

Story Notes:

1. **Create a personal editing checklist.** Use these story notes as a basis to build a personal editing checklist. Add other items you often overlook, and use these sheets to check your future stories *before* submitting them for review.
2. **Compound words.** Check two words that create one noun to see if they are two separate words, hyphenated, or one word—*backyard, front yard, in-depth*. You can type the word(s) in question into an online search engine followed by the words *Merriam* and *Webster* to see the current status of such words or phrases.
3. **Small words.** Check small words like *in, if, of, on, as, at, am, is, be, no, so, to*, etc., to make sure you are using the right word for the job. The keystrokes are easy to confuse even though you know what the word should be. Text-to-speech functions in MS Word, Google Docs, Pages, and such are helpful in catching these mistakes.
4. **Would** – Many, many times you can replace *would* in a sentence with the simple past tense, and it makes the sentence much stronger.

I would go to the movies every Saturday afternoon.
I went to the movies every Saturday afternoon.

5. **Proper nouns.** Proper nouns serve as names for people, places, and things and are capitalized. Check the spelling of all proper nouns, especially the names of businesses, products, organizations, book and film titles, etc., even if you *think* you know how to spell them. Double-check just to make sure.
6. **Nicknames.** If you are using a nickname for an official proper noun, it too should be capitalized. Know that the article before the name—*a, an, the*—is not capitalized.

Florida is known as the Sunshine State.
The Atlanta Falcons are known as the Dirty Birds.

7. **Quantify.** Wherever possible, quantify your descriptions in terms of size, amount, number, etc. If you don't know the exact number, qualify it in some way, but still provide a specific point of reference.

*We've been best friends for a long time.
We've been best friends for more than thirty years.*