STEP-BY-STEP EDITING GUIDE
Adapted from a “Communications Briefings” Reprint

GENERAL STEPS

- Set your work aside for a while before editing it.
- Edit only from a typed copy, double- or triple-spaced to make marking corrections easier.
- Be especially picky when reviewing your first draft. First draft editing should be about:
  - Deleting
  - Substituting
  - Rearranging
  - Inserting
- Focus on your introduction, but pay special attention to the overall sequencing of ideas in your writing.
- Read your work ALOUD. In error detection, the ear is more effective than the eye.
- Read your work SLOWLY to detect spelling errors and other errors that are not easily heard. Reading too fast will not give your eyes enough time to spot some errors.
- ALWAYS check your list of typical errors. If you do not have a personal list of typical errors, make one; review some of your writing samples and identify recurring errors.
- If you are not sure about how to correct a grammatical or spelling error, see a tutor or refer to a grammar handbook or dictionary.
- Let someone else read your work to identify any errors that you may have missed.

ISSUES TO CONSIDER

Contents:
- Is your thesis clear?
- Have you limited your subject sufficiently or have you covered items not directly related to your main theme?
- Did you leave out any main points?
- Are your supporting details adequate?
- Is your organization easy to follow?
- Did you answer the following questions related to your thesis: who, what, where, why, how, so what?

Brevity/Clarity/Vigor:
- Have you eliminated all extraneous (UNNECESSARY) phrases or words? Weed out any words that add nothing to meaning (phrases which begin with prepositions often include unnecessary words).
- Locate places where you used long noun phrases, change these phrases to verbs.
- Have you substituted short, punchy words for long, showy words? Clear, concise writing is the goal.
- Did you use specific words rather than general words? Use specific adjectives, not vague ones. BEWARE OF AMBIGUOUS PRONOUN REFERENCE. If there is any chance the reader cannot determine what noun the pronoun refers to, substitute the noun.
- Have you overused parts of the verb “to be”?

Paragraph Strength:
- Does each paragraph have a clear topic sentence?
- Does each paragraph deal with only one topic?
- Are the paragraphs developed in a logical way?
- Does each sentence in the paragraph contribute to the main idea?
• Are the sentences linked by transitional words or repetition of an important word or idea that reinforces your thesis?

FINAL EDITING AND PROOFING POINTS

• Put yourself in the reader’s place and re-read to be sure nothing can be misinterpreted.
• Check for accuracy of information and grammatical errors. Watch for these problems:
  – disagreement between subject and verb
  – sentence fragments
  – pronouns with unclear referents
  – pronoun antecedent disagreement
  – run-on sentences or comma splices
  – incorrect or inappropriate shifts in verb tense
  – missing end punctuation
  – showing open quotes or parenthesis, but no closed quotes or parenthesis
  – letters omitted or added
  – incorrectly spelled words
  – words spelled two ways in different parts of your manuscript
  – improper or inconsistent capitalization
  – incorrect indentation, transposition of letter (i.e. form for from), or poor spacing (i.e. fo . b. for f.o.b.)