that we can sometimes do for the sake of showing we know their meaning. Conveying your story or poem in your own voice (even if you're in character) is the most important thing – tell it in a simple way. Don't try to sound like a writer.– don't hide your ideas behind over-complicated sentences or impressive sounding words.

**Show don't tell:** Show when you can, rather than tell. A reader will have a much better image in their minds if you show them what's happening through concrete images and sensory detail rather than telling them in a general way. These images can be metaphorical, say in a poem, but their detail is what a reader has a sensory and emotional response to. If a person is angry, show them being angry rather than saying - The woman was angry. Show us by something specific such as the way she walks, talks, the expression on her face, the way she holds her fists clenched or presses her finger into someone else's chest. Now we can feel it. When you edit, go through and check where you could change telling to showing.

**Be specific and selective:** Avoid generic language that's vague and clichéd in your descriptions. Think about using brand names, street names and real detail of that particular place and time. Allowing the reader to focus on a few carefully considered details in the context of the piece, can trigger a whole, visualised scene or character in a reader's head. Too much description can overwhelm and overload us. Only describe, in detail, those things that are unusual or absolutely essential to the piece.

**Be economical:** Not just for the sake of the word count, but to ensure, every word is pulling its weight. Go through your writing and see what you can take out. Take out too many adverbs and adjectives. Make the other words work harder. Sometimes less is more. Use precise verbs like *slam the door* instead of *shut the door hard*. Ask yourself if everything is relevant and essential to the story? Sometimes that means 'killing your darlings', sentences, extra info that belong in a different piece of writing. You can always keep stuff you don't use.

**Be clear with speech:** Make it clear who's speaking. Use said and replied. You can occasionally change it up, e.g. whispered, shouted if that's what your characters are doing, but don't go overboard. Also with adverbs (words ending in ly). E.g. He said happily. Instead, let the scene, the actions of the speaker, do some of the work to show the reader how something is being said. If someone speaks in a poem, use italics to distinguish speech.

**Don't rush it, edit it:** Make sure your work's the best it can be before you send it. There's no need to rush. Better to wait and get it right, than to read it again when you've sent it and see a million things you'd change. Sometimes it helps if you leave it for a couple of weeks before coming back to it with fresh eyes. Make something that's already good even better.

**Hear it and see it:** Before you send your work, print it off (we see things differently on paper), and read through it carefully out loud. Even better, recover it on your smart phone audio and listen back when you aren't looking at the text. Not only will you hear what you've actually written rather than what you think you've written, it's also really important that a story or poem sounds and flows right, as well as sits right on the page.

**Some final considerations:** Is the title appropriate and offering something intriguing or illuminating to the piece? For poems, check line breaks. For short stories check paragraph breaks and speech tags. Ask yourself...is it satisfying? Does it reveal enough but not spell too much out?

**Proof read as a final thing:** Most writers will tell you, at some point they have clicked sent only to realise they spelled something wrong or missed a comma somewhere. If spelling and grammar isn't your strength, get a friend to give it a once over - but wait to do this as a final thing.