

Cover Image.....	1
Title Page.....	2
Table of Contents	3
Introduction	14
Welcome to Self-Editing Land	15
About Me	16
Who This Book is For.....	17
What This Book Will Teach You.....	17
How This Book is Organized.....	21
What’s Missing.....	22
A Confession.....	23
Part 1: Getting Ready to Self-Edit	24
Chapter 1: Demystifying "Editing"	25
Introduction	26
Understanding What Professional Editors Do.....	27
4 Levels of Editing.....	29
Developmental Editing.....	30
Stylistic Editing.....	31
Copy Editing.....	31
Proofreading.....	32
Editing the DIY Way.....	33
Chapter 2: Preparing to Self-Edit	35
Introduction	36
Taking a Break.....	36
Are You Ready?.....	37
Making Time and Space.....	38
Choosing an Editing Method.....	39
Gathering Your Materials.....	42
Revisiting Your Vision.....	43
Chapter 3: Sizing Up Your Manuscript.....	45
Introduction	46
Reading Your Draft.....	46
Taking Notes.....	48
Reviewing Your Notes & Making a Plan.....	51

Step 1: Condensing Your Notes	51
Step 2: Organizing & Prioritizing	52
Big Problems: Story-Level	53
Medium Problems: Chapter or Scene-Level	54
Small Problems: Sentence-Level	55
Step 3: Planning Your Approach	58
Part 2: The Story-Level Edit	60
Introduction	61
3 Myths About Story-Level Editing	62
Myth #1: Everyone should use an outline	62
Myth #2: Good prose and good storytelling are two separate things	62
Myth #3: It's a waste of time to edit your words until you've edited your story	63
Making the Story-Level Edit Work for You	63
Asking Questions	63
Questioning Answers	64
Learning to Forget	65
What This Section Will Teach You	65
Chapter 4: Building Your Story World	67
Introduction	68
The Difference Between Story World & Setting	68
Researching Your Story World	69
Real Worlds: Researching Realism	70
Imaginary Worlds: Researching Fantasy	70
Alternate Worlds: Researching Science Fiction	71
Story World Research Methods	72
Asking Questions	72
Drawing Maps & Creating Models	72
Doing Outside Research	73
Taking Notes	73
Using Your Own Experiences, Opinions, Ideas, and Imagination	73
When to Stop Researching	74
Revealing Your World to Readers	75
Dosing Out Information	75

Info-Dumping: Dealing with Information Overload.....	76
Slow Dripping.....	76
“Wait... What?” When Your Reader Has Nothing to Go On.....	79
Under-Developed Story Worlds.....	79
Under-Explained Story Worlds.....	80
Testing for Internal Consistency.....	81
Establishing Credibility.....	81
Next Steps.....	82
Chapter 5: Creating Dynamic Characters _ _ _ _ _	84
Introduction.....	85
The 4 Types of Characters.....	86
Type #1: Protagonist or Main Character.....	86
Type #2: Antagonist.....	86
Type #3: Secondary or Major Character.....	87
Type #4: Minor Character.....	88
Revising Your Character Arcs.....	88
Character Arcs Defined.....	89
The 5 Basic Character Arc Shapes.....	89
Creating Character Arcs with the DCAST Method.....	91
D is for Desire or Goal.....	92
C is for Conflict or Obstacle.....	93
A is for Action.....	94
S is for Stakes.....	96
T is for Transformation or Change.....	96
Troubleshooting Common Character Problems.....	97
Passive Protagonist.....	98
Unmotivated Protagonist.....	98
Scattered Protagonist.....	99
Too Many Main Characters.....	100
Stereotypical Characters.....	100
Melodrama.....	101
Next Steps.....	101
Chapter 6: Choosing the Right Point of View _ _ _ _ _	103
Introduction.....	104

The Five Basic Points of View	105
First Person (I, we).....	106
Second Person (you).....	107
Third Person (she, he, they).....	107
Third Person Limited (aka third person “close”).....	107
Third Person Omniscient	108
Multiple Point of View	108
Welcome to the 6th Dimension.....	111
Who Speaks?.....	111
To Whom?.....	111
With What Tone or Attitude?.....	112
In What Form?.....	112
At What Distance?.....	113
With What Limitations?	113
Troubleshooting Common Point of View Problems	113
Misuse of Multiple Point of View and/or the Omniscient	115
Claustrophobic First Person.....	116
Balancing Perspective and Intimacy	118
Speculation.....	119
Triangulation	120
Communication.....	121
Repositioning.....	121
Next Steps.....	122
Chapter 7: Plotting Your Story	125
Introduction	126
The Difference Between “Plot” and “Story”.....	126
4 Ways to Plot a Story.....	128
The 3-Act Structure	128
The Snowflake Method.....	130
The But/Therefore Method.....	131
The Chaos Method.....	132
Troubleshooting Common Plot Problems.....	133
Nothing Happens.....	133
Cardboard Characters.....	134

