

Mrs. Kragen's PMS Editing Hints

Page Set-Up

1. I prefer that you do most of your work on the computer. If you write by hand, use blue or black ink, write in your best handwriting (cursive or print), and skip lines.
2. Follow the Submission Guidelines meticulously.

Paragraphing

3. To start a new paragraph hit *enter* (once only) and *tab* (once only). Do not skip an extra line between paragraphs. If you are writing by hand, indent a new paragraph the width of two fingers.
4. Develop your ideas. If you write a topic sentence, add explanations to create a full paragraph. Support general statements with specific details.
[You may lose 5% off your grade for each time you fail to follow this direction!]
5. Keep your paragraphs organized; put sentences related to a single topic into a paragraph together. Put your paragraphs in a logical order.
[You may lose 5% off your grade for each time you fail to follow this direction!]
6. Keep your tenses consistent, especially within a paragraph. Decide if you will use the past or present tense and stick with it. When you are all done writing, reread the piece looking just for tense errors. Fix them all.
[You may lose 5% off your grade for each time you fail to follow this direction!]
7. As you work on revising, ask yourself questions: Is your piece understandable? Is it interesting? Did you follow directions? Read your piece out loud, looking for missed words or confusing places. Fix any problems!
[You may lose 5% off your grade for each time you fail to follow this direction!]

Punctuation

8. Use proper punctuation to create complete sentences—no fragments or run-ons!
9. Put only one space between words; put only one space after a comma or semicolon. Put no spaces between quotes and words. You may choose to put one or two spaces after each period, colon, question mark or exclamation mark, but be consistent!
[You may lose 5% off your grade if you fail to follow this direction!]
10. Use only one exclamation mark per sentence, please!
11. Put NO spaces before any punctuation mark except a quotation mark (like "this," see?) and an ellipsis, made by typing space period period space. (Use an ellipsis rarely!)
12. If you are going to use a long dash, you may choose to use an emdash—which is made with two hyphens and no spaces—or you may choose to use an endash – which is made with two hyphens and a space on each side – but you must be consistent. (You can go into autocorrect to tell Microsoft Word to convert two hyphens to a long dash.)

Spelling and Usage

13. Spell out small numbers (ten and under.) Spell out abbreviations except for a title in front of a person's name. (Don't use "etc." or "&," for example.) Don't use contractions.
14. Make sure your subjects agree with your verbs. A plural subject needs a plural verb form.
15. Make sure your pronouns have clear antecedents. You must use a noun or noun phrase like "the character" before you use a pronoun like "she." The pronoun *always* refers back to the closest noun! If you write "the girl smiled at her friend, and she laughed" the friend is the one who laughed, even if you intended for the first girl to be the one who laughed. Make sure each pronoun is referring to right noun!
16. Using "this" or "that" as the pronoun subject of a sentence is particularly tricky. The question is always "this what?" or "that what?" Spelling out the subject of the sentence is better: "this idea" or "that problem."
17. Most of what you do for me is formal writing, and in formal writing you should always avoid first and second person pronouns. When you are all done writing, do a search to find "I" or "we" or "you" and get rid of all those words. You may need to rewrite some sentences dramatically.
[You may lose 5% off your grade if you fail to follow this direction!]
18. Avoid the passive voice. Make sure the subject of your sentence is clear. (Say "the antagonist struck the protagonist" instead of "the protagonist was struck.")
19. When you think you are all done editing, use the computer's spell check and grammar check. The spell check will catch most of the spelling errors although it will not catch homophone errors. The grammar check is likely to flag things you do not really need to change. See what the grammar check suggests and use your best judgment.

Length

20. Stay within word limits.
[You may lose 5% or more off your grade if you fail to follow this direction!]