Weak Cause-Effect Links.....	136
Too Many Subplots.....	137
Nothing Changes.....	139
Next Steps.....	141
Chapter 8: Developing Your Theme _ _ _ _ _	142
Introduction.....	143
What’s Your Theme?.....	144
What’s Your Story About?.....	144
What Does Your Story Teach Us?.....	144
What’s the Takeaway?.....	145
What Point are You Trying to Make?.....	145
Fine-Tuning Your Theme.....	146
Zooming In.....	146
Writing Your Thematic Statement.....	147
Letting Your Characters Lead the Way.....	149
Using Your Words.....	150
Taking Advantage of Symbolism.....	152
Troubleshooting Common Theme Problems.....	154
Wait... What?.....	155
A Big Bowl of Theme Soup.....	156
Preachiness.....	157
Next Steps.....	158
Part 3: The Scene-Level Edit _ _ _ _ _	159
Introduction.....	160
What Scenes Are, and Why Your Story Needs Them.....	162
Chapter 9: Balancing Scene & Summary _ _ _ _ _	164
Introduction.....	165
The Difference Between Scene & Summary.....	165
Showing and Telling.....	169
Chapter 10: The Anatomy of a Scene _ _ _ _ _	172
Introduction.....	173
Action.....	173
Dialogue.....	175
Direct Dialogue.....	175

Indirect Dialogue.....	175
Summary Dialogue.....	176
Expository Dialogue.....	176
Description.....	177
Interiority.....	178
Narrative Summary.....	179
Mix & Match: Building Strong Scenes.....	181
Chapter 11: Revising Your Scene Structure.....	185
Introduction.....	186
Making a Scene List.....	186
Analyzing Your Scene List.....	187
Keep, Cut, Combine, or Revise?.....	190
Next Steps.....	191
Chapter 12: Revising Your Scenes.....	193
Introduction.....	194
12.1 Examining Your Summaries.....	197
Introduction.....	198
Knowing When to Summarize.....	198
Troubleshooting Common Summary Problems.....	200
Boring Summaries.....	200
Too Many Summaries.....	201
The Show Show.....	202
12.2 "Lights, Camera..." Revising Your Action.....	204
Introduction.....	205
Reviewing Your Scene's Main Event.....	206
Tightening Up the Action Steps.....	207
Troubleshooting Common Action Problems.....	208
Weak Verbs.....	209
Passive Voice.....	210
Cause-Effect Problems.....	211
Time-Scale Problems.....	213
Bland Style.....	214
12.3 Tightening Your Dialogue.....	216
Introduction.....	217

What to Look For.....	217
Troubleshooting Common Dialogue Problems.....	219
Talking Heads.....	219
“As You Know, Bob...”.....	220
Empty Dialogue.....	223
12.4 Setting the Scene: Evaluating Your Descriptions.....	227
Introduction.....	228
Revising Static Descriptions.....	229
Character Engagement.....	230
Filtered Descriptions.....	230
Story Tracking.....	231
Troubleshooting Common Description Problems.....	232
White Room.....	232
Smothered-in-Description-Sauce.....	234
12.5 Letting Us In: Analyzing Your Interiority.....	236
Introduction.....	237
Understanding Interiority.....	237
Troubleshooting Common Interiority Problems.....	239
Excessive Rumination.....	240
No Access.....	241
Explaining.....	242
Head-Hopping.....	243
12.6 Traveling Back in Time: Repairing Your Flashbacks.....	245
Introduction.....	246
Does Your Story Need Flashbacks?.....	246
Finding Your Story’s True Beginning.....	247
Advancing the Plot, Revealing Your Characters.....	247
Revising Your Flashbacks.....	248
Putting Flashbacks in the Right Place.....	248
Keeping Flashbacks Short.....	249
Indicating Time Travel.....	250
Introducing Flashbacks Naturally.....	251
12.7 Speed Matters: Fixing Your Pacing.....	252
Introduction.....	253

Speeding Up Slow Pacing	253
Slowing Down Fast Pacing	254
12.8 Dropping Breadcrumbs: Getting Your Foreshadowing Right ..	257
Introduction	258
Leaving Breadcrumbs, Dropping Pebbles	259
The Rule of Three	260
Part 4: The Sentence-Level Edit	262
Introduction	263
Chapter 13: Choosing the Right Details	265
Introduction	266
Why Details Matter	267
Showing the Universal Through the Specific	267
Establishing Credibility	269
Revealing Theme	270
The Vague Stuff	272
Vague Words to Watch Out For	273
Using Sensory Details	274
Sight ..	274
Sound ..	275
Touch, Taste, and Smell	276
A Word of Caution: Overdosing on Details	279
Chapter 14: Revising Overwriting & Purple Prose	284
Introduction	285
Overwriting Red Flags	286
Revising Overwriting	287
When Flowery Prose Works	288
Chapter 15: Cutting Unneeded Explanations	290
Introduction	291
Emotional Explanations	291
Motivational Explanations	292
Cause-Effect Explanations	293
Common Explaining Words to Watch Out For	294
Chapter 16: Removing Excessive Stage Direction	296
Introduction	297

Spotting Stage Direction.....	297
Words to Watch Out For: Stage Direction Red Flags.....	299
Chapter 17: Filtering Out Filtering _ _ _ _ _	301
Introduction.....	302
Revising Filtering.....	303
Words to Watch Out For: Signs of Filtering.....	303
Exceptions: When Filtering Works.....	304
Chapter 18: Avoiding Clichés _ _ _ _ _	306
Introduction.....	307
When Clichés Work.....	308
Dialogue.....	308
First-Person Narration.....	308
Comedy or Irony.....	309
World Building.....	309
Chapter 19: Smoothing Out Transitions _ _ _ _ _	311
Introduction.....	312
Chapter Transitions.....	312
Scene Transitions.....	313
Using Line Breaks.....	314
Blending & Cueing.....	314
Establishing Time.....	315
Establishing Point of View.....	316
Establishing Location.....	316
Troubleshooting Common Transition Problems.....	317
Long Transitions.....	317
Repetitious Transitions.....	318
Ungrounded or “Floating” Transitions.....	318
Chapter 20: Curbing Unruly Modifiers _ _ _ _ _	320
Introduction.....	321
Modified Verbs.....	321
Modified Adjectives.....	321
Redundant Modifiers.....	322
Examples of Weak Modifiers.....	322
Sensory Deprivation.....	323

When Modifiers Work.....	324
Chapter 21: Refraining from Repetition _ _ _ _ _	327
Introduction.....	328
Repeated Words.....	328
Repeated Structures & Rhythms.....	329
Repeated Ideas or Information.....	330
Repeated Actions.....	331
When Repetition Works.....	331
Chapter 22: Weeding Out the Passive Voice _ _ _ _ _	333
Introduction.....	334
Revising the Passive Voice.....	334
When the Passive Voice Works.....	335
Chapter 23: Curing the -ing Disease _ _ _ _ _	336
Introduction.....	337
Impossible Simultaneous Actions.....	337
Ongoing... and Going... and Going.....	338
Falling into the Passive Voice.....	339
Chapter 24: Clarifying Ambiguity & Eliminating Hedging _ _ _ _ _	340
Introduction.....	341
Clarifying Ambiguous Pronouns.....	341
Pronouns to Watch Out For.....	342
Revising Ambiguous Words.....	342
Vague Words to Watch Out For.....	343
Hedging.....	344
Common Weasel Words.....	345
When Ambiguity or Hedging Works.....	345
Chapter 25: Sprucing Up Dialogue Mechanics _ _ _ _ _	347
Introduction.....	348
Cleaning Up Attribution Tags.....	348
Attribution Tags to Watch Out For.....	349
Dropping Unnecessary Tags.....	350
Showing Accents.....	350
Paragraphing Properly.....	352
She Said, Said She.....	353

Chapter 26: Miscellaneous Decluttering	354
Introduction	355
That	355
Then	355
Down & Up	356
Start & Begin	357
Suddenly or "All of a Sudden"	357
Part 5: Life After Self-Editing	359
Introduction	360
Setting Realistic Expectations	360
Crowd Sourcing: Beta Readers, Critique Groups, and Public Opinions	362
Beta Readers	362
Finding Beta Readers	363
Getting Great Feedback from Beta Readers	364
Critique Groups	365
Benefits of Critique Groups	366
Drawbacks of Critique Groups	367
Making Critique Groups Work for You	370
Bringing in the Pros: When to Hire an Editor	371
Finding an Editor	372
10 Questions to Ask an Editor Before Hiring Them	374
Calling it Good: Knowing When Your Story is Done	378
Part 6: Bonus Materials	380
Parting Gifts	381
Pre-Editing Checklist	383
Story World Checklist	385
Character Development Checklist	388
Point of View Checklist	391
Plot Checklist	394
Scene Editing Checklist	397
Stylistic Editing Checklist	399
Recommended Reading	402
About the Author	403